



Governing Body

356th Session, Geneva, 23 March–2 April 2026

Minutes of the 356th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

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► Abbreviations

ACT/EMP	Bureau for Employers' Activities
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASPAG	Asia and Pacific group
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CINTERFOR	Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EU	European Union
EPZs	Export Processing Zones
GCC	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
GRULAC	group of Latin American and Caribbean countries
IAO	Office of Internal Audit and Oversight
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IMEC	group of industrialized market economy countries
Turin Centre	International Training Centre of the ILO
IOE	International Organisation of Employers
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
MNE Declaration	Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy
OSH	occupational safety and health
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
SRM TWG	Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

► Introduction

1. The 356th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office was held in Geneva, from 23 March to 2 April 2026. It was presided over by Ms Anousheh Karvar (Government, France) as Chairperson. Mr Matthias Thorns, Employer member, was the spokesperson for the Employers' group and Ms Catelene Passchier, Worker member from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was the spokesperson for the Workers' group.

Officers of the Governing Body

Chairperson:	Ms Anousheh Karvar (France)
Employer Vice-Chairperson:	Mr Matthias Thorns
Worker Vice-Chairperson:	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)

Chairing and speaking responsibilities by section

Institutional Section (INS)

Chairperson: Ms Anousheh Karvar (France)

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
INS/1	Mr Matthias Thorns	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/2/1	Mr Thomas Mackall (United States of America)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/2/2	Mr Matthias Thorns	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/3	Ms Anne Vauchez (France)	Ms Michele O'neil (Australia)
INS/4	Ms Anne Vauchez (France)	Ms Zingiswa Losi (South Africa)
INS/5	Mr Matthias Thorns	Mr Anthony Baah (Ghana)
INS/6	Mr Guido Ricci (Guatemala)	Ms Amanda Brown (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
INS/7	Mr Matthias Thorns	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/8	Ms Nancy Chenard (Congo)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/9/1	Mr Hicham Zouanat (Morocco)	Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland)
INS/9/2	Ms Miriam Pinto Lomeña (Spain)	Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland)
INS/10	Mr Blaise Matthey (Switzerland)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/11	Mr Matthias Thorns	Mr Jeffrey Vogt (United States)
INS/12	Mr Matthias Thorns	Mr Aliaksandr Yarashuk (Belarus) Ms Amanda Brown (United Kingdom)
INS/13	Ms Jessica Tinsley (Australia)	Mr Jeffrey Vogt (United States)
INS/14	Mr Fernando Yllanes (Mexico)	Mr José Enrique Oñate Vera (Mexico)
INS/15	Mr Matthias Thorns	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/16	Ms Laura Giménez (Argentina)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/17	Mr Fernando Yllanes (Mexico)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)

Institutional Section (INS)

INS/18	Mr Thomas Mackall (United States)	Mr Jeffrey Vogt (United States)
INS/19/1	Mr Matthias Thorns	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/19/2	Mr Blaise Matthey (Switzerland)	Mr Daniel Mongo (Congo)
INS/20/1	Mr Matthias Thorns	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
INS/20/2	Ms Jacqueline Mugo (Kenya)	Ms Zingiswa Losi (South Africa)
INS/20/3	Mr Matthias Thorns	Mr José Enrique Oñate Vera (Mexico)

Policy Development Section (POL)

Employment and Social Protection Segment

Chairperson: Ms Anousheh Karvar (France)

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
POL/1	Mr Matthias Thorns	Mr Jeffrey Vogt (United States)

Social Dialogue Segment

Chairperson:¹ H.E. Ms Nahida Sobhan (Bangladesh)

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
POL/2	Mr Niklas Beckman (Sweden)	Mr José Enrique Oñate Vera (Mexico)
POL/3	Ms Emiko Nagasawa (Japan)	Mr José Enrique Oñate Vera (Mexico)

Development Cooperation Segment

Chairperson:¹ Ms Anousheh Karvar (France)

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
POL/4	Ms Jacqueline Mugo (Kenya)	Mr Mody Guiro (Senegal)

Multinational Enterprises Segment

Chairperson:¹ H.E. Ms Nahida Sobhan (Bangladesh)

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
POL/5	Mr Niklas Beckman (Sweden)	Mr Antonio de Lisboa Amancio Vale (Brazil)

Legal Issues and International Labour Standards Section (LILS)

Chairperson:¹ Mr Sipho Ndebele (South Africa)

Legal Issues Segment

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
LILS/1	Ms Miriam Pinto Lomeña (Spain)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)

International Labour Standards and Human Rights Segment

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
LILS/2	Mr Kaizer Moyane (South Africa)	Ms Catelene Passchier (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
LILS/3	Ms Laura Giménez (Argentina)	Ms Amanda Brown (United Kingdom)
LILS/4	Mr Kris De Meester (Belgium)	Ms Amanda Brown (United Kingdom)

¹ Delegation of authority from the Chairperson (see paragraph 2.2.5 of the [Standing Orders of the Governing Body](#)).

Programme, Financial and Administrative Section (PFA)

Chairperson: Ms Anousheh Karvar (France)

Programme, Financial and Administrative Segment

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
PFA/1	Mr Blaise Matthey (Switzerland)	Mr Plamen Dimitrov (Bulgaria)
PFA/2	Mr Blaise Matthey (Switzerland)	Mr Plamen Dimitrov (Bulgaria)
PFA/3	Mr Abdulghani Alsayegh (Saudi Arabia)	Mr Plamen Dimitrov (Bulgaria)
PFA/4	Mr Matthias Thorns	Mr Plamen Dimitrov (Bulgaria)

Audit and Oversight Segment

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
PFA/5	Mr Hamidou Diop (Senegal)	Mr Rafael Lamas (Belgium)
PFA/6	Mr Khelil Ghariani (Tunisia)	Mr Rafael Lamas (Belgium)

Personnel Segment

Item	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
PFA/9	Mr Arne Franke (Germany)	Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland)
PFA/10/1	Mr Adewale-Smatt Oyerinde (Nigeria)	Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland)
PFA/10/2	Ms Hansong Liu (China)	Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland)
PFA/11	Ms Sheena Mayers-Granville (Barbados)	Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland)

Other bodies

Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA)

Chairperson: Mr Evance Kalula (Zambia)

Government spokesperson	Employer spokesperson	Worker spokesperson
Mr Pascal Apprederisse (France)	Mr Thomas Mackall (United States)	Ms Amanda Brown (United Kingdom)

► Institutional Section

Opening remarks

- The Chairperson** welcomed participants and opened the 356th Session of the Governing Body.
(The Governing Body adopted the agenda published in document [GB.356/Agenda\(Rev.1\).](#))
- The Director-General** made an introductory statement to the Governing Body, which is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix I.
- The Employer Vice-Chairperson** noted that the business community was deeply concerned by the conflict in the Middle East, which was having a huge impact on businesses, workers and societies in the region and far beyond. It could lead to severe setbacks in job creation, sustainable development and decent work.
- In that context, the discussion of the ongoing reform of the ILO was particularly important, as it must shape a more efficient Organization that fulfilled its mandate of advancing decent work

by promoting employment opportunities, an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises and effective social dialogue, and addressing informality. The Governing Body should be guided by its responsibility to ensure that the ILO could continue delivering on that mandate efficiently, effectively and in a balanced manner. Following its previous discussion of the broad orientation of the ILO reform, at the current session the Governing Body needed to make concrete choices regarding priorities, structures and the use of resources. It would need to see the overall strategy and have all necessary information, including on which departments would be affected and when. The reform was not only about internal financial and organizational adjustments, but also how the Organization positioned itself in a changing economic and multilateral environment and how it remained relevant to its constituents. The reform needed to provide a clear strategic direction and ensure that the Organization's limited resources were concentrated where they generated the greatest value. Constituents expected the ILO to provide meaningful support in areas that would be critical for the future of work: employment creation, productivity, skills development, sustainable enterprise development and stronger labour market institutions. The ILO's standard-setting function was important, but what ultimately delivered results was institution-building to enable countries to effectively implement the standards they had ratified. Greater clarity would be needed on how organizational adjustments would strengthen service delivery to constituents by preserving the policy coherence and expertise that underpinned the Organization's work. The reform would ultimately be judged by its ability to enhance both the strategic coherence and the operational effectiveness of the Organization.

6. Another important discussion concerned possible initiatives to promote decent work in supply chains. Improving labour market outcomes within such complex economic ecosystems required practical approaches that promoted institutional capacity, effective labour market governance and the functioning of national regulatory frameworks. The essential challenge was not an absence of international labour standards but the effective implementation and enforcement at the national level of existing legislation. Capacity-building and practical tools to strengthen labour market institutions, create a compliance culture and facilitate the transition to formality were needed to address challenges.
7. The discussion of the agenda of future sessions of the International Labour Conference was particularly important, as it would determine how the ILO's normative and policy work evolved. For the Employers' group, the key priority was to ensure that the agenda remained pertinent, balanced and manageable, ensuring sufficient time and attention for each item. The Employers' group had consistently opposed placing two standard-setting items on the agenda of the same session, as that overloaded the agenda and risked undermining the quality and depth of the deliberations. The Governing Body had adopted the recommendations of the Standards Review Mechanism to ensure coherence and predictability in the evolution of the ILO's normative framework and should therefore be given due consideration when determining the agenda of future sessions of the Conference. Maintaining a strategically balanced and realistic normative agenda was essential for preserving the effectiveness of the Conference.
8. The Governing Body would also be discussing the continued functioning of the Standards Review Mechanism. Maintaining a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards was essential. The mechanism played a crucial role in classifying instruments and identifying appropriate follow-up actions, thus safeguarding the coherence and credibility of the ILO's normative system; it needed to be an ongoing process.
9. A number of country situations arising under the ILO's supervisory system were on the agenda of the current session. For the supervisory system to remain relevant and respected, its various

mechanisms had to operate in a coherent and complementary manner. The scope and role of the different supervisory procedures had to be clearly delineated to safeguard the integrity of the system and ensure that it was used responsibly and appropriately. The credibility of the supervisory system depended on maintaining a balanced approach that addressed genuine concerns while avoiding practices that could undermine its effectiveness or relevance.

10. The discussions at the current session would address many aspects of the ILO's work. Tripartism remained the Organization's greatest strength, and constructive dialogue and shared responsibility allowed the Governing Body to address complex challenges and find balanced solutions. The Employers' group would work with all constituents to ensure that the discussions contributed to a stronger, more effective and more relevant ILO.
11. **The Worker Vice-Chairperson** contrasted the peaceful springtime in Europe with the bleak situation in the Middle East. There were no more gardens in Gaza and, in the context of the war on the Islamic Republic of Iran, humanitarian aid, food and medicine were again being withheld from an already desperate, starving population. In the occupied West Bank, olive orchards were being destroyed by settlers acting with total impunity. In Lebanon, almost a million people had been driven out of their homes; if they were ever able to return, they would find their houses in ruins. In Israel, people were hiding in shelters from retaliatory attacks, but most Palestinians and Bedouins in the country had no access to shelters. In Tehran, the people who had hoped for peace, freedom and an Iranian Spring instead faced heavy bombing and increased repression by the national authorities, with no end in sight. Other countries in the Gulf region and beyond were increasingly being drawn into a war that nobody wanted. The Workers' group called for an end to the irresponsible use of military force on all sides and a return to peaceful diplomatic means as the only viable way forward. Meanwhile, other conflicts were continuing to inflict major harm and humanitarian crises, including in Sudan, the Congo, Myanmar and Ukraine. Moreover, the military build-up in the Caribbean was threatening the lives and livelihoods of their peoples, and peace and stability in the wider region.
12. The Workers' group was appalled by the level of devastation and the fact that it was primarily vulnerable and innocent civilians and ordinary workers who were hardest hit. All workers worldwide were affected by energy prices soaring and countries redirecting their national budgets towards defence at the expense of investment in education, healthcare, social benefits and development aid. That was contributing to heightened economic and social anxiety and workers' discontent around the world.
13. In such a challenging context, the Governing Body would discuss how the ILO could continue to deliver on its unique tripartite normative mandate by developing standards for the current and future world of work that would safeguard minimum protections for workers and create a level playing field for businesses; ensuring the supervisory system could function with authority to monitor and support implementation of ratified Conventions; promoting respect for freedom of association and civil liberties; fostering diversity, equality and inclusion; and supporting social dialogue and collective bargaining to manage workplaces and societies that would have to adjust to current and future challenges, including to restrain unfettered corporate power.
14. There were also signs of hope. Younger generations in many countries were demonstrating for basic social rights and protections. The Workers' group stood in solidarity with all those risking their lives and livelihoods fighting for fundamental rights and freedoms and social justice, and paid tribute to all trade unionists currently imprisoned for standing up for workers' rights and against dictatorship. Governing Body member Alexander Yarashuk had been

released from prison in Belarus, but deported to Lithuania without his passport; he would join the meeting later in the session.

15. At a time when a strong and impactful ILO was needed more than ever, the Organization was under significant financial pressure. She thanked the vast majority of ILO Member States who had paid their contributions for 2026, which was essential for business continuity. However, one country had been withholding its regular contributions for two years. Each Member of the ILO had the right to participate in decision-making and to benefit from the ILO's expertise and technical assistance, and also the obligation to pay its contributions to the Organization without any preconditions.
16. To ensure the ILO could continue to deliver on its core mandate and become more resilient to resource insecurity and difficult times ahead, the Workers' group would not shy away from discussing painful measures where inevitable. She continued to prefer the term "pruning" rather than "cutting", as the aim was to strengthen the Organization. Setting priorities and ensuring business continuity while preserving key experts and expertise for the future was essential and would maintain a positive focus.
17. The Workers' group noted with great concern the number of staff leaving the Organization, including through agreed terminations. The previous week, Manuela Tomei, former Assistant Director-General for Governance, Rights and Dialogue, had departed after a 38-year career in the ILO and would be sorely missed. Many others would be leaving the Organization in the upcoming months, with less public attention, and the group expressed appreciation for their contributions, commitment, expertise and collective institutional memory.
18. The Workers' group looked forward to the constructive discussions, including on the review of the Organization, with a view to safeguarding its unique and indispensable role in the world of work, fighting for social justice and peace as the only sustainable way forward.
19. **Speaking on behalf of the Government group**, a Government representative of Australia thanked the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body for their continued guidance and ongoing efforts to ensure the success of the Organization. She welcomed Beate Andrees as the new Chief of Cabinet and Assistant Director-General for the Regions, and acknowledged the deep and long-lasting contributions of former Assistant Directors-General Manuela Tomei and André Bogui. She reiterated the Government group's unwavering commitment to tripartism and to fostering open, constructive dialogue among governments, workers and employers. The Government group looked forward to productive discussions that supported consensus-building, which remained more relevant than ever, and would engage with a spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and shared commitment to the Organization's ability to drive meaningful progress in the world of work. Through constructive dialogue and steadfast commitment to the ILO's core mandate, the Governing Body could ensure that the Organization would continue to support all Members and remain responsive to the challenges ahead.

1. Approval of the minutes of the 355th Session of the Governing Body (GB.356/INS/1)

Decision

20. **The Governing Body approved the minutes of its 355th Session, as amended.**
(GB.356/INS/1, paragraph 2)

2. Agenda of the International Labour Conference

2.1. Agenda of future sessions of the Conference (GB.356/INS/2/1)

21. **The Employer spokesperson** emphasized that the agenda of the International Labour Conference should prioritize timely and relevant issues in the world of work for which there was consensus regarding their importance, urgency and the means of addressing them. This was particularly important for standard-setting items, which required significant resources from both the Office and constituents and had potentially far-reaching implications.
22. He reiterated that his group did not support the inclusion of two standard-setting items on the agenda of the same session of the International Labour Conference, and that this position applied to all standard-setting items, not only those related to occupational safety and health, as suggested in the Office document. He considered that placing two standard-setting items on the agenda of a single session would be impractical and counterproductive, as it would dissipate the resources of both the Office and constituents at a time when greater focus was required.
23. He further stressed the importance of adhering to the established double-discussion procedure for all standard-setting items, as set out in the Governing Body's compendium of rules. In his view, single-discussion procedures risked constraining debate, undermining thorough analysis and placing undue strain on both the Office and constituents. He also underlined the need for careful allocation of resources and stated that standard-setting should proceed only where there was clear consensus on necessity, taking into account existing instruments and ongoing work.
24. With regard to specific agenda items, the group reiterated its support for a standard-setting item on ergonomics and manual handling under a double-discussion procedure. While remaining flexible on the timing, the group wished to hear the views of other constituents. It emphasized that any future standard should focus on physical risk factors and hazard and risk management, including preventive measures, and should not seek to establish specific limits or measurements. The group supported the convening of a tripartite meeting of experts prior to standard-setting, provided the outcome is limited to general guidance that informs the Office's preparation for the first conference discussion.
25. Concerning standard-setting on the guarding of machinery, the group indicated openness to placing the item on the agenda of a future session, subject to a double-discussion format. It did not support a single-discussion procedure. Before taking a definitive position, the group requested further clarification from the Office regarding modalities and timing, as outlined in paragraph 24(b) of the document, after which it would consider whether a tripartite meeting of experts would be appropriate. The group took note of the possible item on the protection of workers' personal data in the digital era and reiterated its interest in a meeting of experts on the topic. With respect to the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service, the group recalled previous discussions of the Governing Body and opposed the convening of a cross-sectoral meeting of experts. It noted that in 2022 the Governing Body decided to focus on the public sector and considered that the conclusions of the earlier technical meeting provided sufficient guidance, making further meetings unnecessary.
26. Regarding the labour market implications of demographic change, the group expressed openness to holding a general discussion at a future session of the Conference, with a preference for 2029. It emphasized that any such discussion should focus on worker needs, skills adaptation, reskilling opportunities for older workers and best practices for integrating

an ageing workforce. Before taking a final position, the group requested the Office to incorporate these elements into a revised proposal for consideration at the November session.

27. On the issue of social protection for migrant workers and their families, the group noted the proposed general discussion but considered that the matter would be adequately addressed in the recurrent discussion on social protection scheduled for 2027. It also recalled that the Conference had already examined labour migration governance comprehensively in 2017 and therefore did not support inclusion of this item.
28. With regard to supply chains, the group welcomed the outcome of the decision adopted under GB.356/POL/1 and expressed the view that there was no basis for considering a normative discussion on this topic. It stressed that the decision established non-normative measures as the foundation for the 2028–31 strategy on decent work in supply chains and called on the Office to reflect this direction in future agenda-setting and to refrain from reintroducing proposals for normative discussions.
29. The group also proposed two new general discussion items for future sessions of the Conference. First, it proposed a discussion on supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) for job creation and entrepreneurship, noting the absence of a dedicated discussion on this topic for over a decade. He suggested reviewing the conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007 on sustainable enterprises and in 2015 on small and medium-sized enterprises, in light of recent changes in the world of work, and assessing the extent to which the recommendations arising from those discussions had been effectively implemented. Second, it proposed a discussion on innovative approaches to modernizing labour inspection systems, with a view to identifying best practices and providing guidance to strengthen labour inspection frameworks. The group requested the Office to further elaborate on both proposals for consideration at the session of the Governing Body in November 2026.
30. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the Office's efforts to ensure a strategic and coherent approach to agenda-setting, including stronger synergies with other institutional processes and developments in the United Nations system, notably on business and human rights. She also appreciated the linkages made between General Surveys and recurrent discussions in line with the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022. She reiterated the importance of maintaining annual General Surveys of the Committee of Experts and emphasized the need to enhance their visibility and ensure effective follow-up. With regard to future Conference agendas beyond 2027, she stressed the importance of advancing work on decent work in supply chains through a balanced combination of normative and non-normative measures, recalling recent discussions under the previous agenda item. She supported further development of proposals related to the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022, adopted 50 years ago, and suggested that this be pursued at the November 2026 session of the Governing Body.
31. She noted that discussions within her group had identified a range of possible topics for future general discussions in 2028 to be further discussed in November 2026, including artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on the world of work, strengthening workers' capacity to organize in precarious situations, promoting inclusive collective bargaining, and reinforcing fundamental rights such as freedom of association in the changing world of work, and the role of social partners in peace, resilience and reconstruction. She indicated that the group would continue these discussions with a view to providing further input at a later stage.
32. With regard to possible agenda items for 2028, she noted openness to a discussion on demographic change, while expressing a preference for further consideration of issues related

to migrant workers, in particular the portability of rights within a broader labour migration and social protection framework. She requested the Office to further develop this proposal, including by building on the outcomes of the 2017 discussion on labour migration governance.

33. On the follow-up to the Standards Review Mechanism, she reiterated the importance of maintaining this as an institutional priority and expressed support for a standard-setting item on ergonomics and manual handling, with flexibility regarding timing. She requested further information on developments concerning the global meeting on ports and docks, as referenced in paragraph 22. In relation to the revision of instruments on the guarding of machinery, she noted that the earliest opportunity for a standard-setting discussion would be the 2031 session of the Conference and expressed openness to a single-discussion procedure, preceded by a tripartite meeting of experts in 2029 or 2030. She also emphasized the need for continued discussion among constituents on standard-setting modalities, noting differing views in that regard.
34. With respect to the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service, she reiterated her group's support for holding a discussion within the policy development section of the Governing Body to guide future decisions. She noted that the issue was gaining increasing recognition within the ILO, as reflected in several existing instruments addressing anti-corruption measures and whistle-blower protection.
35. Finally, she highlighted the importance of advancing the implementation of the occupational safety and health strategy adopted in 2023, in particular with regard to issues such as occupational diseases, psychosocial risks and mental health, and called for concrete proposals to be submitted to the Governing Body before 2030.
36. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of the Niger stated, with regard to the 116th Session of the Conference in 2028, that the group took note of the second standard-setting discussion on chemical hazards and the recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment. He emphasized that these issues were of central importance to African countries, particularly in the context of economic formalization and the promotion of productive employment. He further stressed that his group attached great importance to the protection of migrant workers and members of their families, and therefore supported the inclusion of a general discussion at that session aimed at addressing coverage gaps and ensuring the portability of social protection rights.
37. With respect to ergonomics and manual handling, he said that the Africa group supported the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the 117th Session of the Conference in 2029 for standard-setting under the double-discussion procedure, to be completed in 2030. He also noted the importance of discussions on social protection and the protection of workers, emphasizing that strengthening universal social security systems remained a strategic priority for African countries, particularly in the context of economic, demographic and climate-related transitions. Looking ahead to the 118th Session of the Conference in 2030, he welcomed the recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work.
38. He reiterated his group's position that, wherever possible, two standard-setting items should not be placed on the agenda of the same session of the Conference, given the constraints faced by both constituents and the Office in managing such a workload. While remaining flexible and open to further discussion, he said that his group supported the first paragraph of the draft decision.
39. **Speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG)**, a Government representative of Australia said that her group reaffirmed its support for a strategic, coherent and balanced

approach to setting future agendas of the International Labour Conference. She emphasized that agendas should respond to the evolving world of work while remaining aligned with the ILO's strategic priorities, and underscored the importance of maintaining flexibility and agility in planning for outlying years.

40. She welcomed the items already scheduled for upcoming sessions, including the second discussion on decent work in the platform economy and the recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism in 2026, as well as the first discussion on chemical hazards and the recurrent discussion on social protection in 2027. She noted that these were significant issues for labour markets in the region and referred to recent regional initiatives contributing to global policy dialogue, such as the high-level forum on decent work in the platform economy held in February 2026.
41. She said that ASPAG also took note of the range of proposed items under consideration for future sessions of the Conference. She expressed support for considering general discussions on extending social protection and ensuring portability of benefits for migrant workers, as well as on demographic change and decent work for older workers, noting that these issues were highly relevant for the region. She emphasized that countries in the region were simultaneously addressing demographic transitions, labour mobility and evolving labour market needs, and underscored the importance of continued dialogue and exchange of experiences to strengthen inclusive labour markets, enhance social protection systems and respond effectively to demographic changes. She also acknowledged the growing relevance of other issues that could merit further consideration by the Governing Body, including decent work in supply chains, protection of workers' personal data in the digital era and protection of whistle-blowers in the public service.
42. With regard to the draft decision points, she said that ASPAG was open to scheduling standard-setting on ergonomics and manual handling, while emphasizing the need to retain flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues in outlying years. In this context, her group suggested deferring decisions on the scheduling of agenda items for 2029 and 2030. She further noted that scheduling an additional standard-setting item in 2028 alongside chemical hazards could present challenges, given the tight fiscal environment and the workload implications for both the Office and constituents.
43. **Speaking on behalf of the group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC)**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reaffirmed his group's support for a strategic and coherent approach to agenda-setting, aimed at striking an appropriate balance between flexibility to address pressing and emerging issues, and due consideration of constituents' priorities and the recommendations of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group. He reiterated IMEC's strong support for the mandate of the Standards Review Mechanism and the pivotal role it plays in ensuring that the ILO maintains a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards.
44. Recalling that a safe and healthy working environment is one of the fundamental principles and rights at work, he said that his group took note of the proposals to place a double standard-setting discussion on ergonomics and manual handling on the agenda of future sessions following the 2028 Conference. He also expressed support for holding a single standard-setting discussion on the guarding of machinery thereafter, preceded by a tripartite technical meeting.
45. He further indicated that IMEC supported keeping under consideration a general discussion, in 2028 or thereafter, on the labour market implications of demographic change, including intergenerational solidarity and decent work for older workers. He thanked the Office for its

proposals concerning the protection of workers' personal data in the digital era and supported the convening of a tripartite meeting of experts on the subject. In that regard, he said that his group looked forward to reviewing any proposed adjustments to the modalities of that meeting following the conclusion of the standard-setting discussion on decent work in the platform economy. He also took note of the possible inclusion of a future agenda item concerning the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service. With regard to the decision point, the group preferred the option in the first paragraph of the Office paper but remained flexible.

46. **Speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, a Government representative of the Philippines reaffirmed his group's support for a strategic, coherent and balanced approach to setting the agenda of future sessions of the International Labour Conference. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the agenda remained responsive to the evolving world of work while maintaining alignment with the ILO's strategic priorities and broader global commitments.
47. Turning to the 114th Session of the Conference, he said that ASEAN looked forward to the second discussion on decent work in the platform economy. In that regard, he noted that, as Chairperson of ASEAN, the Philippines had convened a high-level forum on decent work in the platform economy in February 2026, providing an opportunity for Member States and partners to exchange views on policy approaches to digital labour platforms. He also welcomed the recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism. With respect to the 115th Session of the Conference in 2027, he said that ASEAN welcomed the first discussion on chemical hazards and looked forward to the recurrent discussion on social protection, which remained an important policy priority for the region.
48. The group took note of the items under consideration for future sessions of the Conference, including the proposed standard-setting item on ergonomics and manual handling and the revision of instruments concerning the guarding of machinery. He further noted the proposals for general discussions on the labour market implications of demographic change, including intergenerational solidarity and decent work for older workers. He highlighted that countries in the region were experiencing demographic transitions at different speeds, with some facing ageing populations while others maintained relatively young workforces, with important implications for labour market policies, skills development and social protection systems.
49. He emphasized the value of continued dialogue and exchange of experiences to support inclusive labour markets across generations. He also underscored the importance of continued discussions on strengthening social protection for migrant workers, including with regard to the portability of social security benefits, noting that this remained an area of shared interest as Member States advanced their respective approaches. In that context, he recognized the challenges faced by migrant workers in accessing and maintaining social protection and supported continued dialogue and cooperation on this issue. He further noted the growing relevance of other issues that the Governing Body might wish to consider for future discussions, including decent work in supply chains, protection of workers' personal data in the digital era and protection of whistle-blowers in the public service.
50. With regard to the draft decision, he said that ASEAN remained open to further discussions on the timing of standard-setting on ergonomics and manual handling and looked forward to consultations among constituents on the most appropriate scheduling of this item.
51. **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

and Georgia, as well as Norway. He expressed strong support for a strategic and coherent approach to agenda-setting and emphasized the importance of ensuring adequate preparation time, flexibility and meaningful tripartite engagement in the decision-making process. He also reaffirmed support for the mandate of Standards Review Mechanism and its role in maintaining a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards.

52. Recalling that a safe and healthy working environment is one of the fundamental principles and rights at work, the EU and its Member States supported a standard-setting discussion on ergonomics and manual handling, as recommended by the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group, and were in favour of including this item on the agenda of the 117th (2029) and 118th (2030) Sessions of the Conference. He added that his group remained open to the possibility of scheduling a future standard-setting discussion on decent work in global supply chains. With respect to the revision of instruments concerning the guarding of machinery, he said that his group supported a single standard-setting discussion preceded by a tripartite meeting of experts, provided that this approach remained compatible with ongoing reform processes.
53. He further expressed support in principle for a general discussion on the labour market implications of demographic change, including intergenerational solidarity, age-disaggregated employment impacts and decent work for older workers, noting the increasing relevance of this issue in the context of ageing populations and evolving labour market dynamics. He also supported further examination of the protection of workers' personal data in the digital era and the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service.
54. He emphasized the EU and its Member States' commitment to constructive engagement in the ILO's normative and policy processes and underscored the need for a balanced, flexible and inclusive approach to agenda-setting, ensuring that discussions were well prepared, evidence-based and aligned with the Organization's strategic priorities, including in the context of ongoing ILO reforms.
55. **Speaking on behalf of the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)**, a Government representative of Oman said that his group supported standard-setting on the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service. He noted the existing national legislation in GCC countries, which already addressed this matter through criminal law, provisions applicable to public officials and auditing, and that public officials were under a legal obligation to report misconduct. In that context, he emphasized the importance of ensuring appropriate legal protection for whistle-blowers as a natural extension of existing legislative frameworks.
56. Turning to the labour market implications of demographic change and intergenerational solidarity, he said that his group recognized the significance of these issues and expressed readiness to engage actively in any future meetings of experts or tripartite consultations. He indicated that the GCC countries would support the inclusion of these topics on the agenda of forthcoming Conference sessions as early as possible.
57. On the protection of migrant workers, he underscored the importance of strengthening and expanding inclusive social protection systems to address existing gaps. He noted ongoing efforts in the region, including collaboration with the ILO and national labour ministries, to improve governance frameworks and mitigate risks associated with migrant employment. In that regard, he emphasized the value of building on existing initiatives and drawing lessons from current practices in order to enhance protection for migrant workers.

58. With respect to ergonomics and manual handling, he said that his group expressed support for considering this item for standard-setting. He added that, while recognizing the need to prioritize among agenda items, his group remained open to discussions on the range of topics proposed, including those related to small and medium-sized enterprises.
59. **A Government representative of Barbados** said that his comments were framed in the context of the ongoing institutional reforms within the ILO. In that regard, he emphasized the importance of not missing opportunities for standard-setting discussions and expressed support for initiating the first discussion on ergonomics and manual handling in 2029, followed by a second discussion in 2030.
60. He recalled previous discussions on decent work in global supply chains and noted that a compromise had been reached to consider this matter in 2030. He further highlighted a number of important issues for future consideration by the Conference, including the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service and the need to close coverage gaps and ensure the portability of social protection for migrant workers and their families. He emphasized that the latter was of particular importance for Caribbean Community Member States in the context of advancing full freedom of movement. In that connection, he informed that Barbados, Belize, Dominica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had established a regime of full free movement among their countries as of 1 October 2025.
61. He stressed that the most pressing issue was the labour market implications of demographic change. He noted that Caribbean countries were facing ageing and declining populations, with significant consequences for labour markets and the sustainability of social security systems. Referring to Barbados, he indicated that the country was approaching the status of a super-aged society and had undertaken substantial reforms of its national insurance scheme to address these challenges. He suggested that elements relating to social protection portability and migration could be considered within the broader discussion on demographic change. In light of the importance of this issue, he expressed support for including this item on the agenda of the Conference in 2028.
62. He also underscored the growing importance of protecting workers' personal data in the context of rapid technological developments and digitalization. Subject to the outcome of the ongoing standard-setting discussion on the platform economy and allowing time for assessment, he considered that 2029 would be an appropriate timing for including this issue on the Conference agenda.
63. **A Government representative of Brazil** said that her Government expressed flexibility concerning the options for the inclusion of a standard-setting item on ergonomics and manual handling. In that respect, Brazil was prepared to support either option of the decision point, taking into account the need to ensure a balanced workload for both the Office and constituents.
64. Turning to the protection of whistle-blowers in the world of work, particularly in the public sector, she emphasized that this was an issue of growing importance at both the international and national levels. She noted that Brazil had been actively engaging with civil society, including in examining relevant developments such as the EU directive on whistle-blowers, and stressed that recent experiences had highlighted the need for continued attention to identifying and addressing gaps in protection. In that regard, she underscored the essential role of whistle-blowers in safeguarding transparency, democracy and the rule of law.
65. She said that Brazil looked forward to the inclusion of a general discussion on the protection of whistle-blowers on the agenda of a future session of the Conference, preferably following

the completion of appropriate preparatory work, including a tripartite meeting of experts. She considered that such a process would enable a comprehensive exchange of national practices and support an informed assessment of the need for further ILO action.

66. **A Government representative of the United States of America** said that discussions in recent years had been overly focused on new standard-setting to the detriment of other important Conference discussions. It was not necessary to undertake standard-setting at every session of the Conference and, in some years, the absence of a need for new instruments could be a positive outcome, allowing the Organization to focus on other priorities through well-structured discussions, including the effective supervision of existing labour standards and targeted technical assistance and guidance to constituents. Real impact depended on turning commitments into tangible improvements for workers and employers on the ground, and standards were only truly realized when they were implemented in practice. He reiterated that his Government did not support the inclusion of two standard-setting items in the same year, except in rare and exceptional circumstances, as this could undermine the quality of outcomes. He further stressed that standard-setting processes should generally follow a double-discussion procedure and should not be rushed.
67. On the proposals contained in the paper, his Government opposed the development of an ILO standard on supply chains. The ILO's resources would be better directed towards action that could make a concrete impact on the ground, including the implementation of existing efforts and effective practices of Member States, such as support for the enforcement of labour rights provisions in trade and investment agreements, the implementation and enforcement of bans on the import of goods made with forced labour, and further research on labour rights violations in the production of goods. His Government also did not support a general discussion on social protection for migrant workers, noting that social protection was scheduled as a recurrent discussion at the 115th Session of the Conference in 2027 and that 2028 might therefore be too soon to address a specific subtopic in that area. Furthermore, he voiced concern regarding the proposed framing of that discussion, including the proposal to develop outcomes in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, which he said were a soft form of global governance that his Government could not support.
68. His Government also had significant concerns that other possible future agenda items of the International Labour Conference were framed in the Office paper with a focus on climate and other concepts that it considered divisive. He urged the Office to avoid promoting divisive ideologies and to focus on the Organization's core mandate in framing future agenda items of the Conference. His Government had listened with interest to the Employers' proposals on MSMEs and entrepreneurship and would be open to considering further proposals from the Office on those topics.
69. **A Government representative of Uzbekistan** said that the selection of agenda items was a strategic exercise, as it shaped both the future direction of the Organization and possible areas for standard-setting. It was therefore important to ensure that the agenda remained balanced, focused and responsive to actual developments in labour markets.
70. She took note of the proposed items, including those related to occupational safety and health, and supported continued work in that area in view of its direct relevance to the protection of workers. At the same time, she underlined the importance of maintaining social protection as a central cross-cutting priority. As labour markets evolved, extending social protection coverage to workers in all forms of employment, including new and non-standard forms, was essential for sustainable development. In that regard, she supported consideration of the platform economy, which was a rapidly expanding segment of the labour market that created

income opportunities while also raising important policy questions. She considered that further discussion on that topic would be valuable, with a focus on practical solutions, including improved data-sharing, exchanges of national experience and approaches to extending social protection coverage while preserving flexibility and room for national policy innovation.

71. She also considered that the implications of digital transformation, including the growing use of AI in the world of work, deserved greater attention in the Conference agenda. AI was already influencing job creation, working conditions and labour market dynamics, and there was a need for informed and forward-looking discussions on how to harness its benefits while addressing potential risks. With regard to other areas, including the labour market implications of demographic change and coverage gaps, as well as the portability of social protection for migrant workers and their families, she recognized the relevance of those issues and supported continued dialogue and exchange of experience among Member States.
72. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) said that the Office had taken note of the guidance provided and of the new proposals that had been raised, which would be developed further in the paper to be submitted for discussion in November, when the Governing Body would have an opportunity to provide additional comments.
73. With regard to standard-setting on ergonomics and manual handling, and in relation to the possibility of postponing the decision, she drew attention to paragraph 21 of the Office paper, where the Office had indicated that taking a late decision would place the Office in a difficult position as regards preparing quality papers in time for the discussion. She also noted that the meeting of experts on ergonomics had been scheduled for April 2027, which had already been decided upon, pending availability of funding to be discussed in GB.356/POL/3.
74. With regard to the labour market implications of demographic change, she recalled that a recurrent discussion on employment was already foreseen for 2028 and that scheduling both items in the same year would create overlap and would also call on the same department to service two important committee discussions.
75. On the guarding of machinery, she recalled that the global occupational safety and health strategy adopted in November 2023 included, under output 1.3.3, a review of the code of practice on the safety of machinery, which would logically follow the adoption of new standards on that subject. With regard to the need for a meeting of experts, the paper had proposed such a meeting in the event that the Governing Body was considering a single discussion. If the Governing Body were to consider a double discussion, there would be no real need for a meeting of experts, since standards already existed and there were sufficient comparative knowledge and expertise on the subject.
76. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the increasing interest shown in the protection of whistle-blowers. Recalling that an earlier meeting on whistle-blowers in the public sector had recommended the further development of normative and non-normative measures, the group proposed that the Office prepare a discussion for the Governing Body, preferably in November but, if necessary, in March, in order to explore how the matter might be further developed.
77. Furthermore, she clarified that the meeting of experts on ergonomics was scheduled to take place after the March session of the Governing Body. In her view, the meeting would in any event be very helpful in further developing the scope of the item and the issues relevant to future standard-setting.
78. The group welcomed the support expressed by a number of governments for a single discussion on the guarding of machinery, together with a preparatory technical meeting. The

Workers considered it necessary to move forward on issues for which such an approach was appropriate and that, by way of exception, it should be allowed. In the light of the institutional priority attached to follow-up to the Standards Review Mechanism, the Workers could support placing the item on the agenda in 2029 and 2030, on the understanding that the experts' meeting to be held in April 2027 would feed into the preparation of the instrument.

79. **The Employer spokesperson** said that, for his group, the standard-setting agenda of the ILO lay within its core mandate and that discussion of priorities in that regard was therefore extremely important. Resource constraints affecting delegations had to be taken into account and, in that context, there should not be two standard-setting items in the same year. He stressed that standard-setting was not the only aspect of the Organization's normative function and that giving effect to standards and ensuring their implementation at the local level were equally important. Proceeding by default to new standard-setting without adequate regard to resources and context would risk undermining the quality of the Organization's work. He indicated that his group supported the inclusion of standard-setting on ergonomics and manual handling in the agenda of the Conference for 2030 and 2031.
80. He stressed the importance of MSMEs to the global economy and their role as engines of decent work. He noted that such enterprises not only offered significant potential for decent work but also operated close to informality. MSMEs had not been the subject of discussion for more than a decade, and he urged that the matter be developed further for the Governing Body in November. On social protection for migrant workers, the group emphasized that the issue could at least partly be covered or incorporated into the discussion on social protection scheduled for the following year. On the topic of whistle-blowing, the group reiterated the Employers' opposition to a Conference discussion on the issue and emphasized that, if the subject were pursued at all, it should be limited to the public sector. On the guarding of machinery, the group reiterated that, if a matter was important enough to merit a standard, it was important enough to merit two discussions. There were no small issues coming before the International Labour Conference, particularly in a standard-setting context, and such matters should be given the attention they deserved.
81. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of the Niger expressed the group's preference for standard-setting on ergonomics and manual handling starting in 2029, while maintaining flexibility.
82. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus indicated a preference for a normative discussion on ergonomic and manual handling in 2029 and 2030.
83. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Australia indicated that the group remained flexible on both options outlined in the decision point.
84. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom indicated that the group supported the first paragraph of the decision point but remained flexible.
85. **Speaking on behalf of the GCC countries**, a Government representative of Oman indicated a preference for standard-setting on ergonomic and manual handling starting in 2030.
86. **A Government representative of Brazil** indicated that her Government had a preference for 2029 and 2030. She further invited the Office to provide its views, noting that it would bear the main workload.
87. **A Government representative of the United States** indicated that his Government would support placing the item on the agenda of the Conference in 2030 and 2031.

88. **A Government representative of Uzbekistan** indicated that her Government remained flexible.
89. **The representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) indicated that the Office would be in a position to prepare the necessary documentation for standard-setting commencing in either 2029 or 2030.
90. **The Employer spokesperson** indicated that, from the group's perspective, moving forward with 2029 would amount to business as usual and that 2030 was the more rational option in the current circumstances and given the relative urgency of the proposed standard-setting item. However, in the spirit of consensus, the group would agree to the scheduling of the item in 2029 and 2030.

Decision

91. **The Governing Body:**
 - (a) **decided to place on the agenda of the 117th Session (2029) and 118th Session (2030) of the International Labour Conference an item on ergonomics and manual handling for standard-setting on the basis of a double discussion;**
 - (b) **requested the Office to take into account the guidance provided in preparing the document concerning the agenda of future sessions of the Conference for its 358th Session (November 2026).**

(GB.356/INS/2/1, paragraph 35)

2.2. Update on the arrangements for the 114th Session (2026) of the Conference (GB.356/INS/2/2(Rev.1))

92. **The Employer spokesperson**, emphasizing that coordination, communication and teamwork would be key to the successful organization of the Conference session, particularly in the current difficult circumstances, said that he trusted the Office to designate clear focal points to address emergency and urgent questions. He welcomed the steps taken to enable remote participation at the sittings of the Committee on the Application of Standards. Noting the cancellation of the forum of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, he highlighted that such decisions should be taken in consultation with the groups' secretariats and the Coalition's coordination group. Concerning the programme, the General Discussion Committee on a Transformative Agenda for Gender Equality at Work should conclude half a day earlier to mirror the arrangements for the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Social Dialogue and Tripartism. He supported the draft decision.
93. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the Office's efforts to organize the Conference across three venues. She requested that all group meetings – particularly those related to the Committee on the Application of Standards, in which large numbers of worker representatives were involved – be held in rooms with adequate capacity, and she sought clarification as to whether the meeting rooms in the temporary building at the ILO would be available. Her group supported the accreditation and registration procedures outlined in the document. Acknowledging the efforts made to reduce costs by limiting interpretation services after 10 p.m., her group requested to explore alternative solutions to ensure inclusivity and the full engagement of all delegates.
94. The cancellation of the Global Coalition forum was regrettable, and she wished to know what was being planned in its place. Social justice lay at the heart of the ILO's mandate and formed

the basis for the fundamental principles and rights at work. She asked what were the next steps for the Global Coalition and how the Office intended to give effect to the follow-up to the Doha Declaration. Her group strongly supported the ILO Integrity Hotline. It agreed that in the absence of a decision by the Credentials Committee to accept the credentials of delegates from Myanmar, the Governing Body's November 2024 recommendation in that regard remained valid. She reiterated her group's support for the decisions set out in the document regarding the suspension of provisions of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference in relation to the status of the State of Palestine, and she supported the draft decision.

95. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Senegal welcomed the plans to provide a shuttle service between the venues and the option of remote participation in the Conference. In the interest of efficiency, his group supported the proposal to consider the withdrawal of the Labour Standards (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 83), in a plenary sitting, as well as the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference to enable the effective implementation of the 2025 resolution on the status of Palestine; a necessary step if the delegation of the State of Palestine was to exercise fully its rights and privileges, particularly its right to address the Conference and to submit motions.
96. The cancellation of the high-level segment was regrettable and should not set a precedent, since such segments contributed significantly to raising the Conference's visibility. He wished to know what would happen with regard to the planned events, particularly the forum of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, to ensure their longevity. He expressed particular support for the high-level event to promote the ratification of the 1986 Instrument for the Amendment of the ILO Constitution, which was vital for a modern, more just and more inclusive ILO, and supported the draft decision.
97. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh voiced his group's support for the draft decision.
98. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with her statement: Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Switzerland. She expressed surprise at the cancellation of the Global Coalition forum and sought clarification as to when and why that decision had been taken; what savings would be made as a result; whether the forum, or a similar event, would be organized on another date, and in what format; what would be the Conference's programme of work on the day of the cancelled event; what would be the impact of the cancellation on the Global Coalition's key interventions and whether any changes to the Advisory Board or core group meetings were planned. The forum's cancellation was not in line with the guidance provided by the Governing Body at its 355th Session. If the high-level segment was cancelled or scaled down for cost-saving reasons, clarification would be welcome on the arrangements for the June session of the Governing Body, so that its work could be organized effectively given the particularly heavy agenda anticipated for that session.
99. **Speaking on behalf of the Arab group**, a Government representative of Qatar welcomed the planned holding of the Conference across three venues and the related logistical measures. It was, however, important to boost communication with participants, providing clear, continuously updated information to avoid confusion. The arrangements must be subject to ongoing monitoring throughout the session and delegates' feedback used to inform improvements. The measures outlined in the document to implement the 2025 resolution to strengthen the participation of the State of Palestine and social partners in the Organization were welcome; the implementation of that resolution enhanced the ILO's credibility and

affirmed its role in consolidating the representation of all parts of the State of Palestine, including the most marginalized groups. It also lay at the heart of efforts to ensure the equitable implementation of peace and reconstruction plans and to strengthen the labour market. He supported the draft decision.

100. **A Government representative of Brazil** expressed her Government's deep regret at the absence of the Global Coalition forum from the Conference's revised programme of work; that omission was not aligned with the consensus reached at the Governing Body's November 2025 session, which had envisioned a format similar to the previous Conference session. She requested clarification regarding its cancellation, which risked undermining the Coalition's momentum and could discourage engagement by current and future partners. She requested the forum's reinstatement on the Conference's programme or, if it was not possible, assurances that the exceptional circumstances cited would not result in its permanent cancellation, but rather a flexible solution that preserved the Coalition's visibility and essential contribution to the ILO's strategic goals. Her Government supported the suspension of the provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference as set out in subparagraph (b) of the draft decision; that step constituted a logical consequence of the 2025 resolution.
101. **A Government representative of the United States** expressed concern at the recommendation to suspend provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference in relation to Palestinian rights and privileges. All parties should focus on the swift and successful implementation of President Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza. Hamas must disarm, and Gaza must be demilitarized and deradicalized, before progress could be made towards reconstruction. Durable peace in the region could be achieved only through the plan's implementation, with the security of Israel guaranteed and a path forward determined for Palestinians in Gaza, without Hamas. Considering that the implementation of the 2025 resolution would not advance efforts towards durable peace, his Government could not support subparagraph (b) of the draft decision.
102. **A Government representative of Colombia** said that his Government had been surprised at the cancellation of the Global Coalition forum given that, since the Coalition's creation, the event had offered an excellent opportunity to exchange experiences and brought Heads of State and other high-level officials together to demonstrate their support for social justice. The forum should therefore be reinstated at the 114th Session of the Conference; its cancellation would not lead to effective cost savings and had not been subject to consultation with Coalition members. The forum should remain an in-person event to avoid losing relevance and discouraging Coalition members; the fact that it took place in Geneva was a strong draw for new members. The Global Coalition should be maintained and encouraged to meet specific objectives, something which would be assisted by holding an in-person forum during the Conference or seeking in-person alternatives.
103. **A Government representative of the Philippines** underscored the continued importance of maintaining the strong political visibility of the Global Coalition, which was a central platform for advancing the ILO's mandate on social justice in a rapidly changing world of work. The Conference should continue to provide opportunities for highlighting and sustaining the momentum of the Coalition, to which her Government remained firmly committed.
104. **A Government representative of the State of Palestine**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, recalled that the suspension of provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference had been agreed by the Governing Body in November 2024 and at the previous Conference session; a procedural matter on which consensus had been reached should not constitute an obstacle.

He called on the President of the United States to pressure the occupying Power to implement the peace plan, as well as UN Security Council resolution 2803 of 2025. The State of Palestine wished to partner with the ILO to achieve a world that was more equitable, stable and respectful of human rights in the workplace. Similar action had been taken at other UN agencies, and the ILO's Office of Legal Services and the Governing Body were aware of the matter; he had therefore hoped that the delegation of the United States would take a positive view of the proposals set out in the document.

- 105. A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, External and Corporate Relations) explained that the decision to cancel the Global Coalition forum had been taken in recent days because the ongoing cost containment efforts had led the Office to recommend focusing the 114th Session of the Conference on the work of the plenary and the Conference committees. The decision to cancel the forum had been taken based on geopolitical developments and consultations on the ILO reform process. There had been insufficient time to consult with the tripartite constituents or the Coalition's Coordinating Group; efforts would be made to consult more thoroughly in future. The proposed arrangements for the Conference would be finalized based on the outcome of the current debate, and the way forward was for the Governing Body to decide. There were plans to hold the forum in a virtual format, possibly in September 2026, to ensure members' full and effective participation. No in-person event was proposed for 2026. It was not anticipated that the cancellation would have a significant effect on the Conference's work. The Office proposed holding an additional Governing Body sitting on the Friday afternoon of the second week should the Conference conclude its work beforehand, as expected.
- 106. Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Official Relations, Meetings and Language Services Department) said that although the meeting rooms in the temporary building would not be available, the necessary arrangements would be made, in consultation with the group secretariats, including the possibility of using the Governing Body room. Orientation sessions would be held on the first few days of the Conference, and staff would be available to guide delegates. Additional support would be provided by the Swiss Government and the local authorities in Geneva. Concerning the programme of work, it was planned to consider in plenary the reports of at least two committees on Thursday, 11 June, and the remainder in the morning of Friday, 12 June, in order to hold a sitting of the Governing Body in the afternoon. Alternatively, that Governing Body sitting could take place on the Thursday morning. Consultations would take place in the finalization of the programme to ensure the best use of time during the second week of the Conference.
- 107. The Director-General** stressed that the Governing Body's feedback would be taken into account. During consultations on the ILO reform, some Governing Body members had suggested cutting the Conference session to one week; while he did not believe that such a step was feasible, the Office had considered removing the high-level segment from the agenda of the 113th Session in the light of questions from Governing Body members surrounding the logistics of inviting Heads of State and other high-level officials to take part. On that occasion it had been decided to hold the segment in the form of the Global Coalition forum. The same debate had taken place during preparations for the 2026 session of the Conference and had brought to light many different elements for consideration; that complexity had led to the decision not to hold the forum on a trial basis for one year. Although it was true that the high-level segment acted as an incentive for high-level officials to attend the Conference, the proposals made during the ILO reform process must be considered by weighing benefits against drawbacks. The proposal was not to eradicate the forum, but to hold it online in 2026, preferably in September subject to the approval of the Coalition's Coordinating Group. An

assessment of the online arrangements for the forum compared with previous years' modalities would be presented to the Governing Body at its November 2026 session. He reiterated that none of the changes lessened the ILO's drive to bring about social justice.

- 108. A Government representative of the United States** reiterated that his Government could not agree to the draft decision and requested that it be put to a vote.

(The decision was adopted with 49 votes in favour, 1 vote against and 4 abstentions.)

- 109. A Government representative of Hungary** said that her Government wished to disassociate itself from the decision given its position on the participation rights of the State of Palestine.

Decision

110. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the updated information concerning the arrangements for the 114th Session;**
- (b) **recommended that the Conference suspend the provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference set out in Appendix II to document GB.356/INS/2/2(Rev.1) for its 114th Session (2026).**

(GB.356/INS/2/2(Rev.1), paragraph 28)

3. Results of the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2024–25 and proposed outline of the Action Plan 2026–29 (GB.356/INS/3)

- 111.** The Governing Body had before it an amendment to the draft decision, proposed by the Government of the United States and circulated by the Office, which read:

35. The Governing Body ~~decided~~ ~~requested the Director-General to:~~

- (a) the name of the general discussion to be held by the International Labour Conference at its 114th Session (2026) would be "Advancing the transformative agenda for equality between women and men at work";

~~and requested the Director-General to:~~

- (~~ba~~) finalize and implement the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality Between Women and Men 2026–29, based on the guidance provided during the consideration of document GB.356/INS/3;
- (~~cb~~) integrate its guidance in pursuing the ILO's mandate to achieve gender equality, i.e. equality between women and men, at work through a transformative agenda, taking into account the outcomes of the general discussion on advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality between women and men at work to be held by the International Labour Conference at its 114th Session (2026) and the conclusions concerning decent work in the care economy adopted by the Conference at its 112th Session (2024), especially when implementing the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–29 and the corresponding programmes and budgets.

(As the amendment was not supported by other Governing Body members, it was not discussed.)

- 112. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the Office for the report and recalled the continued relevance of gender equality in light of persistent inequalities in the world of work. She emphasized that gender equality remains central to the ILO's mandate and its constitutional foundations. As such it should continue to be treated as a cross-cutting priority across the entire Organization and should not be negatively affected by the ongoing reform and possible budget constraints. The ILO's leadership role in promoting gender equality must be preserved.

113. She welcomed the progress achieved, noting that the proportion of targets met had increased, including improvements in staffing, substance and structure, and in reinforcing the Office's capacity to deliver on policy outcomes. She highlighted the increase in women's representation at the P4 level and above as a positive development and stressed the need to sustain progress through strong leadership and accountability. She said that continued and strengthened efforts were necessary in the area of capacity-building, where half of the targets remained unmet, and to address the continued under-representation of women in delegations to the Conference and regional meetings. She acknowledged the responsibility of her group in this regard, while recognizing the important work achieved with workers' organizations in promoting gender equality. She expressed concern about the sharp decline in gender-responsive Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), attributed in part to the limited or late involvement of gender specialists. She called for their systematic engagement from the earliest stages of programme design and requested clarification on how the Office would reverse this trend. She said that the gender marker should be used as a priority tool across the Office.
114. Regarding the proposed Action Plan for 2026–29, she supported the overall approach and pointed out the need to reflect the lessons learned when delivering services to constituents. She welcomed the alignment with United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Phase 3.0 (UN-SWAP 3.0), including the indicator on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment. She noted the challenges related to the indicator on stakeholder engagement, given the ILO's tripartite governance structure; supported limiting the number of indicators to 42; and emphasized the importance of considering the forthcoming Conference general discussion on advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality at work when implementing the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–29 and the programmes and budgets for the same period. She supported the draft decision.
115. **The Employer spokesperson** welcomed the overall improvement in achievements compared to the previous cycle. She highlighted progress in women's representation at senior levels, including at the P5 level, while emphasizing that progress should not be assessed solely on numerical parity and that merit-based recruitment should be maintained. She identified areas requiring further attention, including capacity-building and women's participation in training activities, and encouraged strengthened efforts, including through cooperation projects and engagement of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV). She expressed concern about the decline in DWCPs that integrate gender equality due to insufficient involvement of gender equality experts at the design phase, and called for improved coordination and greater vigilance by the Office. She encouraged delegations to improve women's representation during the Conference and regional meetings and highlighted that employers' organizations, through the International Organisation of Employers and ACT/EMP, were investing in strengthening the pipeline of women leaders. Such a structural approach was merit-based and contributed to increasing the pool of qualified women participating in global and regional processes.
116. Regarding the forthcoming Action Plan, she encouraged the use of participation in the training courses run by the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) as one of the key indicators. She said that recognizing the engagement of the social partners was important, as was strengthening qualitative indicators. She pointed out that the independent evaluation found that the ILO lagged behind some comparable United Nations (UN) entities in implementing UN-SWAP 2.0 and suggested that the Office could draw on the experience of other bodies in the UN system to improve its performance. She encouraged the Office to pursue a proactive dialogue with UN Women in respect of the indicator on stakeholder

engagement as employers' organizations were not external stakeholders, but part of the ILO's governance structure. She requested clarification on the number and prioritization of indicators under UN-SWAP 3.0 and supported the draft decision.

- 117. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of the Congo recognized the overall positive trend and the increase in targets met from 56 per cent to 74 per cent. He identified areas requiring further attention, including the empowerment of women and capacity-building, and encouraged continued cooperation with UN Women to accelerate progress. He called for strengthened efforts to expand the participation of women in capacity-building activities, including through the Turin Centre. His group expected the Office to maintain momentum, draw on lessons learned and integrate the outcomes of the general discussion on advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality at work. The Africa group supported the draft decision.
- 118. Speaking on behalf of the 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, Republic of Moldova, Iceland and Norway. She thanked the Office for the comprehensive report and the proposed outline for the Action Plan 2026–29. She underscored the importance of gender equality as a cornerstone of social justice and a fundamental principle and right at work. While welcoming the positive progress achieved, including improvements in gender-responsive evaluation and coordination with the UN system, she noted that challenges remained, including budgetary constraints, fragmented responsibilities and uneven leadership engagement.
- 119.** She expressed concern regarding the decline in the integration of gender equality in DWCPs and called for the Office to ensure early and systematic involvement of experts on gender equality and to address capacity and resource constraints. She mentioned gaps in capacity and the uneven application of the gender marker, noting that the ILO continued to lag behind the wider United Nations system in relation to performance against UN-SWAP 2.0. She encouraged continued efforts to promote more balanced representation and gender parity in official meetings, and underlined the importance of international standards for advancing gender equality in the world of work, including broader ratification of standards to prevent and address violence and harassment. She looked forward to the finalization and implementation of the Action Plan 2026–29 in support of the ILO's transformative agenda for gender equality at work.
- 120. Speaking on behalf of 31 countries,**² a Government representative of the United Kingdom welcomed the progress achieved and the continued positioning of gender equality as a core, cross-cutting institutional priority, but expressed concern regarding the decline in gender-responsive DWCPs. She encouraged the Office to ensure early involvement of gender specialists in the design of DWCPs, stronger accountability, adequate resourcing, and deeper integration of gender equality into core systems and processes. She welcomed the proposed 2026–29 Action Plan, including its focus on preventing and addressing sexual abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment, and alignment with UN-SWAP 3.0 and the UN's Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. She stated the importance of data and analysis to capture the intersectional barriers faced by women in the world of work and encouraged the ILO to expand data disaggregation beyond sex and gender. She stressed that financial constraints should not

² Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and United Kingdom.

undermine gender equality efforts and requested information on how the final action plan would align with the UN-SWAP 3.0 and the UN Gender Equality Acceleration Plan while maintaining indicators that reflect the ILO's specific mandate and tripartite structure. She supported the draft decision.

121. **Speaking on behalf of a group of countries,**³ a Government representative of Australia stated that gender equality and women's empowerment in the world of work is an intrinsic element of the ILO's core mandate on social justice. She commended the Office's leadership and accountability in strengthening capacity to mainstream gender equality across all its activities, staffing and structure. She welcomed the proposed direction for the 2026–29 Action Plan, including the continuous focus on gender mainstreaming across the ILO's normative, operational and institutional work. She emphasized the need to combat discrimination, stereotypes and all types of violence and noted the role of ILO's normative and programmatic approach. Her group reaffirmed its commitment to advancing gender equality and promoting the empowerment of all women in the world of work. She supported the draft decision.
122. **A Government representative of India** welcomed the emphasis placed on addressing structural barriers, consistent with India's development approach of putting women at the centre of policy efforts. He highlighted national efforts, including labour law reforms, social protection and women's economic empowerment initiatives. Such reforms aimed to support formalization and reduce labour market segmentation while encouraging greater participation of women. In concluding, he reaffirmed India's commitment to working with the ILO and its Member States to advance policies aimed at removing barriers to women's participation, promoting decent work, and strengthening women's economic empowerment.
123. **A Government representative of Brazil** said the document reflected a commendable effort and a renewed commitment to equality. She highlighted the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) as a key tool for advancing equal pay. In Brazil, EPIC was a central pillar of the equality agenda and had provided the technical support and exchange network needed for the implementation of the national equal pay law. She encouraged other countries to join the initiative and supported the draft decision.
124. **A Government representative of United States** said his Government was committed to the empowerment of women and non-discrimination and equality in the world of work. He urged continuous efforts to meet unmet targets. However, his Government could not support the use of the term gender in the text of the draft decision without further definition of the term and proposed an amendment. He requested a more precise use of language when discussing equality between men and women in the world of work, while opposing references to the Sustainable Development Goals and the use of quotas, targets or goals for participation based on sex. He urged that the proposed Action Plan remain focused on delivering on the ILO's core mandate, with effective and efficient delivery of the fundamental principles and right work.
125. **A Government representative of Colombia** emphasized that equality and non-discrimination are fundamental principles of the ILO's mandate and highlighted the importance of inclusive policies, disaggregated data, and the role of social dialogue and tripartism. He said that the 2026–29 Action Plan should continue to reflect a cross-cutting approach that considered the different types of inequalities affecting people at work, including those related to gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and socio-economic status. He called for the

³ Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Türkiye and Australia.

strengthening of gender mainstreaming, adequate financing and stronger international cooperation, including South–South and triangular cooperation.

126. **A Government representative of Hungary** underscored the importance of equality between women and men for economic growth and development. She emphasized that equal access to employment, fair wages and career advancement are essential for strengthening economic growth and creating a more balanced and resilient workforce. She expressed appreciation for the efforts of the ILO in promoting equality worldwide and noted that Hungary's approach emphasizes the importance of equality between women and men, ensuring that they both enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in the labour market.
127. **A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** welcomed the progress made, and expressed strong support for the proposed outline of the 2026–29 Action Plan and its alignment with UN-SWAP 3.0 and the UN Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. He highlighted national efforts to promote equal opportunities and women's economic empowerment, protect women's rights and expand access to skills, leadership and decent employment, including measures to expand maternity protection. He expressed that he looked forward to the effective implementation of the Action Plan.
128. **A representative of the Director-General** (Department Director) recalled that the Gender Equality Action Plan was prepared and implemented periodically, as mandated. There had been several iterations of the action plan aiming to address gender equality in terms of substance, staffing and structure. She noted the overall improvement in results, while acknowledging the sharp decline in gender integration in DWCPs, which was attributed to the late or insufficient involvement of gender specialists in the programme design as well as resource constraints.
129. She said that, in a context of continued financial uncertainty, the Office would strengthen the early and systematic integration of gender specialists in DWCP consultations and project design, including through revised review processes involving the Partnerships Department. She emphasized the need to reinforce institutional capacity, including the gender network and staff capacities, integrate gender equality into core planning and budgeting processes for 2026–29, and provide targeted capacity-building for constituents, while prioritizing the use of the gender marker. She confirmed that the number of indicators would be limited to 42, aligned with UN-SWAP 3.0. She clarified that the terminology used was consistent with the guidance of ILO supervisory bodies in relation to the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), as well as with International Labour Conference decisions and existing ILO standards.
130. **A Government representative of the United States** reiterated his Government's concern about the use of the term "gender equality" and the rejection of the draft decision as drafted. He requested that it be put to a vote.
131. **A Government representative of Libya** supported the position expressed by the United States and the request for a vote.
(The decision was adopted with 46 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 2 abstentions.)
132. **A Government representative of the United States** reiterated his Government's support for equality between men and women, while maintaining his objection to the terminology used by the Office and to the involvement of UN Women in the Action Plan. The United States did not support quotas, special measures or approaches based on structural barriers.

Decision

133. The Governing Body requested the Director-General to:

- (a) **finalize and implement the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2026–29, based on the guidance provided during the consideration of document GB.356/INS/3;**
- (b) **integrate its guidance in pursuing the ILO’s mandate to achieve gender equality at work through a transformative agenda, taking into account the outcomes of the general discussion on advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality at work to be held by the International Labour Conference at its 114th Session (2026) and the conclusions concerning decent work in the care economy adopted by the Conference at its 112th Session (2024), especially when implementing the ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2026–29 and the corresponding programmes and budgets.**

(GB.356/INS/3, paragraph 35)

4. Review of the implementation of the strategy to give effect to the resolution concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work (GB.356/INS/4)

134. The Governing Body had before it an amendment to subparagraph (b) of the draft decision, proposed by the Africa group and circulated by the Office, which read:

- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account the evaluation of the strategy, and the guidance provided during the discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform, when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources.

135. The Employer spokesperson reaffirmed strong support for efforts to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work. She noted progress, including technical assistance and employer-focused initiatives, and emphasized the need to strengthen measurable workplace impact, including clearer outcome indicators and sustainability. While ratification was an important step, she stressed that effective implementation required legal clarity and called for more systematic, tripartite pre-ratification reviews, including employer involvement, particularly regarding proportionality for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). She underlined the importance of robust and coherent data frameworks, including in development cooperation programmes, noting that initiatives such as Better Work should align with the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and national systems without creating parallel compliance expectations.

136. She also emphasized the importance of maintaining conceptual clarity regarding Convention No. 190, noting that it is not a fundamental principle and right at work, and that its integration within occupational safety and health (OSH) frameworks should avoid duplication and ensure coherence with existing legal obligations. She further emphasized the need for clear prioritization in the next phase of work, in light of resource constraints, including a focus on high-impact areas, consolidation and harmonization of existing tools, and alignment with the Office reform process and the programme and budget. The Employers’ group could support the draft decision, but wished to first hear the explanation of the Africa group on the amendment.

137. The Worker spokesperson recalled her group’s strong engagement in promoting the ratification and implementation of Convention No. 190 and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206). She noted that resource constraints had affected the pace

of implementation and stressed the need for continued prioritization, including in the context of the ILO reform. She welcomed progress achieved, including 54 ratifications, ongoing legislative reforms, high reporting rates and active social partner engagement, and emphasized the importance of advancing ratification and implementation in parallel.

- 138.** She welcomed efforts to address data gaps and called for strengthened, disaggregated data collection, including through a second global survey to capture emerging risks. She also welcomed expanded research, including on OSH, supply chains and vulnerable groups, as well as work on labour inspection, access to justice, the informal economy and at the sectoral level. She further welcomed amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, and new guidelines for professional athletes. She stressed the need to maintain violence and harassment as a priority with adequate resources, strengthen implementation including through OSH frameworks, reinforce the role of the social partners and labour inspection, and address emerging risks, including digitalization, AI and technology-mediated violence and harassment and the impact of domestic violence. Taking into account that the title of the item referred to a review, rather than an evaluation of the strategy, the Workers' group proposed a subamendment to the amendment by the Africa group, which read:

- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account ~~the evaluation of the strategy, its review,~~ and the guidance provided during the discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform, when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources.

- 139. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of Mozambique noted that the strategy had contributed to advancing an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. He acknowledged the progress achieved, including 54 ratifications, ongoing legislative reforms and the work of the supervisory system, and encouraged further ratifications. He welcomed progress in technical assistance, including efforts to address data gaps, the development of statistical tools and research, particularly in West Africa, as well as the development of behaviour-based prevention tools. He also highlighted the strengthening of action on gender-based violence and harassment, the integration of Convention No. 190 into OSH frameworks, labour inspection and capacity-building initiatives targeting governments and the social partners. He welcomed strengthened international cooperation and financial support. At the same time, he noted that challenges remain in ratification and effective implementation and stressed the need for continued efforts. The amendment proposed by his group was aimed at reflecting the fact that the Governing Body was considering an evaluation of the strategy.
- 140. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of the Niger explained that the purpose of the proposed amendment was to clarify that the strategy had concluded and was no longer operational. Therefore, in the decision, reference should be made to its evaluation or review that had been discussed by the Governing Body
- 141. A representative of the Director-General** (Department Director) clarified that, if the intention was to refer to a review, the strategy had undergone a mid-term review in 2023 and the document under discussion contained its final review. Such reviews were addressed through internal processes, while a formal independent evaluation would require a separate process, including consideration under the rolling evaluation work plan and consultation with constituents before a decision was taken.
- 142. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG,** a Government representative of Australia highlighted progress achieved, including 54 ratifications, and commended the role of the strategy in integrating Convention No. 190 across the Office's work, including through programme and budget

processes and broader institutional frameworks. She also noted the contribution of technical assistance and training to legislative and policy reforms, including through the integration of prevention within OSH frameworks. She welcomed progress made since the mid-term review, including in addressing data gaps, research and training tools, strengthening prevention approaches and building the capacity of the social partners. She highlighted the benefits of integrated approaches, including through programmes such as Better Work, and emphasized the need to continue strengthening tripartite engagement, technical assistance and capacity-building, including for reporting and workplace-level implementation. She stressed the importance of continued advocacy of Convention No. 190 and of addressing the specific vulnerabilities of groups at higher risk. ASPAG supported the draft decision and was open to amendment using the term “review”, as proposed by the Workers’ group.

- 143. Speaking on behalf of the 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 and Norway. She highlighted the importance of Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 as a milestone in promoting a safe and healthy working environment. She welcomed progress in improving data collection and measurement, including the development of survey tools and the establishment of a tripartite technical working group, and emphasized the importance of continued investment in high-quality, comparable data. She also welcomed targeted capacity-building efforts, the development of practical and sector-specific tools, and the focus on groups at heightened risk. While acknowledging progress, she noted persistent challenges, including gaps in institutional capacity, limited data and emerging risks linked to technological change. She supported the forward-looking approach outlined in the paper, including strengthening implementation through OSH and non-discrimination frameworks, labour inspection and access to justice, and emphasized the key role of the social partners. She stressed the need for continued prioritization, adequate resources and sustained commitment. In her group’s view, the strategy remained relevant, and the group supported the draft decision, as subamended by the Workers.
- 144. Speaking on behalf of a group of countries**,⁴ a Government representative of Canada acknowledged the progress achieved, including 54 ratifications, and commended the Office’s support to constituents through training, technical advice, institutional capacity-building, advocacy and international cooperation, as well as advances in data collection. She further welcomed internal Office measures, including staff training, the RESPECT campaign and the appointment of a dedicated Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Officer, and encouraged further efforts in this area. She noted that violence and harassment in the world of work remained a significant challenge and supported continued prioritization and the mainstreaming of Convention No. 190 across ILO policies and programmes. She emphasized the importance of strengthening prevention and response systems through OSH, labour inspection, access to justice and anti-discrimination frameworks, and called for further improvements in data collection and research, particularly for groups and sectors at higher risk, including in relation to gender-based violence and harassment. She also highlighted the importance of follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Her group supported the draft decision but reserved its

⁴ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Canada.

position on the amendment and subamendment pending clarification from the Office on the status of the strategy.

- 145. A Government representative of Brazil** welcomed the considerable success achieved during the 2019–25 period, especially the 54 ratifications. She highlighted the importance of integrating violence and harassment as a workplace hazard into OSH frameworks. She referred to national efforts towards ratification, including technical support provided by the Office and the ongoing consideration of the Convention in the National Congress. She supported the draft decision and emphasized the need to continue an integrated and cross-cutting approach, with a focus on effective implementation, prevention and response measures to promote safe, healthy and inclusive working environments. She supported the draft decision. Regarding the amendment and subamendment, she indicated that Brazil could accept a reference to the review of the strategy, noting that, while completed, it had not ceased to exist, and did not support the use of the term “evaluation”.
- 146. A Government representative of Barbados** welcomed the progress achieved, including the 54 ratifications of Convention No. 190 and its catalytic effect on legislative and policy reforms. He emphasized that data collection remained essential to addressing violence and harassment and highlighted the need to take into account the specific challenges faced by small island developing States, including reluctance to report sensitive issues in small communities, when developing and testing data collection tools. He called for continued efforts, particularly in relation to gender-based violence and harassment, recognizing its intersection with other vulnerabilities, including those affecting women migrant workers, refugees, persons with disabilities and workers in the informal economy. He also highlighted the importance of labour inspection training, advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building.
- 147. A Government representative of Malawi** highlighted national progress, including the completion and validation of a gap analysis, which indicated no major gaps and supported ongoing steps towards ratification. He also referred to the development and launch of a national code of conduct on violence and harassment at work, as well as the revision of labour inspection tools to better capture data on violence and harassment, including gender-related violations. He further highlighted capacity-building initiatives targeting labour and OSH inspectors, the judiciary and law enforcement authorities. Malawi supported the amendment proposed by the Africa group.
- 148. A Government representative of India** highlighted national developments, including the adoption of new labour codes and providing for safe working conditions, such as safeguards for women working at night and gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms. He referred to national schemes that had supported women and contributed to increased female labour force participation. He requested clarification on how continued prioritization, adequate resourcing and clear institutional anchoring would translate into budgetary support. He emphasized that addressing violence and harassment in the informal economy required innovative approaches, including community-based mechanisms, and reaffirmed India’s commitment to advancing decent work through social dialogue.
- 149. A Government representative of the United States** expressed support for ILO efforts to strengthen constituents’ compliance with violence and harassment standards as part of the Organization’s core mandate. He welcomed the development of internal coordination mechanisms and emphasized their relevance in the context of ILO reform. He supported measures aimed at strengthening national legal frameworks, enforcement and the capacity of the social partners, and noted that cooperation with UN entities on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse should remain within the ILO’s competencies. He underscored the

importance of addressing violence and harassment for the advancement of labour rights, including in the context of trade, noting its implications for wages, fair competition and labour market functioning.

150. **A Government representative of Colombia** welcomed the progress achieved under the strategy, including advances in promoting Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 and the increase in ratifications and legislative reforms supported by social dialogue. He emphasized the importance of a gender-responsive and inclusive approach, particularly for vulnerable groups, and highlighted the role of ILO technical assistance in supporting national ratification efforts. He stressed the need to continue this work within the ILO, with greater focus on effective implementation, including through strengthened data, research and knowledge-sharing, and prioritization of high-risk sectors and groups.
151. **A Government representative of South Africa** highlighted the role of the strategy in embedding violence and harassment as a core priority and referred to regional progress, including pre-ratification reviews, integration of Convention No. 190 into OSH frameworks, and the development of codes, research and initiatives in the informal economy. She noted persistent challenges, including limited institutional capacity, coordination gaps, insufficient data and difficulties in translating frameworks into practice. She emphasized the need for more integrated responses linking workplace and societal violence, raised concerns about the sustainability of project-based initiatives, and called for continued focus on the informal economy, stronger integration with OSH, expanded capacity-building and improved data collection. She stressed the need to maintain violence and harassment as a priority in the context of ILO reform and requested a future regional update on implementation.
152. **A Government representative of Mexico** highlighted national efforts to strengthen legal protection against violence and harassment and emphasized its impact on workers' well-being, productivity and employment. She stressed the importance of strengthening data and international standards to support evidence-based policies, as well as comprehensive prevention approaches, including capacity-building, coordination and effective complaint mechanisms. She welcomed ILO support to national processes and reaffirmed Mexico's commitment to implementing Convention No. 190 through a victim-centred and social dialogue-based approach. She supported the continuation of an integrated strategic approach within the ILO.
153. **The representative of the Director-General** (Department Director) welcomed the positive assessment of the strategy and noted that the guidance provided was well aligned with the findings of the final review, including the effectiveness of its three-pronged approach. She indicated that there was broad support for maintaining this area as a priority and referred to existing programme and budget arrangements, including an output under outcome 5, noting that further reflection could be given to strengthening outcome-oriented indicators. She emphasized that data and measurement would remain a key priority, including ensuring consistency, and noted that a further global survey, as proposed, would be subject to resource availability. She referred to ongoing work by the ILO Statistics Department and forthcoming proposals to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, as well as pilot surveys conducted in West Africa. Looking ahead, she confirmed that support for ratification and implementation, including pre-ratification legal reviews, would continue subject to resources, and highlighted the central role of the social partners. She also noted that labour inspection would remain a key area of support and that further research would be undertaken on emerging issues, including digitalization, AI and the informal economy. With regard to the draft decision, she suggested that the wording could refer either to "the final review" or to "this discussion".

154. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, a Government representative of the Niger indicated that the group was open to discussion on the wording of the draft decision provided that it reflected the fact that the strategy had concluded and that the Office should take into account the lessons learned from its review in its future work, particularly in the context of the programme and budget. He proposed another subamendment so that the text of subparagraph (b) would read:

- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account lessons learned from this review ~~the evaluation of the strategy and its review~~, and the guidance provided during the discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform, when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources.

155. The Employer spokesperson emphasized that future action should be guided by clear prioritization, particularly in the context of resource constraints. On that basis, the Employers' group could not support the subamendment proposed by the Workers' group. As the Office document provided a final assessment of the strategy, the most appropriate would be to use the terms "the final review of the strategy" as follows:

- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account the final review of the strategy, including lessons learned from this review ~~the evaluation of the strategy and its review~~, and the guidance provided during ~~this~~ the discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform, when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources.

156. A Government representative of Mozambique supported the Employers' proposal, noting that lessons learned were already reflected in the final review and could be omitted unless considered necessary.

157. The Worker spokesperson stated that her group wished to retain reference to the strategy, its final review and the lessons learned.

158. The Employer spokesperson emphasized that the focus of the discussion should be on the final review and its findings, and expressed a preference for his group's proposed subamendment, while remaining flexible regarding reference to lessons learned.

159. The Worker spokesperson reiterated that the strategy itself should be retained and guide future work, together with its final review and lessons learned.

160. The representative of the Director-General (Department Director), in response to a question from a Government representative of Malawi, confirmed that the strategy had concluded and the Office document contained its final review. Future work could build on both the strategy and the review.

161. A Government representative of Brazil stated that the fact that the strategy had come to an end did not preclude it from being taken into account and supported reference to both the strategy and its final review.

162. A Government representative of South Africa proposed a subamendment for the text to read:

- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account lessons learned from the final review of the strategy, including lessons learned from this review ~~the evaluation of the strategy, its review~~, and the guidance provided during ~~the~~ this discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform, when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources".

163. The Employer spokesperson supported the wording proposed by South Africa.

164. The Worker spokesperson supported the position expressed by Brazil, emphasizing the importance of referring both to the strategy and to the lessons learned, and proposed another subamendment for the text to read:

- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account the strategy and lessons learned from the final review of the strategy, including lessons learned from this review the evaluation of the strategy, its review, and the guidance provided during the this discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform, when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources".

165. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States, a Government representative of Cyprus indicated agreement with the Office's proposal and the positions expressed by the Workers' group and Brazil.

166. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, a Government representative of Niger reiterated the need to avoid referring to a concluded strategy as ongoing.

167. A Government representative of Barbados suggested adding "2019–2025" before "strategy" to clarify its status.

168. The Worker spokesperson indicated that the group could accept the draft decision as subamended by Barbados, on the understanding that actions based on the strategy would continue.

169. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States, a Government representative of Cyprus supported the draft decision as subamended.

170. The Employer spokesperson stated that with the inclusion of the dates of the strategy the wording was clear and consistent, and the Employers' group could support the draft decision as subamended.

171. A Government representative of Brazil also supported the draft decision as subamended.

Decision

172. The Governing Body:

- (a) requested the Office to take into account the guidance provided during the discussion of document GB.356/INS/4 in respect of the way forward regarding the implementation of the strategy for action concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work;
- (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take into account the 2019–25 strategy and lessons learned from its final review, as well as the guidance provided during the discussion, in the context of the ongoing ILO reform and when preparing future programme and budget proposals and facilitating extrabudgetary resources.

(GB.356/INS/4, paragraph 42, as amended by the Governing Body)

5. The process of the determination of the Members of chief industrial importance (GB.356/INS/5 and GB.356/INS/5/Additional information)

173. The Chairperson indicated that the draft decision on the agenda item offered two options: either to proceed with a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance or not to proceed with a determination at that stage.

- 174. The Worker spokesperson** said that the governance architecture of the international institutions that had been built to secure peace clearly did not reflect the world of the current time. In the ILO, the Workers' group had consistently linked the discussion on the determination of the Members of chief industrial importance to the issue of democratization and had consistently advocated for the principle of democracy within the ILO's institutional framework. The Workers' group remained strongly committed to the 1986 Instrument for the Amendment of the Constitution of the ILO (the 1986 Amendment) and shared the frustration of some Governments at the lack of progress on securing the three remaining ratifications from the Members of chief industrial importance that were required for it to enter into force. The group remained committed to engaging constructively in discussions on any process that would overcome the deadlock and identify legally sound, consensus-based solutions to strengthen democratization of ILO institutional organs. The fact that the list of Members of chief industrial importance had been reviewed 11 times and modified on 9 occasions demonstrated that the Governing Body could review the list while still promoting the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment. He stressed the importance of achieving broad consensus on the issue, especially among Governments.
- 175.** He noted that any review would involve a process regulated by the Standing Orders of the Governing Body and would entail a strictly technical assessment by an impartial committee of experts. Should such a process be initiated, safeguards must be in place to ensure that it did not become political. The group noted that such a process would not modify the current number of fixed seats. It could agree with the requirements proposed in paragraph 18 of the Office document ⁵ for the establishment of the expert committee and selection of the proposed criteria, if it would lead to consensus. He stressed the importance of ensuring that each region was represented on the committee. The group supported the need to ensure an updated approach to the assessment of industrial importance, as highlighted in paragraph 24 of the document, which could be complemented by other criteria.
- 176.** He asked whether, in the current financial context, the costs of the process could be absorbed within the Programme and Budget for 2026–27. The Workers' group would support a decision to undertake a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance if the Governing Body considered it appropriate; it was flexible on the most appropriate approach and timing, while being mindful of the current financial constraints. Building consensus would require a clear understanding of the impacts of a revision, including whether it would have the effect of deprioritizing the ratification of the 1986 Amendment. The group would wait to see whether consensus emerged among the Governments before taking a position on the draft decision.
- 177. The Employer spokesperson** emphasized that his group had consistently upheld balanced representation, democratic participation and proper tripartite governance as the core principles of the Organization that applied to every institutional process. The structured, evidence-based process under article 7(3) of the ILO Constitution and article 1.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body had been tested across 12 separate determinations since 1919, under different economic and geopolitical circumstances, but grounded in the same procedural logic. That consistency was a valued source of institutional credibility.
- 178.** However, institutional arrangements benefited from periodic review to ensure they remained fit for purpose, especially a process that had not been applied in over 40 years. Criteria relating to economic importance had evolved considerably over time, always reflecting the best available methodology at the time. The document acknowledged in paragraphs 23 and 24 that

⁵ GB.356/INS/5.

the methodological landscape had continued to evolve. Economic importance could currently be assessed through multiple metrics that had not been available four decades previously. Any committee of experts appointed would need to take full account of those developments and determine the most appropriate criteria. Particular attention should be paid to the independence, technical competence and credibility of the expert committee. The legitimacy of the process and the conclusions would largely depend on constituents' confidence in the objectivity of the committee's analytical work as well as the composition of the committee, the qualifications of its members, and the rigour of the methodology it applied.

179. The Governing Body's consideration of the Director-General's proposals at its 357th Session would be an important stage of the process. One important feature of the process that was welcomed by the Employers' group was the fact that the report of the expert committee would be appended to the Officers' recommendations when submitted to the Governing Body for decision. The Employers' group supported the option of undertaking a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance.
180. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of the Niger emphasized that the ongoing review process and the promotion of the 1986 Amendment with a view to securing its entry into force were not mutually exclusive. Concerning the Office's recommendations on the profile of experts to be appointed and the criteria to be taken into account, the group considered that that fell within the prerogatives of the Governing Body. The group considered that that the committee should not rely solely on gross domestic product (GDP) as the determining criterion. He invited the Director-General to ensure that the composition of the committee of experts reflected the four ILO regions on an equal footing and to hold consultations with the constituents on that matter before the June 2026 session. The group considered that a decision to proceed with the revision of the list of Members of chief industrial importance had clearly been taken at the March 2025 session of the Governing Body. That was reflected in the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the current session; it was therefore unnecessary to have the second option in the draft decision. Furthermore, the Africa group had written to the Office on 19 December 2025 to draw its attention to the substance of the Governing Body's March 2025 decision. It was regrettable that the Office had not followed the usual practice of consulting with constituents before publishing the document on the important agenda item. The Africa group clearly supported the first option of the draft decision and the proposed timetable.
181. Democratization of the ILO's governance organs remained an imperative. The group welcomed the ratification of the 1986 Amendment by India and Italy, two Members of chief industrial importance, as well as by the Maldives and Estonia. He also noted with appreciation that ratification procedures were at an advanced stage in Brazil, Uruguay and Belize, and encouraged those States that had not yet done so to consider ratification as soon as possible.
182. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh expressed his group's full support for the democratization of ILO governance, including the 1986 Amendment that would expand the membership of the Governing Body and abolish the category of Members of chief industrial importance. He congratulated the Maldives and Estonia for their recent ratification of the 1986 Amendment and encouraged all other Member States, especially the current Members of chief industrial importance, to intensify their efforts towards ratification. The group looked forward to the high-level side event at the Conference to promote ratification.
183. In the 43 years since the last review of the Members of chief industrial importance, the global economy had experienced many shifts, which had changed the world of work significantly.

Given that the work of the ILO had also gone through major changes during those 43 years, it was high time that it adapted. A consensus-based approach to the review of the Members of chief industrial importance was more likely to result in a membership that matched the current reality. The agenda item reflected a broader commitment to social justice and the long-term objective of advancing more democratic governance within the ILO. While recognizing that the selected criteria would be proposed by the committee itself, ASPAG would like the committee to consider the diverse economic and labour contexts.

- 184. Speaking on behalf of the Arab group,** a Government representative of Libya noted that the current list of Members of chief industrial importance had not been updated for more than 40 years, despite the profound economic transformations in the world. As major players in the energy sector, international trade and manufacturing industries, Arab countries had become a fundamental pillar of the global economy. Any review of the criteria for industrial importance should reflect those developments; they should not be limited to GDP alone, but should also include the size of the labour force, the contribution of States to international economic stability and their role in supporting sustainable development.
- 185.** The Arab group agreed that democratization of the ILO's governance organs was indispensable and that the continued existence of preferential arrangements for a small number of Member States violated the principle of equality among Members. The group supported the proposal that the committee of experts should consist of four experts and four alternates from each of the four ILO regions.
- 186.** The group welcomed the recent ratifications of the 1986 Amendment, as well as those by India and Italy, and Brazil's announcement of its intention to ratify. It called on the Office to continue promoting ratification and to provide information on the activities undertaken since March 2025 to encourage ratification and the results achieved. The group supported strengthening good governance within the ILO and ensuring that the process of determining the Members of chief industrial importance was inclusive and responsive to global economic changes. It therefore endorsed the option of undertaking a new determination of the Members of chief industrial importance, thereby updating the list to reflect current global economic realities and enhancing balanced representation within the Governing Body.
- 187. Speaking on behalf of a group of European countries,**⁶ a Government representative of Spain said that the committee of experts should include experts from all regions and its composition should ensure inclusivity and efficacy. The group of countries would appreciate informal consultations on the Director-General's proposal prior to the one-day June session to facilitate a short and focused decision on the appointment of the committee at the session. Recognizing that the selected criteria would be proposed by the committee itself, the group of countries would welcome a clear, objective and transparent process, in which the assessment of criteria was based on internationally agreed statistical standards. To build trust in the process, it would be helpful to receive, in due course, clarification on how the Office would in practice identify Members that might fall just above or below the line of demarcation, while fully respecting the requirement of impartiality under the Standing Orders.
- 188.** The group of countries reaffirmed its continuous support for democratization and its commitment to ensuring more inclusive governance. It was therefore in favour of undertaking

⁶ Spain, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, Cyprus, Iceland, Austria, Hungary and Greece.

a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance and placing a corresponding item on the agenda of the 358th Session (November 2026) for decision.

189. The 1986 Amendment remained an important element of the broader governance discussion. A large number of Member States had already ratified it, which demonstrated strong overall support for its objectives. He encouraged those Members that had not yet done so to consider advancing their ratification processes, in accordance with their national procedures, so that the Organization could move closer to bringing the amendment into effect.
190. **Speaking on behalf of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom expressed the countries' firm commitment to a strong, effective and efficient ILO, grounded in its Constitution and tripartite composition. Governance discussions, including on the Members of chief industrial importance, should ultimately serve the Organization's capacity to deliver on its core mandate and should not be an end in themselves. Members of chief industrial importance had a long, well-established institutional history, and questions related to which Members were so designated were of high political sensitivity. Any possible review must therefore be firmly anchored in the existing provisions of the Constitution and Standing Orders and follow the established sequence whereby issues of selection were first considered by an impartial committee of experts before a decision was taken by the Governing Body.
191. He expressed the countries' concerns about the Organization's overall workload, as the Governing Body would be engaged in major Organization-wide processes, including the follow up to the reform discussions; possible contingency measures; the discussions of the Programme and Budget for 2028–29 starting in November 2026; the forthcoming consideration of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the right to strike; and the procedure for the election of the Director-General. The question arose as to how many internal governance and institutional exercises the Organization could realistically run in parallel. Given the ILO's current situation, the proposed timeline was ambitious. The criteria used over time to identify Members of chief industrial importance had a limited legal definition, and the changes in the composition of the group of ten had become increasingly limited. That raised questions as to whether the significant effort and the estimated US\$156,000 cost of a new determination was proportionate to the likely added value of the outcome, and as to the impact of launching such a procedure on the Organization's ability to deliver other activities already approved by the Governing Body. The group of countries saw limited possible benefit to such a process, and encouraged all constituents to keep in mind the ILO's current capacities and the need to balance internal institutional debates with its responsibility to deliver concrete results for workers and employers around the world. They supported the second option in the draft decision, not to proceed with a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance.
192. **A Government representative of Gabon** said that the review of the conditions for a new determination of the Members of chief industrial importance was provided for under the ILO Constitution and should therefore occur more frequently. Her Government attached great importance to the issue of democratization of the ILO's governance organs. She welcomed the ratification of the 1986 Amendment by Member States, including some Members of chief industrial importance, and called for an acceleration of the process with a view to securing its entry into force. Gabon supported the first option of the draft decision and the proposed timetable.
193. **A Government representative of Senegal** noted that the 1986 Amendment represented the pinnacle of a modern ILO founded on the equality of States and the adaptation of structures

in line with twenty-first century realities, yet its entry into force was still pending. Maintaining the status quo was no longer a viable option. The current list of the ten Members of chief industrial importance was based on statistics from 1983, but the global economic landscape had undergone profound changes in the last 40 years. He therefore supported the first option in the draft decision, to undertake a new determination of the Members of chief industrial importance. The committee of experts must work with full impartiality, the process must be conducted with absolute clarity, and the redetermination must not be an alternative to the 1986 Amendment. In the hope of one day having a fully elected Governing Body, its members had a collective duty to ensure that the current composition was based on an undisputable factual reality.

194. **A Government representative of Barbados** explained that when his country had joined the ILO, it had recognized that the Organization had been formed long before small islands were sovereign States and able to become Members. They had accepted the rules and the structure of the time and had understood that times would continue to change and that rules and structures would need to evolve with those changes. However, the current structure of the ILO clearly could not be considered as being democratic: among other things, it did not allow for the participation of enough smaller Member States in important decision-making processes. Latin America and the Caribbean was the only region that required a small island developing State to be a member of the Governing Body.
195. It was regrettable that the 1986 Amendment was still not in force, only because insufficient Members of chief industrial importance thought it important enough. The tension between the views of those Members and the majority of the membership was the clearest demonstration of the dysfunction caused by the categorization. Barbados acknowledged the need to advance the work of democratization and supported reviewing the determination of the Members of chief industrial importance. Ensuring good and inclusive governance was a critical part of the work currently being undertaken to make the Organization more focused, effective and efficient, and could not be seen as a separate consideration for some future time.
196. **A Government representative of Italy** expressed serious reservations regarding the appropriateness of launching a process to determine the Members of chief industrial importance at that time. The proposal raised significant procedural, financial and institutional concerns, and the implications must be assessed in the current context. The ILO faced a demanding agenda, and proceeding with a determination would place an additional burden on the Organization when financial and human resources were already under strain. The Office had clearly indicated that the costs associated with the establishment and functioning of the committee of experts had not been foreseen in the current programme and budget and would need to be accommodated through reallocation or contingency mechanisms, which could affect the delivery of the activities already approved by the Governing Body. It was questionable whether dedicating such efforts to a procedurally complex exercise was justified currently, when it risked diverting attention from the Organization's core priorities. At a time of pressing challenges in the world of work, the ILO must be able to focus on promoting decent work, social justice and internationally recognized labour rights. Moreover, the link between the process and the broader objective of democratizing the governance of the ILO remained unclear. The notion of "chief industrial importance" had historically been based on relative economic weight rather than on principles of equitable representation or inclusiveness. The process would therefore not in itself constitute a step towards a more democratic governance structure. Italy remained firmly committed to the objective of a more democratic and inclusive ILO, and had ratified the 1986 Amendment. However, it did not consider that the conditions

had been met to initiate a determination of Members of chief industrial importance at that stage.

197. **A Government representative of Malawi** underscored the importance of ensuring the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment remained a priority so that ILO could eliminate that privileged category of Members and bring equality among Member States within the Governing Body. Considering that the decision to determine the Members of chief industrial importance had already been taken at the 353rd Session of the Governing Body, she supported the first option in the draft decision and the proposed timeline in paragraph 30 of the document, which aligned very well with the Governing Body elections in June 2027. She also supported the proposal that the impartial committee should have members with equal geographical representation from the four regions. It was hoped that the determination would take various factors into account, as the world had evolved since the last revision in 1983.
198. She sought clarity on the meaning of “as occasion requires” in article 7(3) of the Constitution, and asked whether article 7(5), which said “The period of office of the Governing Body shall be three years”, also applied to Members of chief industrial importance occupying non-elective seats.
199. **A Government representative of the Russian Federation** observed that the initiative to review the Members of chief industrial importance had been launched against a background of unprecedented politicization in the work of the ILO, when the Russian Federation, Belarus and Myanmar were subject to sanctions and Nicaragua had withdrawn from the Organization as a result of yet another politicized campaign. The Russian Federation had been excluded from the Tripartite Working Group on Democratization on purely political grounds unrelated to the issue of democratization, based on Governing Body’s controversial decision at its 344th Session concerning the situation in Ukraine.
200. The situation was complicated by the fact that the procedure for reviewing the list of Members of chief industrial importance was vague. There were no clear classification criteria, nor was there a clearly regulated procedure for establishing an impartial committee to determine the final list of such Members. Moreover, the powers of Member States, in particular of members of the Governing Body, were reduced to endorsing the proposals of the Office without any substantive discussion, in an approach deliberately intended to allow the impartial committee maximum leeway. However, in the current politicized context, the committee might be subject to pressure and consequently fall short of the required level of impartiality.
201. The Russian Federation supported the idea of democratizing the work of the ILO and under different circumstances might have supported an initiative aimed at correcting imbalances in the governance organs. However, in the current context of politicization, uneven regulatory conditions, financial difficulties, an agenda overloaded with internal institutional issues and other challenges facing the Organization, undertaking structural reforms of the governance organs would lead to additional tensions and to a dispersion of efforts and resources without any guarantee of a positive outcome. The Russian Federation therefore did not support the option to determine the Members of chief industrial importance at that stage.
202. **A Government representative of Brazil** said that her country remained fully supportive of all constructive dialogue towards a more democratic and representative ILO, but firmly believed that the ratification of the 1986 Amendment was the most effective path to true democratization. In his address at the 2024 session of the Conference, President Lula had emphasized that global institutions must evolve to reflect the contemporary world. For Brazil, a legitimate international order required an equitable distribution of power that granted the global South its rightful voice in decision-making. The 1986 Amendment offered a

comprehensive solution by considering a transparent system based on geographic and social relevance. While technical discussions on the Members of chief industrial importance were valuable, they must not replace the broader structural reform of the ILO's governance. The Brazilian Government had taken decisive steps towards securing the approval of the 1986 Amendment by Congress. By prioritizing that legal framework, Brazil was demonstrating its commitment to an ILO that was not only more efficient, but also fundamentally more democratic and representative of the diverse global workforce.

- 203. Speaking on behalf of a group of 74 countries,**⁷ a Government representative of Bangladesh recalled that the current exercise was not an isolated technical review, but had originated in the broader deliberations on the democratization of the governance of the ILO. The review of the Members of chief industrial importance should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a stepping stone towards the realization of the objectives of the 1986 Amendment. It must remain anchored in the fundamental principle of social justice. The process would require time and careful consideration and must be accompanied by continued efforts to advance the broader process of democratization within the Organization. The fact that 129 Member States had ratified the 1986 Amendment reflected a strong collective aspiration for a more equitable and democratic Organization based on equal membership among all States. The ILO should strive to set a positive example within the multilateral system. As an organization founded on social justice, it must ensure that all Member States were treated on an equal footing.
- 204.** The Office document provided a necessary procedural basis for the review, but remained limited in addressing the broader governance implications of the exercise, including how the review would effectively contribute to a more balanced and equitable representation within the Organization. After more than four decades, undertaking a review of the current list was both timely and necessary to reflect evolving global economic realities and to preserve the credibility and legitimacy of the Organization's governance structure. The process must be conducted transparently and objectively. The role of any expert committee should remain strictly advisory, with full oversight retained by the Member States. The determination of industrial importance should not rely solely on aggregate economic indicators such as GDP, but should also take into account labour-related dimensions, including the size of the workforce and contribution to global employment. It was essential for the outcome to strengthen rather than diminish the representation of developing countries and to contribute to a more balanced and inclusive governance structure. It must therefore be complemented by a clear political commitment to democratization to deliver meaningful change. The review of the Members of chief industrial importance was an initial step, and the group remained firmly committed to advancing broader ratification of the 1986 Amendment for the collective good of the Organization and to ensure that no one was left behind. The group supported the first option in the draft decision.
- 205. A Government representative of Oman** considered the review of the determination of Members of chief industrial importance to be linked to the 1986 Amendment and announced that Oman had officially ratified the amendment on 1 March 2026, which reflected its firm commitment to supporting an ILO that was more democratic, balanced and representative, in line with the principle of social justice.

⁷ The 54 countries of the Africa group and Bangladesh, Nepal, Colombia, Barbados, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Qatar, State of Palestine, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon.

206. Any review needed to be carried out with caution, balance and on the basis of broad consensus among Member States. Given the significant developments, many countries had become key pillars of the global economy and any review of the criteria therefore needed to reflect those transformations, in addition to considering countries' contributions to international economic stability and their support for the Sustainable Development Goals. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to participating constructively and effectively in consultations to contribute to strengthening the effectiveness and institutional cohesion of the ILO.
207. **A Government representative of India** recalled that the item had emerged from the discussions on the 1986 Amendment, whose objective was to strengthen the democratization of the Organization's governance structure. His country had ratified the 1986 Amendment and believed that renewed attention should be paid to advancing its implementation.
208. He sought clarity as to the mandate of the proposed review of the Members of chief industrial importance, as the decision at the 353rd Session had been to place on the agenda an item on the process of determination and not on the initiation of a fresh determination. Noting that article 7(2) and (3) of the Constitution provided that such determinations may be undertaken "as occasion requires" and that, historically, they had been undertaken in response to significant developments, he sought clarification on the specific circumstances that might warrant initiating such an exercise at that point. Any such process must be approached with careful consideration and clarity, given its institutional significance and long-term implications.
209. The document did not explicitly propose the exercise as an interim arrangement towards implementation of 1986 Amendment; if it was intended to be a transitional approach, it should be clearly defined so that it did not evolve into ad hoc arrangements which could affect institutional clarity over time. If it was not an interim arrangement, clarity was needed on the framework and on whether it was envisaged as a one-time exercise or as part of a broader review cycle so as to ensure stability and consistency in governance. Without reforms in the UN, including expansion in both categories of Security Council membership, the isolated exercise by the ILO would undermine its effectiveness and credibility. The ongoing institutional discussions and the prevailing global uncertainties called for caution and careful consideration of the timing and approach. To enhance the legitimacy and credibility of the outcome and to ensure that decisions enjoyed broad acceptance, a consensus-based approach must be followed. Considering the sensitivity of the issue and its implications for the governance structure of the ILO, any process must be guided by the principles of objectivity, transparency, neutrality and broad-based agreement.
210. **The Government representative of the Niger**, speaking in his national capacity, noted that the Organization was in a deadlock owing to the non-ratification of the 1986 Amendment by a small number of Members of chief industrial importance. Under article 7 of the Constitution, a revision of the list of Members of chief industrial importance could be undertaken "as occasion requires" and it was for the Governing Body to define what was meant by those terms. After more than 40 years, it was time to take action for a revision of the list of Members of chief industrial importance with a view to potentially updating the list and strengthening the legitimacy of the Members in that category. It would also clarify whether some Members currently on the list still belonged to the category. He requested information on the activities to promote ratification of the 1986 Amendment, including the outcome of the meetings with Members of chief industrial importance that had not ratified it.
211. **A Government representative of Peru** noted that the discussion formed part of the broader debate on democratization in the ILO's governance. At the 353rd Session, the Director-General had confirmed that the discussion would focus on providing a comprehensive analysis of the

processes applicable to the determination, within the boundaries of the ILO Constitution and other applicable rules. However, subparagraph (a) of the draft decision presupposed that the Governing Body had already agreed to initiate a determination process, which was not the case. In line with article 7(3) of the Constitution and article 1.3 of the Standing Orders, the Governing Body had to assess whether a determination was necessary and place an item to that effect on its agenda before it could consider initiating such a process. Peru was not opposed to a potential determination process in the future; however, any steps in that regard had to be taken in an orderly and informed way that preserved institutional coherence and unity.

- 212. A Government representative of Cuba** said that the issue went beyond procedural and technical considerations and was directly linked to the discussion on democratization in the ILO's governance. Despite major shifts in the global economy and the growing contribution of developing countries to global production, trade and industry, the list of Members of chief industrial importance had remained unchanged for decades. The rotation among non-permanent Governing Body members did not ensure equitable access to decision-making or representativeness, address the historical imbalances or advance progress towards the democratization sought by the 1986 Amendment. She cautioned against initiating the determination process without undertaking the necessary preparatory work, and against rushed decision-making, especially given the Organization's other priorities. She was in favour of keeping open the option of placing the item on the agenda of the next session of the Governing Body and of allowing for formal consideration when appropriate. She reaffirmed Cuba's commitment to a more democratic, inclusive and representative ILO and to engaging constructively in the ongoing discussion.
- 213. A Government representative of Colombia** stressed the importance of reviewing the list of Members of chief industrial importance to ensure the continued legitimacy and effective functioning of the ILO's governance structure, given the significant changes in the global economy and ILO membership since the Organization's creation. In that context, he considered it appropriate to examine the criteria provided for in the Constitution for determining the Members of chief industrial importance, noting that any determination process must be based on objective and transparent technical criteria underpinned by robust statistical data in the work of the independent experts. The periodic review of those criteria would help ensure that the composition of the Governing Body reflected global economic developments and the diversity of the ILO's membership. He reaffirmed Colombia's readiness to engage constructively in the process and expressed support for the first option in the draft decision.
- 214. A Government representative of Mexico** said that the discussion was inextricably linked to the broader debate on democratization in the ILO's governance to better reflect regional, economic and social diversity. The list of Members of chief industrial importance reflected a historical context very different from the current one and had not been reviewed since 1983 despite major global economic shifts. He was in favour of examining the possibility of updating the list based on transparent and comparable technical criteria underpinned by current statistical tools. Any such exercise must reinforce progress towards more equitable, inclusive and representative governance. The entry into force of the 1986 Amendment, which Mexico had ratified in 1988, remained the most legally sound path towards democratization. Pending progress on that front, he called for prudent and transparent decision-making aimed at building cohesion, consensus and mutual trust. He confirmed Mexico's readiness to engage constructively in an open and good-faith dialogue to ensure that the ILO's governance was fully aligned with its values of social justice, equality and decent work for all.

- 215. A Government representative of Tunisia** said that the democratization of the ILO was a shared objective that could be achieved through multiple, complementary avenues. The 1986 Amendment remained the most complete expression of that aspiration and its entry into force should remain the ultimate priority. The review of the Members of chief industrial importance was a positive and necessary step towards greater democratization, given the current imbalance in the composition of the Governing Body. The determination process under article 7 of the Constitution was intended to be dynamic and flexible and could be initiated as occasion required. She was in favour of initiating the process in accordance with the proposed timeline.
- 216. A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** said that the current list of Members of chief industrial importance did not reflect current economic realities. Since the list had been established, there had been major shifts in industrial capacity, labour force growth and value chain integration, and emerging economies, particularly in the global South – including Africa – now played a decisive role in global production, trade and employment. Approaches that preserved historical privilege were inconsistent with the principle of equality among Member States and could not be considered neutral. Any credible determination process must be inclusive and transparent and ensure equal geographical representation. Africa's inclusion was essential for a democratic and credible ILO.
- 217. A Government representative of Namibia**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that the list of Members of chief industrial importance was never intended to be permanent. Although it had been revised 11 times, no Member State from Africa had ever been included. The same ten countries had continued to occupy their seats for more than four decades. Noting major shifts in global economic and demographic realities, including Africa's growing industrial contributions and changing workforce, he said that the list should evolve accordingly. Article 7(3) of the Constitution required the Governing Body to undertake such determinations as occasion required. Initiating the process was not only constitutionally necessary but would also help ensure that the governance architecture reflected global economic and demographic realities, including those of Africa. Reform for broader representation and democratization was taking place across international organizations and the ILO could not be left out. The initiation of a new determination process was both necessary and justified and the process should be completed efficiently, considering the upcoming elections in 2027.
- 218. A Government representative of Zimbabwe**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, reaffirmed Zimbabwe's commitment to the principle of the equality of States. While the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment remained a priority and a way of moving towards the democratization of the ILO's governance, he welcomed the process of reviewing the list of Members of chief industrial importance to reflect the changes that had taken place since the last revision in 1983. He recalled the strong support shown for democratization through the wide ratification of the 1986 Amendment, including by Zimbabwe, and urged all Members of chief industrial importance that had not yet ratified it, to do so. He commended the Director-General's engagement with Member States to that end. In accordance with article 7(3) of the Constitution, the Governing Body should make rules to ensure that all questions relating to the selection of the Members of chief industrial importance were considered by an impartial committee. That committee should be geographically balanced and should develop inclusive criteria. Zimbabwe supported the first option of the draft decision and the proposed timeline.

- 219. A Government representative of Zambia**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, recalled that the Constitution empowered the Governing Body to determine the Members of chief industrial importance as occasion required, and underscored that the list should evolve in line with global economic realities. While the Constitution provided that ten Governing Body seats were reserved for such Members, it did not limit the number of those Members and instead allowed for a pool of such Members entrusted with collectively appointing ten of their number. Moreover, the original drafters could not have intended that there would only ever be ten Members of chief industrial importance, irrespective of global economic development. The Constitution also provided that the Governing Body shall make rules to ensure that “all questions” relating to the selection of such Members were considered by an impartial committee before being decided by the Governing Body. Noting that article 1.3 of the Standing Orders entrusted the committee of experts with identifying appropriate criteria, he sought clarification on who could raise questions relating to the determination of Members of chief industrial importance and which questions should be examined by the impartial committee. The committee’s advisory role should not diminish the rights of Governing Body members to raise questions, consistent with the text and spirit of article 7(3). He noted the strong support for reform demonstrated through the ratifications of the 1986 Amendment. Pending its entry into force, he supported the first option of the draft decision, to initiate the determination process, and the proposed timelines.
- 220. A Government representative of Nigeria**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that the evolving global economic realities called for fair, transparent and representative governance and observed that the item was closely linked to the broader objective of strengthening equitable representation within the ILO. Because it played a pivotal role in directing the work and policies of the ILO, the Governing Body’s composition must continue to inspire the confidence of the entire membership of the ILO. The 1986 Amendment, which called for a more representative Governing Body, including the removal of non-elective seats reserved for Members of chief industrial importance, was of continued relevance and its entry into force remained essential for balanced and inclusive governance; efforts to promote its ratification should therefore be intensified. He supported the first option in the draft decision.
- 221. A Government representative of Pakistan**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that the issue for many Member States was not changing the current composition of the Members of chief industrial importance; rather, it was the democratization in the ILO’s governance. Whereas the Standing Orders recognized only four geographical regions, additional groupings had emerged in practice that were not grounded in any formal legal framework. That imbalance extended to subsidiary processes, including the Screening Group, allowing certain Members to be represented in more than one grouping while others with large populations and workforces had comparatively limited opportunity to express their views. Meaningful democratization could not be achieved solely by adjusting the existing framework; instead, a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to governance was required to ensure the equitable participation of all Members.
- 222. A representative of the Director-General** (Legal Adviser) stated that the Office had duly noted all views expressed. Responding to questions raised, she confirmed that there were ten Members of chief industrial importance. That number ten was clear from article 7(2) of the Constitution, which stated that ten Government representatives shall be appointed by the Members of chief industrial importance and that the delegates of those ten Members were

excluded from the electoral process of the Governing Body. There had originally been eight Members of chief industrial importance and the number had been increased to ten in 1954 through an amendment to the Constitution.

223. The expression “as occasion requires” in article 7(3) was not black and white, but it was clear that there must be a trigger for the determination and the Governing Body must identify it. The trigger was sometimes obvious, such as when a Member of chief industrial importance withdrew from the ILO or a country of a certain economic importance joined. On one occasion, the Governing Body had decided that a request for review from a country that considered itself to fulfil the criteria of chief industrial importance could trigger its determination. There was no provision for a regular determination.
224. When the process was initiated, it followed a clear sequence. While it was for the Governing Body to determine the Members of chief industrial importance, it could not do so before having the advice of an impartial committee. The Governing Body must first establish an impartial committee, which was mandated under the Standing Orders of the Governing Body to determine the criteria anew and then apply the criteria to determine the list of Members of chief industrial importance. The impartial committee was composed of experts and met in private sittings to discuss the criteria. The report of the impartial committee was submitted to the Officers of the Governing Body for their review, who then made a recommendation to the Governing Body for its determination, at a session where there was a specific item on the agenda.
225. As to the three-year period of office of the Governing Body, article 7(5) of the Constitution was clear that that applied only to the elected members of the Governing Body, not the Members of chief industrial importance. Furthermore, article 1.3 of the Standing Orders mentioned no time period for the Members of chief industrial importance whereas article 1.4 referred to a period of office of three years for elected members of the Governing Body.
226. **Another representative of the Director-General** (Chief Statistician) added that the list to be proposed by the independent expert group would take account of the fact that the global economic situation had changed in the last four decades. The criteria would reflect the understanding of the term “industrial importance”, which had evolved from manufacturing power to become a broad measure of economic size. The metrics would be used in the spirit of transparency, objectivity and clear replicability, based on international statistical standards and widely accepted, harmonized data. To reflect the underlying democratization of the process, all countries had to have the same type of information available for comparison. Much better indicators were available currently than had been available in 1983. The criteria would be based on economic variables which had been incorporated in the System of National Accounts of all countries. Whether to adopt the recommendations of the committee would be decided by the Governing Body, which would be the custodian of transparency and objectivity and pre-empt any political considerations or other possible biases.
227. **The Director-General** said that the Office had made various types of representations to promote ratification of the 1986 Amendment, focusing on the eight Members of chief industrial importance that had not yet ratified it. However, except for Brazil, which had begun the process, there had been no appetite for ratification. The Office would nevertheless continue its promotional efforts. The overall number of ratifications required by other Members had already been attained. He welcomed the latest ratification, by the Maldives.
228. **The Government representative of Peru** asked the Legal Adviser which event had triggered the current process to review the ten permanent seats. He also sought clarity on article 1.3 of the Standing Orders, which stated that “[t]he Governing Body shall not decide any question

relating to the selection of the Members of chief industrial importance unless the question of modification of the list of such Members has been included in the agenda of the session as a specific item", as the title of the current item referred to the process of determination, not the modification of the Members of chief industrial importance.

- 229. The Legal Adviser** clarified that the Governing Body had not yet taken a decision to determine the list of Members of chief industrial importance. If it decided to do so, it would be assumed that the Governing Body had considered that the occasion required a review of the list and that a specific item must be placed on the agenda of a future session. On previous occasions, the term "modification" in the Standing Orders had been used interchangeably with "determination" and "review" by the Governing Body.
- 230. The Government representative of Brazil** asked whether there was a way to introduce geographical criteria without amending the Constitution, and how the 1986 Amendment would be affected if countries that had not ratified it were included in the list of Members of chief industrial importance as a result of the review.
- 231. The Legal Adviser** explained that the concept of "industrial importance" had always been construed by the ILO as economic importance and determined on the basis of quantitative criteria. That was the reason why the matter was first referred to an impartial committee composed of experts of the highest statistical authority. The question of whether a geographical dimension could be introduced to select the ten Members of chief industrial importance had been debated at the ILO and the understanding had been that it would require a constitutional amendment. The discussion of the question in the 1970s had led to the 1986 Amendment, which aimed at abolishing the seats of the ten Members of chief industrial importance. In 2008, the question had been raised of whether there could be a geographical distribution among the 10 seats – or 12 seats, if an increase in the seats could be considered – and it had been considered that a constitutional amendment would be required. The Governing Body had not pursued its examination of a new constitutional amendment at that time as efforts were focused on the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment.
- 232. The Government representative of Malawi** considered that article 7 of the Constitution must be read in its totality because it clearly stated: "The period of office of the Governing Body shall be three years"; it did not state that Members holding a non-elective seat could sit beyond three years. Her understanding was that the intention was to have a pool of Members of chief industrial importance from which they would nominate among themselves the ten that would represent them for the three-year cycle that would be linked to the other, elective seats.
- 233. The Government representative of India** asked what trigger had prompted the Office to include the matter as an item for decision at the current session.
- 234. The Government representative of South Africa** recalled that the issue of amending the Constitution had not arisen in 2008 because the Legal Adviser at the time had advised the Governing Body that, under the Standing Orders, the number of permanent seats could be increased to 12 and the 2 extra seats could be allocated to Africa. Because amending the Constitution would have been a long and complex process, the Africa group had rejected that option in favour of the process offered through the Standing Orders.
- 235. The Government representative of the Russian Federation** also asked whether any change in the composition of the list would affect the five ratifications from Members of chief industrial importance that were required for the 1986 Amendment to enter into force.
- 236. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, the Government representative of the Niger said that the examples given by the Legal Adviser of triggers for a review process were historical

examples that were not binding on the Governing Body. A State considering itself to meet the criteria of industrial importance was not an appropriate trigger, as that could be determined only through the review process, for which the criteria could change from one review to the next. The necessary trigger was a general, dynamic provision that was subject to the Governing Body's discretion in deciding whether the occasion required it. The group considered that, after more than 40 years, that was indeed the case.

- 237. A Government representative of Zambia**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, noted that article 7(1) provided for the composition of the Governing Body and that article 7(5) governed the “period of office of the Governing Body”, but did not state that it applied only to the elective seats. As there was no other provision that would merit a departure from the full meaning of “Governing Body”, he considered the Legal Adviser's response that the term of office related only to the elected seats to be a misinterpretation. If the Constitution had been interpreted incorrectly in the past, the Governing Body should correct it.
- 238. The Legal Adviser** said that paragraph 5 of article 7, which stated “The period of office of the Governing Body shall be three years”, must be read in conjunction with the other paragraphs of the article. Paragraph 2, which read: “Of the twenty-eight persons representing governments, ten shall be appointed by the Members of chief industrial importance, and eighteen shall be appointed by the Members selected for that purpose by the Government delegates to the Conference, excluding the delegates of the ten Members mentioned above”, clearly distinguished between elective seats and non-elective seats. Hence, the ten Members of chief industrial importance were excluded from the electoral process in the Governing Body in that they could not present a candidate or vote. Paragraph 3 addressed the process of determination of the ten Members of chief industrial importance and referred to a determination, not an election. Paragraph 4 referred to the elective seats held by the Employers' group and the Workers' group, respectively. Paragraph 5 addressed the term of office of three years and also the consequences if an election did not take place, in which case the Governing Body would remain in office until such elections were held. It was thus clear that the term of office applied only to the elected members.
- 239.** From the first draft of the Constitution in 1919, the intention had been to list the eight countries that had won the First World War; the drafters had decided not to name those countries as it would have been inappropriate for an organization dedicated to universal peace. Instead, they had inserted the concept of chief industrial importance without defining it; at the time, it had been predicted that determining the Members of chief industrial importance would create difficulty for the ILO.
- 240.** In November 2008, the Office had proposed to the Governing Body a constitutional amendment to increase the number of Members of chief industrial importance from 10 to 12, while maintaining the total members of the Governing Body. The process was described in paragraph 11 of a note circulated by the Office in January 2025, which contained links to the documents of the time.⁸
- 241.** If there were any changes to the list of Members of chief industrial importance, the fulfilment of the conditions for the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment would be reassessed on the basis of the new list. If a Government that had ratified the amendment was no longer on the

⁸ Note on the allocation of Government seats in the Governing Body.

list, that ratification would no longer be counted towards the ratifications by Members of chief industrial importance.

- 242. The Government representative of India** sought clarification on what had led to the formulation of the current draft decision, which appeared to go beyond the Governing Body's decision at its 353rd Session. He asked whether the process would be an interim arrangement pending the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment and, if not, what the framework or periodicity of future reviews would be.
- 243. The Government representative of Malawi** reiterated that article 7 did not state that the ten Members appointed to non-elective seats would sit permanently. Her reading was that the Members of chief industrial importance had a prerogative to choose among themselves who would represent their interests for the term of office of that Governing Body, which was stipulated in article 7(5) as three years. She asked how article 7(5) was tied to those Member States who held non-elective seats.
- 244. The Government representative of South Africa** supported the view that article 7 did not provide that the ten seats of Members of chief industrial importance were permanent. Paragraph 3 of article 7 provided that the Governing Body shall appoint the Members of chief industrial importance as occasion required, which could mean that there could be a determination every three years when the Governing Body's term of office ended. Moreover, the provision could mean that there could be more than ten Members of chief industrial importance according to the criteria, of which ten could be appointed to the Governing Body.
- 245. The Chairperson** reminded the Governing Body that the discussion should be related to the draft decision.
- 246. The Government representative of Barbados** responded that the expert committee to which the draft decision referred would need to receive instructions on the number of Members of chief industrial importance that it would need to determine. His reading of the Constitution suggested that the Organization as a whole could have an unlimited number of Members of chief industrial importance, as no limit was stated, but that the Governing Body must appoint no more than ten of them.
- 247. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, the Government representative of the Niger recalled that the Governing Body had decided during its ongoing discussion on democratization at its 353rd Session to place the item on the agenda of the current session and that the implementation of the decision would be informed by the Governing Body's discussion, including the answers to the questions raised. The document containing an update on the status of ratification of the 1986 Amendment ⁹ had been presented for information only, but was linked to the current discussion.
- 248. The Government representative of the Russian Federation** said that the representative of Barbados had raised a very interesting point on the scope of the mandate of the impartial committee, because the issues raised pertaining to article 7(2) and (5) appeared to be a matter of interpretation of the Constitution. If the Governing Body decided to proceed with the determination of the ten Members of chief industrial importance, the impartial committee would have to discuss constitutional interpretations, on which the Governing Body would need to provide guidance.

⁹ GB.356/INS/INF/5.

- 249. The Legal Adviser** explained that under paragraph 1 of article 7 of the Constitution, the Governing Body was composed of 56 regular members, 28 of which representing Governments. Paragraph 2 indicated that out of those 28 seats, 18 were elected and 10 were for the Members of chief industrial importance and were not elected. Paragraph 5 clearly linked the period of office with an election. Elections were held for 18 of the Government regular members every three years; the next election would be in June 2027. The ten Members of chief industrial importance were not elected but were determined by the impartial committee on the basis of criteria. Those ten remained members of the Governing Body until a new determination was made. Appendix I to the Office document showed that the Members of chief industrial importance had always been determined based on the number specified in the Constitution – eight initially and thereafter ten. The term “chief industrial importance” conveyed the concept of a ranking of the ten Members at the global level.
- 250.** The mandate of the impartial committee was clear from article 1.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, which referred only to the determination of criteria and the application of those criteria to determine the list. The committee would be composed of statistical experts, who would carry out a technical, quantitative determination only and then advise the Governing Body.
- 251. The Government representative of Barbados** expressed his strong view that article 7(2) did not suggest that the committee of experts directly chose the ten Members to be appointed to the Governing Body; his reading was that the article provided that those ten Members would be appointed by the Members of chief industrial importance. That implied that the committee could determine a group of more than ten countries that were Members of chief industrial importance and that those countries could then decide among themselves which ten of them would be appointed to the Governing Body.
- 252. The Chairperson** indicated that the title of article 7 was “Governing Body” and therefore its provisions could not apply to the entire membership of the Organization. The committee of experts would produce a ranking of the ten Members of chief industrial importance based on impartial quantitative economic criteria. The number of Members that would be considered to be of chief industrial importance was determined by the Constitution, which currently provided for ten. The Officers of the Governing Body would recommend the names of those ten countries to the Governing Body based on the advice of the impartial committee. There was no ambiguity in the ILO Constitution or the past practice of the ILO. The expression “as occasion requires” was extremely flexible; there would be no reason not to conduct a determination every three years if the Governing Body considered it appropriate. However, the trigger required a collective decision by the Governing Body, which was the subject of the current discussion.
- 253.** A member of the Governing Body that was not elected – namely a Member of chief industrial importance – had a permanent seat – and not an elected seat – until the Governing Body considered that a new determination should be conducted. The trigger could be anything on which the Governing Body agreed. The majority had now decided that it was the right time.
- 254.** If the Governing Body decided by consensus to launch a new determination, a proposed composition of a committee of experts would be presented at its June 2026 session. Once the committee had completed its work, and based on the recommendation of the Officers, the Governing Body would determine the ten countries on the list at its November 2026 session. It would be important for Governing Body members to raise questions at that point. If a new determination was adopted, five ratifications of Members on the newly determined list would be required for the entry into force of the 1986 Amendment.

- 255. The Government representative of Barbados** respectfully disagreed with the Chairperson's response to his interpretation of article 7.
- 256. The Government representative of Spain** asked whether a Member that had lost, or was at risk of losing, the right to vote owing to unpaid contributions could be designated a Member of chief industrial importance, and what would happen if a Member that had ratified the 1986 Amendment when it was not a Member of chief industrial importance was subsequently included in the list.
- 257. The Government representative of South Africa** indicated that there was a need for a proper interpretation of article 7 of the Constitution, as Governing Body members differed in their understanding.
- 258. The Government representative of Brazil** asked what was required for the Governing Body to consider it necessary to conduct a new determination, recalling that the minutes of the 353rd Session of the Governing Body stated that "as occasion requires" had been interpreted to be applied whenever a new development of sufficient importance occurred, for instance, when a Member of chief industrial importance left the ILO or if a Member considered that it fulfilled the criteria and requested the Governing Body to review the list of Members of chief industrial importance.¹⁰
- 259. The Government representative of India** observed that at its 353rd Session, the Governing Body had decided to include on the agenda of the current session an item on the process of determination of the Members of chief industrial importance, and asked what had prompted the Office to include a new determination of those Members in the current draft decision. He also asked whether the process would be an interim or transitional approach towards implementation of the 1986 Amendment and, if not, what the framework and periodicity of such determinations would be.
- 260. The Legal Adviser** said that payment of assessed contributions was not among the criteria used to determine the industrial importance of a country, which were quantitative economic criteria.
- 261.** The withdrawal from the ILO of a Member of chief industrial importance would mean that only nine such Members would remain on the list. As the Constitution specified that there must be ten, a new determination would be triggered. That had happened when Germany had withdrawn before the Second World War and when the United States had withdrawn in 1977.
- 262.** The explanation of "as occasion requires" in the minutes of the 353rd Session was aligned with paragraph 14 of the Office document, which explained how the Governing Body had interpreted the expression.
- 263. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, the Government representative of the Niger said that the fact that non-payment of contributions had not been used among the criteria in the past did not mean that it could not be in the future. The criteria were general and dynamic, and the Governing Body and the expert committee were not bound by past practice. He expressed the hope that the committee would take account of those observations.
- 264. The Director-General** recalled that the discussion on legal aspects had led to an impasse in the discussion on democratization at the 353rd Session, which had resulted in a compromise whereby the Governing Body had decided that it would look at the process of determining the ten Members of chief industrial importance. The Office would continue its efforts to promote

¹⁰ GB.353/PV, para. 166.

ratification of the 1986 Amendment that would abolish the Members of chief industrial importance. Pending its entry into force, the Governing Body could decide to trigger the process for a new determination or to maintain the status quo, which was why the draft decision offered both options. Should the Governing Body decide to proceed with a determination, he urged its members to pay close attention to the independence of the experts, which was of paramount importance and linked to the credibility of the system.

- 265. The Government representative of the Russian Federation** noted the Legal Adviser's response that the impartial committee's mandate was strictly technical. He understood that it would not involve constitutional interpretations, but asked what the procedure would be if a constitutional interpretation did prove necessary. The interrelation between the process under consideration and the 1986 Amendment raised an interesting legal question of whether a new determination was an appropriate means of effecting the entry into force of an amendment to an international treaty. The Governing Body might have to consider that question in the future if it decided to proceed with a determination.
- 266. The Chief Statistician** explained that the terms of reference of the independent committee of experts would include ensuring the transparency and objectivity of the process. As described in the Office document, the criteria were based on the technical aspects of assessing the economic size of countries. Any additional criteria that the committee proposed to the Governing Body must be focused on the quantitative aspects of assessing economic importance; they must not be debatable or introduce any potential bias.
- 267. The Government representative of India** thanked the Director-General for clarifying that the Governing Body had not decided at its 353rd Session to initiate the process and that the Office had proposed the draft decision for the Governing Body to decide whether to proceed.
- 268. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, the Government representative of the Niger said that nowhere in the Constitution or the rules applicable to the Governing Body were quantitative or technical economic criteria mentioned. The Governing Body could note the past practice but was not bound by it, either for the potential review under discussion or in the future. He requested the Director-General to take the Governing Body's guidance into account when proposing a list of experts for appointment to the committee.
- 269. The Government representative of Uruguay** observed that the interpretation of the term "industrial" had evolved from its literal meaning of manufacturing and factory work to the broader concept of economic importance, which was appropriate. An evolutive interpretation should also be applied to the criteria to ensure that they were more closely related to the aims and objectives of the Organization and not merely the quantitative aspects. Under such an approach, he suggested that the criteria could include the Human Development Index.
- 270. The Director-General** emphasized that it would be for the expert statisticians to decide independently on the criteria that they would apply, which would maintain the credibility of the exercise. The outcome of their work would be presented to the Governing Body, which would decide whether to accept it.
- 271. The Chairperson** summarized the discussion by explaining that the Governing Body had to choose between two options: proceeding with a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance or maintaining the status quo. If it decided to proceed, the Governing Body would decide on the determination at its November 2026 session, which would mean that it would decide on the experts to be appointed at its June 2026 session. The appointed experts would produce a ranking of the top ten Members of chief industrial importance, who would be permanent, not elected, members of the Governing Body. If there was a need to

clarify the interpretation of the Constitution, that would not need to be at the current session. It appeared that there was a trigger to proceed with a new determination because there seemed to be consensus among Governing Body members on doing so.

- 272. The Worker spokesperson** said that as there was overwhelming support for proceeding with a determination, the Workers' group supported the first option in the draft decision.
- 273. The Employer spokesperson** said that as the experts would identify the appropriate criteria, the Employers' group also supported the first option in the draft decision. He also observed that there was agreement within the Governing Body to proceed with a determination, and there had been no proposed amendments to the draft decision. As there were still many questions pending, it would be useful to have an information session in which they could be clarified, but because they were not linked to the decision itself, that should take place outside the Governing Body plenary.
- 274. Speaking on behalf of 74 countries**, the Government representative of Bangladesh confirmed that they also supported the first option, to proceed with a determination.
- 275. The Government representative of the Russian Federation** noted that some Governments, including his own, had clearly stated that they did not agree with proceeding with a determination. Furthermore, before constituents could express a position on the draft decision, clarity was needed on what the determination process would entail, such as whether the Governing Body or the Office would decide on the criteria, and on whether there would be an interpretation of article 7(2) and (5) of the Constitution in connection with the determination and, if so, how that would be undertaken.
- 276. The Chairperson** indicated that the step-by-step process and timeline from March to November 2026 were set out in paragraph 30 of the Office document.
- 277. The Director-General**, referring to that paragraph, explained that if the Governing Body decided to trigger the process, the Office would submit a proposed list of experts, along with background information, for the Governing Body's approval in June. Neither the Governing Body nor the Office would determine the criteria; the experts appointed by the Governing Body would do so independently. The results of the committee's work would be presented to the Governing Body for its assessment and decision in November 2026.
- 278.** While recognizing that despite the Office's explanations, some Governing Body members disagreed with its interpretation of article 7 of the Constitution, he did not see a need for a constitutional interpretation exercise. If the process in paragraph 30 of the document was sufficiently clear and agreeable to the Governing Body and if there was a consensus on the first option of the draft decision, the Office would proceed with it and report back to the Governing Body in June.
- 279. Speaking on behalf of France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States**, the Government representative of the United Kingdom said that a decision to determine the Members of chief industrial importance would also reaffirm their continuing importance as a feature of the ILO's governance. If the Governing Body decided to go ahead with it, the process must be based on robust and internationally agreed statistical standards and guided by objective, transparent criteria that reflected economic reality and minimized politicization, and were designed in a way that safeguarded the overall stability and effectiveness of the Governing Body's functioning. He underlined the importance of clarity from the outset on the composition and mandate of the impartial committee of experts.

- 280.** He requested further explanations on which Members would be excluded from serving on the committee – in particular those that might fall just above or below any possible line of demarcation between Members of chief industrial importance and other Members – and on which substantive considerations and objective parameters such exclusions would be based. He also requested clarification from the Office on how it would organize the work of the June session so as to avoid time pressure and costly night sittings, including by careful sequencing of agenda items and realistic planning of the time required for substantive exchanges. The group of countries did not intend to stand in the way of an emerging consensus in favour of the option of undertaking the determination of Members of chief industrial importance.
- 281. The Legal Adviser** explained that impartiality was the main factor in the appointment of the expert committee, which was referred to in article 7(3) of the Constitution as “an impartial committee”. Paragraph 1.3.2 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body referred to “experts qualified to advise on the most appropriate criteria of industrial importance and on the relative industrial importance of States assessed on the basis of such criteria”. Therefore, the Governing Body had always appointed experts of the highest statistical authority.
- 282.** The Office had addressed the question of the demarcation between a State of chief industrial importance and the other countries in paragraph 13 of the document containing additional information.¹¹ ILO records did not show how the demarcation had been established, but it appeared to have been based on the previous determination of the Members of chief industrial importance. That would be rather impracticable currently, as 43 years had elapsed since the previous determination. The critical factors to be applied were the impartiality and expertise of the experts.

Decision

283. The Governing Body:

- (a) **decided to undertake a determination of the Members of chief industrial importance and to place a corresponding item on the agenda of its 358th Session (November 2026) for decision;**
- (b) **invited the Director-General to submit a proposal concerning the appointment of a committee of experts and the related financial arrangements to its Officers, so that the Governing Body could take the corresponding decisions at its 357th Session (June 2026).**

(GB.356/INS/5, paragraph 31)

6. Review of the modalities of recurrent discussions under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022 (GB.356/INS/6)

- 284. The Employer spokesperson** supported the objectives of the recurrent discussions as set out in the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022 (Social Justice Declaration). He maintained that, especially in the current context of reform, the recurrent discussions served as a valuable tool for the governance and recognition of the Organization’s delivery on its mandate to promote decent work through strengthened institutional capacity and effective implementation of international labour

¹¹ GB.356/INS/5/Additional information.

standards. Nonetheless, there were ways in which the format of the recurrent discussions could be strengthened to ensure they consistently and effectively served their purpose.

285. He called for more concise background reports for recurrent discussions, which should include clearer explanations of the root causes behind ILO activities, based on inputs from national constituents and be aligned with conclusions from independent high-level evaluations. On the functioning of the recurrent discussion committees during Conference sessions, he opposed the proposal for inclusion of interactive high-level panels as being too burdensome on constituents and lending themselves to politicization. The conclusions of recurrent discussions should concisely reflect the consensus reached in the discussion.
286. He emphasized the importance to ensure a clear distinction between recurrent discussions and general discussions of the Conference and to preserve such a distinction in all phases of the discussion, in the conclusions and in their follow-up. His group did not support the proposals in paragraphs 46, 47 and 55(c) of the Office document to include a section on interactions among different strands of normative action – such as references to conclusions of the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS), including General Surveys. That went beyond the framework for recurrent discussions adopted by the Governing Body in 2017, which allowed General Surveys to inform recurrent discussions, but not the opposite. He requested clarification from the Office on how to clearly distinguish the recurrent discussion from general discussion items.
287. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the opportunity to strengthen the effectiveness of recurrent discussions. She stressed the importance of adhering to the framework adopted by the Governing Body in 2017, urged a continuation of the practice of establishing preparatory working groups involving specialists from headquarters, the field, ACTRAV and ACT/EMP as had been done for the preparation of the background report for the 2026 discussion. She welcomed the recommendation in paragraph 17 to strengthen coherence across the multilateral system and supported the alignment of recurrent discussions to cycles of high-level evaluations and systematic reviews. She also expressed appreciation for the call to strengthen linkages between recurrent discussions and elements of the ILO normative action, including by integrating information provided by General Surveys in a more systematic manner and a dedicated section on the interactions between all the different strands of normative action.
288. She supported the suggestion to hold informal preliminary briefings and suggested that interactive high-level panels be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Regarding outcome documents, she expressed support for restructuring them into two parts, but streamlining the introductory text. She supported the idea of a funding mechanism to promote follow-up of recurrent discussions and would welcome more information from the Office on that.
289. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Senegal recognized the need to review the modality of recurrent discussions in view of improving the quality and relevance of background reports, bolstering the analysis of synergies and enhancing follow-up actions. He stressed the importance that recurrent discussions draw on General Surveys and the Standards Review Mechanism (SRM) to better guide future standard-setting initiatives. Recurrent discussions should help to integrate the commitments of the ILO's programme into the follow-up to the Second World Summit for Social Development held in 2025.
290. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Spain, confirmed the value and relevance of recurrent discussions as a means to inform the Organization's priorities and programmes of action. IMEC regretted the lack of rigorous assessment of how the conclusions had informed programming outcomes. Recurrent discussions should strengthen linkages

between related discussions and include dedicated space for reflection on the ratification of ILO Conventions, the SRM and the conclusions of the CAS, including those arising from General Surveys. With regard to background reports, IMEC appreciated the involvement of relevant departments at headquarters and the field, as well as of the social partners in their preparation and commended the scheduling of a high-level evaluation and synthesis review of development cooperation activities in preparation for the recurrent discussion on social protection in 2027. On the modalities of the conclusions, the group agreed with a two-part structure, one on trends and one on priorities for action.

291. He requested more information about the proposed mechanism for funding follow-up actions and evaluation of the impact of recurrent discussions and on the feasibility of including high-level interactive panels during recurring discussions.
292. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh stressed that the Social Justice Declaration had been a timely contribution from the ILO to address challenges arising from globalization. Recurrent discussions were a tool for reinvigorating ILO actions to promote decent work in response to identified needs and priorities of constituents. He confirmed that the modalities for recurrent discussions adopted by the Governing Body in 2017 remained relevant and expressed a preference for strengthening high-level evaluations as a mechanism to assess ILO action. Their findings should be incorporated into recurrent discussions and action plans stemming from recurrent discussions should be integrated into DWCPs and global programming.
293. ASPAG appreciated the endorsement of the Doha Political Declaration by the Governing Body and urged the Office to establish the strategic alignment of the recurrent discussions with the Doha Political Declaration's relevant specific commitments. He requested more information on whether the Office would be able to allocate the necessary funds for the recurrent discussions in the future.
294. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with the statement: Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. He reaffirmed the value and relevance of recurrent discussions aimed at understanding the diverse realities and needs of ILO Member States and identifying gaps with respect to the four interrelated strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda. He recalled the Doha Political Declaration in which the Governing Body had endorsed a three-pronged approach as follow-up to the Second World Summit for Social Development (2025) and underscored its continued relevance for aligning commitments directly relevant to the ILO's mandate with recurrent discussions.
295. **A Government representative of India** welcomed the review of the recurrent discussions' modalities and stressed that those discussions must remain a dynamic tool to understand the diverse realities and needs of Member States with respect to the four strategic objectives, with a view to harnessing the Office's capacity to provide appropriate technical support and research to Member States. He supported the suggestion in paragraph 21 of the Office document that background reports should focus more on results and lessons learned from ILO action rather than providing exhaustive compilations of activities. He supported the proposal to structure the conclusions in two parts, one on trends and challenges and another on the priority areas for ILO action. Mitigation strategies provided by Member States must be reflected to ensure that the conclusions respect national circumstances and policy space especially in relation to low-income countries.
296. **A Government representative of the United States** supported efforts to improve the analytical quality and relevance of background reports, including by integrating inputs from

high-level evaluations and General Surveys, as well as evidence reflecting regional and national realities. The involvement of headquarters and field specialists in preparing the reports was welcomed. The ILO should ensure greater coherence across different activities and not misuse such linkages as a basis to expand its mandate. While appreciating the proposal to enhance the follow-up to recurrent discussions, he asked for clarification regarding a mechanism to dedicate resources for that purpose, underscoring that such a mechanism must be transparent, cost-effective and aligned with existing budgetary processes without creating new commitments. He expressed particular concern about the proposal to include a table listing high-level outputs corresponding to Sustainable Development Goals' targets, which he viewed as a form of soft global governance infringing national sovereignty. He asked the Office to confirm whether the background reports for recurrent discussions would continue to include such tables. Expressing disagreement with the idea of aligning the follow-up to recurrent discussions with the Doha Political Declaration, he suggested that follow-up action plans should focus on responding to specific requests for technical assistance from Member States to support the fulfilment of their labour obligations and commitments.

- 297. A Government representative of Colombia** stressed that recurrent discussions were a central governance tool that enabled the ILO to align its activities with the priorities of its constituents. Their purpose was not only to assess progress made on each of the strategic objectives, but also to identify emerging priorities and adequate global policy responses. Thanks to recurrent discussions the issue of wage policies and living wages had been placed as a cornerstone of social justice. His country participated actively in the Global Coalition for Social Justice, convinced that social justice should be reflected in structural reforms and concrete results. He noted the progress made in Colombia with a labour reform that strengthened workers' rights, enhanced the formalization of traditionally excluded economic sectors and broadened social protection coverage, as well as its achievements concerning wage policies that guaranteed decent wages. He regretted that the global forum on social justice was not carried out in person, and requested that in the future it be organized in person at least every two years in Geneva.
- 298. A representative of the Secretary-General** (Department Director) stated, in response to certain questions raised, that recurrent discussions should place greater emphasis on assessing progress and identifying gaps that could be most effectively addressed within that specific mechanism. He underscored the importance of clarifying the respective roles of general discussions and recurrent discussions, with the former focusing primarily on policy guidance, and the latter providing direction to the Office in relation to programme and budget priorities, resource mobilization and operational follow-up. In that context, the Office would welcome guidance from constituents on how best to enhance synergies while maintaining a clear distinction between the two processes.
- 299.** Regarding working methods, he highlighted efforts to strengthen internal coordination and consultation across the Office, as well as a shift towards more concise reporting formats, in line with preferences expressed by constituents. He also emphasized the need to make more effective use of limited time during discussions, with a view to delivering clearer and more actionable outcomes. On the question of follow-up, he clarified that the intention was not to prioritize certain actions over others, including normative actions, but rather to improve coherence, sequencing and interlinkages across different areas of work. The objective was to ensure that the outcomes of recurrent discussions could more effectively inform the full range of Office activities. Proposals relating to the allocation of resources for follow-up actions would need to be considered within the broader context of the ongoing reprioritization process and related budgetary discussions. The organization of high-level interactive panels would be

decided upon through informal tripartite consultations to confirm if there was clear tripartite interest. Finally, addressing a question from the representative of the United States, he clarified that references to the SDGs in the action plans were not intended to imply stand-alone SDG activities, but rather to reflect how the implementation of the programme and budget contributed to their achievement, in line with established Office practice.

300. The Employer spokesperson stressed that the primary objective of the recurrent items should be to ensure consistency of ILO activities with the strategic objectives set out in the Social Justice Declaration. Given that the Declaration did not include references to normative action, they should not be incorporated in the recurrent discussions. He reasserted his group's opposition to the introduction of a section on normative issues in background reports, as well as to the organization of high-level panels. The conclusions should focus primarily on guidance to the Office rather than to constituents. While maintaining these reservations, the Employers' group could support the draft decision.

301. A Government representative of the United States stated that as key concerns remained unresolved, particularly regarding the proposed format and the inclusion of references to the SDGs, he requested to put the draft decision to a vote.

(The decision was adopted with 50 votes in favour, 1 vote against and no abstentions.)

Decision

302. The Governing Body:

- (a) **reaffirmed the role of recurrent discussions in strengthening the capacity of the ILO to support Members in promoting decent work through the four strategic objectives and in contributing to a more strategic setting of the Conference agenda;**
- (b) **requested the Director-General to take the necessary steps to follow up on the guidance it provided during the discussion of document GB.356/INS/6 with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the recurrent discussions for the current cycle (2026–30).**

(GB.356/INS/6, paragraph 58)

7. The ILO in a changing multilateral environment: Towards better effectiveness and efficiency (GB.356/INS/7)

303. The Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, which had been proposed by the Workers' group and circulated by the Office, which read:

65. The Governing Body:

- (a) reiterated its concern regarding the financial and budgetary challenges facing the Organization;
- (b) recalled and confirmed its decision of November 2025, providing the framework and principles for the reform process;
- (c) ~~endorsed the strategic vision for the ILO and~~ requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance in further developing the reform process;
- (d) ~~endorsed~~ requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance regarding the proposals for reprioritization and other measures to generate efficiency gains in 2026–279, and ~~requested the Director-General to ensure that any savings realized are managed prudently and applied strictly in accordance with the priorities set out in the approved Programme and Budget;~~

~~(d)~~ requested the Director-General to present an update on the implementation of the reform process to the 357th Session of the Governing Body (~~November~~ June 2026).

- 304.** The Governing Body also had before it some amendments proposed by the EU (EU) Member States and circulated by the Office. The proposal was to add a new subparagraph (d) and to amend the subsequent subparagraph, to read:

(d) requested the Director-General to continue examining overlaps and synergies with other UN agencies that could lead to identification of additional areas for de-prioritization, thus contributing to additional savings;

~~(d)~~ requested the Director-General to present a document for information on the reform process to the 357th Session of the Governing Body (June 2026) and an update on the implementation of the reform process to the 358th Session of the Governing Body (November 2026).

- 305. A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General for the Regions and Director of the Office of the Director-General) reported that the reform process was shifting from the design to the implementation phase. All the task teams – which had clear deliverables and timelines – were operational, as was the Governance Committee. The overall timeline of the reform reflected the interdependence of measures and the Governing Body's oversight role. Headquarters restructuring was expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2026, subject to the Governing Body's discussion and the ongoing reprioritization exercise, and would be followed by discussions with partners in the UN system on avoiding duplication. Needs analyses and a review of field structures were under way to strengthen capacity in the regions and ensure alignment with broader UN reforms. A cost-benefit analysis for the proposed global service centre would be presented to the Governing Body in November 2026. Work was also ongoing to streamline internal business processes and optimize the use of office space. In that regard, she acknowledged the support of the Government of Switzerland in promoting the efficient use of office space and conference facilities across the Geneva-based international organizations.

- 306.** The Office was continuing discussions – also with the support of the Government of Switzerland – on strengthening solutions powered by AI. It had improved internal communication and would soon launch a public website to provide regular updates and background information on the reform. The Governance Committee was reviewing a reform risk register, and a results-based monitoring framework with measurable indicators was expected by April 2026. She reaffirmed the Office's commitment to engage regularly with the Staff Union through the Joint Negotiation Committee and welcomed the recently signed memorandum of understanding on that subject. The Office's overarching priority was to implement the reform in a coherent, timely and transparent manner, with clear accountability at every stage.

- 307. Another representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) made a presentation on financial matters relevant to several interrelated documents before the Governing Body. A copy of the presentation can be found on the [Governing Body website](#).

- 308.** Noting that liquidity was one of the Office's key concerns, he explained that, to date, the Office had received approximately 35 per cent of the assessed contributions for 2026, above the normal ten-year average, from 66 Member States. However, 107 Member States had not paid their contributions, with 14 having made partial payments. Documents GB.356/INS/7 and GB.356/PFA/4 reflected two different scenarios. Assuming the normal receipt of income, the scenario set out in INS/7 was aimed at increasing the Office's efficiency and effectiveness, based on a reform process to be carried out over the biennia 2026–27 and 2028–29. Document

PFA/4 presented contingency measures in case of an income shortfall, aimed at accelerated cost reductions. Document INS/7 projected savings of 8.9 per cent (US\$82.5 million) in 2026–27, whereas PFA/4 assumed a 20 per cent reduction of US\$186.1 million, divided between staff and non-staff costs.

309. As a knowledge-based organization, the Office's delivery depended on its staff and the knowledge they held. Document INS/7 referred to a reduction of 120 regular budget positions (7 per cent of the current workforce) over the two biennia through reform measures. Document PFA/4 referred to a potential reduction of 60 regular budget positions by the end of 2027, with another 350 positions potentially affected by contingency measures. Document INS/7 provided for an expenditure reduction in the field of US\$25.2 million and at headquarters of US\$57.3 million. Under PFA/4, the reduction would be US\$45.7 million and US\$75.1 million respectively, leaving a balance of US\$65.3 million to be covered by a range of unidentified staff positions. Under INS/7, some savings had already been achieved through the reorganization of space, the reduction of non-staff and short-term costs, and the reorganization of the Office. Other savings would be achieved over the course of the current biennium, including through the review and streamlining of business processes and reprioritization. As to the changes in regular budget positions foreseen in 2026, he explained that, at headquarters, 57 positions would be abolished, 24 relocated and 20 reprofiled, generating savings of US\$24 million. The cuts would be made at all staffing levels.
310. In relation to the timeline for measures to be taken, the Governance Committee and task teams were in place, senior management positions were being streamlined and departments merged. Agreements had been reached with host countries concerning the coverage of costs for ILO offices. The cost containment measures would continue as funds were received, and a methodology for implementing contingency measures would be put in place through negotiation. An ILO reform web page would be accessible to all constituents. Talks would be held after June 2026 on whether to proceed with contingency measures. Everything depended on the Member States that had not paid their contributions. Non-payment would give rise to the need for an earlier decision and, if payments were made, a decision would be required by the third quarter of 2026, to come into effect on 1 January 2027. The Governing Body would be provided with regular updates on the ILO's financial position. Furthermore, the ILO web page was updated regularly with information on the status of assessed contributions.
311. **The Worker spokesperson** said that understanding the relationship between the various documents relating to the reform and the financial situation of the ILO was no mean feat. However, it was clear that the continued uncertainty about the ILO's financial outlook for 2026 and beyond and the unresolved issue of unpaid financial contributions and arrears called for a prudent approach. She recalled that, at its 355th Session (November 2025), after considering two different scenarios, the Governing Body had endorsed a two-pronged endeavour of implementing immediate financial efficiency measures and undertaking a thoughtful structural reform of the Organization to secure its medium to long-term efficacy and impact. Document INS/7 had been prepared to reflect that endeavour. Document PFA/4 presented potential contingency measures in the event of an income shortfall. It seemed, therefore, that the Governing Body once again had two scenarios before it. The scenario presented in PFA/4 would inevitably mean that the proposals and measures set out in INS/7 would have to be put on hold. Noting that INS/7 referred to a 12.5 per cent reduction in budget allocations, she asked where that figure had come from and whether it would be part of, or in addition to, the 20 per cent reduction mentioned in PFA/4 if the contingency scenario was triggered.
312. She asked for confirmation that any reductions in spending in the current biennium would not lead to a reduction in the level of the budget in the next biennium. She acknowledged the

usefulness of regularly assessing whether the Organization was fit for purpose and delivering on its constitutional mandate. In the current unstable global environment in which workers' rights were increasingly under threat, there was clearly a need for a stronger and more impactful ILO, possibly warranting a discussion in the future on the need for a raise in regular contributions. However, the current reform discussions must remain firmly anchored in the framework and principles agreed upon by the Governing Body in its decision of November 2025. While her group was open to discussing adaptations that were in line with the Programme and Budget for 2026–27, the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–29 and other key decisions, it was not in favour of endorsing a broader, open-ended reform process that would extend beyond the current biennium. In the document under consideration, the Office could have indicated more explicitly how the proposals aligned with and implemented the elements of the November 2025 decision.

- 313.** Given the ongoing resource uncertainty, documents INS/7 and PFA/4 would both need to be revisited. Despite the need to focus on short-term measures, she welcomed the indications that longer-term mitigation measures – such as the establishment of a revolving fund – were being explored. As the strategic vision for the reform was firmly anchored in the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–29, there was no need to renew the endorsement of that vision or to discuss it further. Regarding the ILO's engagement in the UN80 Initiative and system-wide coherence, she remained concerned about the simplistic assessments of overlap between the work of the ILO and that of other UN agencies. Her group was not yet convinced by the amendment proposed by the EU Member States on that subject. The ILO's role as the specialized agency for the world of work must be fully respected.
- 314.** Noting that the reprioritization exercise should identify areas to be strengthened and not just those to be scaled back, she said that the question before the Governing Body was how to ensure that the ILO could continue to deliver on its constitutional mandate in the current challenging context, by developing standards for the current and future world of work to safeguard minimum protection of workers and level playing fields for business; ensuring that the supervisory system could function with authority to monitor and support the implementation of ratified Conventions; promoting respect for freedom of association and civil liberties and fostering diversity, equality and inclusion; and supporting social dialogue and collective bargaining to manage workplaces and societies that would have to adjust to current and future insecurities and challenges. That would mean prioritizing areas that fell within the ILO's unique remit and strengthening its role in the UN system as the centre of excellence in the world of work; promoting an inclusive approach where all workers, regardless of their status, benefited from social and labour protection; safeguarding the fundamental principles and rights at work; and advancing work on collective bargaining and living wages, labour migration and social protection.
- 315.** Cautioning that the agreed terminations and natural attrition could result in the loss of essential expertise at headquarters and in the field, she called for a clear plan to safeguard critical capacities at headquarters, ensure a balanced approach to terminations and account for varied regional and country needs.
- 316.** Noting the repositioning of sectoral work within the Office structure, she reiterated her group's long-standing concerns about the lack of consistency with respect to that important work. The strong engagement from major multinational enterprises and global bodies at recent sectoral meetings was evidence of the relevance of those meetings. Reducing sectoral activities for marginal cost savings would undermine a core comparative advantage of the ILO. She welcomed the clarification that decent work in public services and agriculture would remain at the heart of the ILO's work, noting that the proposal should be developed further. Her group

continued to challenge the focus on the number of sectoral meetings and called for further discussions to identify ways to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of the ILO's sectoral work and to create an industrial policies hub to face future challenges.

317. She noted with satisfaction that the important work under the four priority action programmes would continue until the review of those programmes had been completed. Noting that accelerating the implementation of the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), was a core priority for her group, she called for greater coordination across the Office and increased support to the constituents to that end, and recognized the important role of the social and solidarity economy and of cooperatives in that context. The discontinuation of the priority action programmes should not mean that the topics would disappear from the ILO agenda.
318. On the Office restructuring, she noted with concern that there was a big gap in the senior management structure and that only one of the four clusters was dedicated to the ILO's core mandate. She hoped that the restructuring would not detract time and energy from important policy and technical work and asked how it would contribute to addressing the financial challenges facing the Organization. She continued to have strong concerns about the partial relocation of policy departments and technical staff and supported the proposal to put decisions on such relocations on hold. She welcomed the appointment of a Chief Economist and asked what the implications of that appointment would be for other departments. She also asked for further information on the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, given the current circumstances in the region. She also asked for more information about the proposed elimination of 120 posts – for example, she would like to know whether the posts would be filled again in the future – and about the savings that would be generated by the global service centre.
319. Introducing her group's amended version of the draft decision, she reiterated that all reform measures must remain firmly anchored in the framework and guiding principles agreed upon by the Governing Body in November 2025 and that the ILO's strategic vision did not need further endorsement. As the discussion on reprioritization was ongoing, the Director-General should be asked simply to take into account the Governing Body's guidance regarding the proposals, and measures should be limited to the biennium 2026–27. As contingency measures might be needed as early as September 2026, the item should be placed on the agenda of the 357th Session (June 2026) of the Governing Body.
320. **The Employer spokesperson** expressed disappointment that his group's input during the consultation process had not been adequately reflected in document INS/7. The document lacked ambition and did not set out a clear strategic vision for the ILO's future. While it identified areas for de-prioritization, it did not sufficiently identify the areas in which resources should be focused. It set out what appeared to be a minor recalibration rather than the ambitious reform that was needed.
321. The absence of clear priorities created difficulties also in respect of the contingency scenario set out in document PFA/4. In a financial crisis, a clear list of priorities would be needed, to determine where cuts should or should not be made. The global economic upheaval, geopolitical tensions and fragmentation of the multilateral system, as well as the new demands arising from digitalization, climate change and skills shortages, required the ILO to rethink its priorities and methods. Priority should be given to strengthening the implementation of the fundamental principles and rights at work; promoting competitive and sustainable enterprises; effectively supporting the transition from the informal to the formal economy; and preparing for a world of work heavily impacted by AI. The fact that, at the November 2025 session, all

Governments had called for greater support in respect of institutional capacity-building should be reflected in the reform proposals.

- 322.** Relocating policy staff from headquarters would undermine the ILO's ability to ensure policy coherence, oversight and strategic direction, risked fragmenting institutional memory and would reduce essential interaction with Geneva-based missions and the social partners. While acknowledging the complementary roles of headquarters and field experts, he underscored the need to preserve the necessary normative, technical and policy expertise at headquarters, in line with the Governing Body's November 2025 decision. He called for a clear distinction to be made between policy functions and technical cooperation roles, and for careful consideration of the impact at headquarters when deciding on relocations. While relocations of policy staff had been put on hold, those concerning technical cooperation roles had not. He requested transparent information on the current and planned relocations, including on the number of affected staff, their departments and new functions, the expected implications for headquarters capacity and related mitigation measures.
- 323.** He emphasized the need to revise the body of international labour standards, including by institutionalizing and increasing the effectiveness of the SRM. New standard-setting should proceed only where a global need was jointly identified by all three groups. Success would mean that the body of international labour standards was up-to-date and relevant; all Member States had the capacity to implement and enforce those standards; there was reduced reliance on technical assistance; and conditions were in place to support competitive enterprises and a thriving private sector. Achieving that success would require the ILO to provide more effective support to Member States at the country level, with a focus on capacity- and institution-building; better understand country needs to ensure the efficient use of resources; strengthen country-level work, including DWCPs; and ensure that development cooperation aligned with the programme and budget priorities.
- 324.** He underlined the importance of preserving the ILO's tripartite structure, calling for binding consultation mechanisms to ensure that employers' and workers' views were taken into account at all stages of normative and operational processes. A culture shift was needed to ensure an impartial approach across all areas of the ILO's work and to guarantee that the views of employers carried equal weight. Steps should be taken to ensure greater geographical balance in staff recruitment and the representation of all three constituent groups in key positions. Noting an imbalance in resource allocation between ACTRAV and ACT/EMP, with the former receiving more than double the funding than the latter, he called for more equitable support.
- 325.** Noting the need for greater clarity regarding roles in headquarters and the field, he said that country offices and Decent Work Teams should identify national needs, while headquarters should retain responsibility for policies, standards, research and policy tools. Field offices should apply those tools to build national capacity. There was also a need for a clear process for identifying and responding to country needs. There was significant duplication of work at headquarters, with overlapping functions and parallel activities across departments. Eliminating such duplication was essential to improving efficiency.
- 326.** He cautioned that mainstreaming informality risked diluting roles and responsibilities, and called for a dedicated focal point in that regard. Clear criteria were needed to assess the relevance, impact and cost-effectiveness of meetings and activities, including to improve the efficiency of the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body through streamlined agendas and shorter sessions. He noted that the proposal for a temporary reduction in sectoral meetings lacked ambition, and called instead for a comprehensive review

and significant reduction in the number of meetings, based on their relevance, value and outcomes.

327. He expressed concerns about programme coherence, noting for example that placing the Better Work programme into a single sectoral delivery workstream overlooked the programme's links to productivity, enterprise performance and working conditions. Careful consideration should be given to the placement of the ILO's work on supply chains in the new structure. Digitalization and innovation should become strategic drivers supported by efficient reporting, modern analytic tools and improved digital governance.
328. Given the evolving nature of the reform process and the exceptional circumstances facing the Organization, he called for a substantive update at the June 2026 session of the Governing Body. The item should be included on the agenda for discussion and not merely for information, despite the short duration of the session. The discussion could not wait until November.
329. He reaffirmed his group's support for modernizing the Organization to enhance impact and provide more tailored support at the national level. Further work was needed to set out a clear and ambitious strategic vision aligned with the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019), to reflect core priorities beyond standard-setting – including employment, skills and productivity and the essential role of sustainable enterprises – and to provide clarity on implementation, relocation, human resources and financial planning.
330. A successful reform would strengthen multilateralism and trust in a rules-based international system. The ILO could build trust only if it acted impartially, maintained coherent standards and preserved its core strengths at headquarters. A modern, efficient and balanced ILO was essential for shaping future labour and social policy and an ambitious reform was necessary to reinforce the ILO's effectiveness and relevance in the year ahead.
331. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom aligned themselves with the statement. She expressed her appreciation to the Office for having organized consultations and welcomed the clear distinction made in documents INS/7 and PFA/4 between structural reform measures and contingency measures, which would enable more informed decision-making by the Governing Body.
332. She expressed support for the reform to enhance the ILO's effectiveness, efficiency, strategic focus, capacity and adaptability in the current multilateral environment and acknowledged the additional challenges arising from the significant shortfalls in assessed contributions. She urged all Member States to pay their arrears and assessed contributions in full and on time and invited the Office to continue to explore ways to strengthen the Organization's financial resilience, including through the further development of financial regulations.
333. She welcomed the reprioritization proposals, including the consolidation of fragmented initiatives, and commended the focus on the ILO's core mandate, particularly its normative and supervisory roles. She expressed support for measures to enhance synergies within the UN system under the UN80 Initiative and to reinforce field capacities. The Office should continue to examine overlaps, gaps and synergies in the work of the ILO and that of other UN agencies, through structured dialogue with the relevant agencies. Such an exercise could lead to the identification of additional areas for de-prioritization, allow for a better division of work and enhance complementarities and cooperation with UN agencies both in the field and at headquarters. By engaging with the relevant UN agencies, the ILO could foster a more effective

multilateral system that delivered optimal results for its constituents. To that end, the EU Member States proposed adding a new subparagraph (d) to the draft decision. She requested information on the discussions already held and the further steps planned in that regard. Any adjustment to ILO engagement in UN system-wide activities should preserve synergies under the UN80 Initiative and ensure the continued promotion of ILO standards.

334. Priority should be given to areas where the ILO added value, including with regard to developing employment policies, promoting decent work opportunities, developing skills, promoting social protection, strengthening labour market institutions and tackling informality, with gender equality and non-discrimination as cross-cutting elements.
335. Regarding business processes, the Office should explore opportunities with other UN agencies to pool services and align administrative policies, including in relation to the establishment of a global service centre. In parallel with the work of the task team, it should identify and pursue immediate administrative efficiencies. She welcomed the confirmation that Geneva would remain the seat of the Organization and expressed support for relocations that were cost-effective, reinforced the ILO's core mandate and generated substantial, lasting savings. She looked forward to the further assessment of the partial relocation of organizational units, requested more information on the creation of the new Office of the Chief Economist and its financial implications, and welcomed the commitment to report regularly on the implementation and impact of the reform.
336. Underscoring the importance of keeping the constituents informed, she said that the Office should present a document for information to the Governing Body at its 357th Session (June 2026), providing an update on the implementation and the impacts of the reform. The EU Member States proposed amending the last subparagraph of the draft decision accordingly.
337. **Speaking on behalf of the Government group**, a Government representative of Australia, recognizing the serious financial challenges facing the ILO, welcomed the clear separation between the core reform – which must ensure the Organization's stability and resilience – and contingency measures to address shortfalls in assessed contributions. Social dialogue must continue to underpin the reform process in the form of meaningful and ongoing engagement with staff and the ILO Staff Union. Her group encouraged the ILO to continue to engage meaningfully with the UN80 Initiative while ensuring that any potential implications for the Organization were fully assessed, discussed and approved by the Governing Body and respected the ILO's specialized mandate and tripartite governance.
338. The reform must be strongly evidence-based, founded on a robust and transparent assessment of potential costs, savings, benefits and risks. The Governing Body must debate and consider all proposals fully and substantively, as well as playing an ongoing role in guiding their implementation. The information provided to Governing Body members, which must set out the practical impact on policy, programmes and staff, must therefore be clear and transparent, affording members a consistent and coherent understanding of the proposals. In the light of the liquidity pressures on the ILO and the need for the cost-effective sequencing of reform measures, including by ensuring that savings were realized before new spending was undertaken, proposed measures that entailed significant upfront or transitional costs or were contingent on further information must be evaluated carefully and continuously.
339. To aid comparability, demonstrate impact and enable the tracking of implementation, the Office should establish baseline information to be presented regularly to the Governing Body, including between sessions, as required. She welcomed the continued dialogue on the sequencing of decisions relating to the reform and called for the involvement of the Governing Body in decision-making at each stage.

- 340. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of South Africa noted with deep concern the financial and budgetary challenges facing the ILO and the need for it to adapt. Nevertheless, beyond fiscal targets, critical questions must be asked regarding the assumptions underpinning the proposed reform and its impact and implications for the most vulnerable workers and enterprises. In particular, he sought clarification of the geographical and programmatic implications of the proposed savings, including a more detailed assessment of the impact of the reduced allocation of regular budget resources on the scope and depth of delivery of the Programme and Budget for 2026–27 and a broad outline of the regions and programmes most likely to see reduced coverage and delivery.
- 341.** The proposed reform framework posed a threat to the Organization’s identity as an advocate for social justice. The Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) and direct engagement in humanitarian settings and fragile contexts, for example, were not peripheral to the ILO’s mission; they brought about freedom, dignity and economic security for the most vulnerable, and scaling them back to focus solely on upstream policy advice risked reducing the ILO to a normative body disconnected from the realities of implementation. Policy should not be valued over practice; to do so would be to weaken the ILO’s unique position as a UN agency able not only to establish rules, but also to equip actors to implement them.
- 342.** The distribution of the proposed cuts was unclear, and his group feared that they would affect disproportionately persons most in need of ILO support. Moreover, the scaling back of the EIIP might cede ground to other UN agencies that did not prioritize social dialogue, fundamental rights at work or the institutionalization of decent work. Any decision to disengage with direct work in humanitarian settings and fragile contexts would contradict the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), and the Declaration of Philadelphia. The ILO played an irreplaceable role in ensuring that recovery was founded on workers’ rights, freedom and dignity, and ceding ground in that sphere to purely humanitarian actors risked creating a system where humanitarian relief was provided without rights and long-term development ignored the immediate needs of crisis-affected populations.
- 343.** His group therefore proposed a differentiated, integrated model under which the ILO could focus on upstream policy in countries with strong institutional capacity while continuing its hands-on implementation efforts in least developed countries and fragile contexts. The Africa group also called for the preservation of significant operational aspects of the EIIP and the ring-fencing of resources to support its direct implementation in countries where it was most needed, ensuring that employment-rich infrastructure remained a core part of the ILO’s social justice mission. The matters at hand were of existential importance and required urgent and continued consideration.
- 344.** Turning to the draft decision, he proposed subamending subparagraph (d) as amended by the EU Member States by removing the words “for deprioritization”. He supported the amendments proposed by the Workers’ group, albeit with a subamendment to the proposed subparagraph (e) to the effect that the update should be for discussion and decision by the Governing Body at its 357th Session.
- 345. Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC)**, a Government representative of Paraguay emphasized the importance of preserving the ILO’s ability to fulfil its mandate and strengthening its presence on the ground during the reform process, which should be based on broad tripartite consultation. Decisions on institutional restructuring must lie with the Governing Body. She asked how the savings planned for the 2026–27 biennium might affect technical cooperation and support for Member States. Her group noted with particular concern the proposed 30 per cent reduction in the Regular Budget

Technical Cooperation (RBTC) account for activities in the field and at headquarters, and it would welcome more details of how that reduction might affect the scope and outcomes of technical cooperation projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. It would also be useful to know whether any projects in the region might be affected by the proposed changes to the EIIP and the scaling down of direct engagement in micro-level project implementation.

346. GRULAC would appreciate greater clarity on the follow-up and evaluation mechanisms that would measure the short- and medium-term impact of reprioritization. It would be important to continue to draw on the reliable data gathered by the ILO when formulating policy, and she therefore requested information on how the rationalization of research and knowledge activities and products would be implemented, including details on the criteria that would guide the rationalization of courses, meetings, databases and platforms, so as to better understand its effects on information availability, capacity-building and social dialogue processes. While recognizing the need to reduce sectoral meetings and temporarily suspend some regional meetings, her group stressed the importance of forums for tripartite dialogue and the exchange of sectoral experience.
347. GRULAC would welcome updates on the ILO's participation in the UN80 Initiative, particularly with regard to its coordination with other UN agencies and the added value of the different Workstreams under the Initiative. In general, any change should be made in a balanced and progressive manner without affecting technical cooperation in the field. It was also important to preserve fundamental cross-cutting approaches, such as equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and to ensure continuity in priority areas. Multilingualism must be safeguarded, particularly in relation to the quality of interpreting and translation provided by AI tools, to ensure inclusive tripartite dialogue and equitable access to information. Lastly, she sought clarity on the criteria used to reallocate technical capacity to the regions and on the possible implications of the UN system's regional reset for the structure and functioning of the ILO at the regional level.
348. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh expressed concern at the financial instability and regular budget funding shortfall affecting the ILO and urged all governments to pay their assessed contributions in a timely manner. He called on the Director-General to continue his prudent management of the Organization's resources; the drive for efficiency should be ongoing, rather than merely a response to financial instability. His group would welcome clarification of how the reprioritization framework aligned with the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019). Noting with concern the possible weakening of certain pillars of decent work, he asked how as the four strategic objectives were addressed under the reprioritization framework. No streamlining effort or review of the ILO's core mandate should undermine those equally important pillars, and he invited the Office to comment in that regard.
349. The reform should enhance country offices' alignment with national realities and priorities. Such concerns, however, did not appear to have been addressed in the reprioritization framework, and ASPAG would welcome clarification in that regard, along with a full review of the framework. The Office should consider the capacities of smaller diplomatic missions and the particular needs of least developed countries and small island developing States when planning the relocation of ILO units, a step that should be taken as a last resort following tripartite consultation. His group wished to know how the reprioritization framework aligned with the "One ILO" approach, particularly given the existing over-expansion of ILO regional and country offices into areas where no distinct ILO mandate existed. He expressed his group's support for the decentralization of development cooperation facilities and stressed the need for minimum support infrastructure criteria. Large country offices could be scaled down and

resources relocated to other countries or country offices where necessary. He urged the Office to ensure a geographical balance in staff reductions, giving particular consideration to his region and the distance from headquarters.

350. National tripartite bodies should be involved in changes to priority action programmes. He asked what proportion of the proposed 30 per cent reduction in the RBTC account would affect headquarters activities and field activities, respectively; such a reduction would be more impactful if implemented at headquarters. He expressed concern at the potential reduction in the scope and depth of ILO activities in the form of reduced geographical coverage and failure to meet targets for 2026–27. The draft decision appeared to lack a pragmatic timeline.
351. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom voiced his group's firm support for the ambitious structural reform and programmatic realignments proposed for implementation by the ILO across the UN system. He noted with appreciation that the implementation would focus on upholding the ILO's core mandate, thereby preserving the Organization's efforts on international labour standards, as well as its policy work and technical assistance for constituents. His group supported the streamlining of management structures while aligning authority and accountability, and it would welcome clarification of the function of the Chief Economist and requested the Director-General to appoint the head of the policy cluster as soon as possible.
352. IMEC supported strengthening field technical capacity and called on the Office to present to the Governing Body, before redeployments began, an update on the number and profile of technical specialists expected to be redeployed in 2026; the regions to which they were expected to be redeployed and why; and how many would have a specific focus on, and expertise in, labour standards, fundamental principles and rights at work, and the supervisory system. Structural reform and financial measures should be adopted immediately, taking into account meaningful consultation and negotiations. The Office should engage substantively with the UN80 Initiative and consider how improvements under it might be incorporated into its own reform efforts. IMEC encouraged the Office to engage with other entities in the UN system to seek out and adopt best practices.
353. He encouraged the Office to enhance the efficiency and cost effectiveness of sectoral meetings while safeguarding their tripartite nature and strategic value. While the limiting of expenditure through the strict management of recruitment and non-staff expenditure and the initial implementation of reform measures without impacting service delivery was commendable, IMEC had significant concerns regarding when and how contingency measures would be triggered should the liquidity crisis persist and what impact they would have on the delivery of key services to ILO constituents. IMEC wished to know how the Office planned to ensure the Organization's long-term financial sustainability, including through a more diversified and predictable resource base, and what, if any, progress had been made in that regard.
354. He requested further information on the proposed stronger platform for engagement with international financial institutions and any related resource implications. He urged the Office to prioritize reducing non-staff costs and streamlining business processes that increased efficiency, including through preparatory work for an effective global service centre. His group would welcome details of the intended scope and governance of such a centre, including the services that would be centralized there. Any concrete proposals on the establishment of that centre should be submitted to the Governing Body for consultation. He sought confirmation that efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment at headquarters and in the field would continue, as well as information on how those efforts would be protected during the reform process. Stressing the importance of social dialogue, he

called for continued negotiations in full respect of the applicable regulations prior to the adoption of any decision affecting ILO staff, within the framework of the Joint Negotiating Committee. He urged the Office to continue to provide regular updates on the reform process.

- 355. Speaking on behalf of the Arab group,** a Government representative of Oman stressed the importance of the ILO's institutional reform, which must uphold its core mandate and strike a balance between standards and technical activities, as well as preserving tripartite action. Priorities must be redefined using a progressive approach and clear cost analysis. Costs and benefits must be analysed carefully and made transparent to ensure that the ILO's ability to support Member States, particularly developing countries, was not compromised. The reprioritization of activities must also be based on a cost analysis, and development cooperation programmes, technical support and capacity-building must be maintained. Member States must receive key information on the impact of the reform on human resources to inform their decision-making.
- 356.** As part of the reform, efficiency must be reinforced and working methods developed that sought to improve the ILO's performance, taking into particular consideration the pillars of decent work and priority areas, including migrant workers. A clear balance must be struck between headquarters and the field, ensuring that the ILO played an effective role in the field so as to support Member States. He welcomed the opening of a regional office in Qatar and highlighted the ILO's important presence in Lebanon. The reform must be introduced with caution in order to cut costs while meeting commitments, taking into account the liquidity crisis. A mechanism to follow up implementation must be developed based on clear and measurable indicators to track progress and reinforce responsibility and transparency with regard to human resources. Any human resource-related measures, including restructuring and the cutting of posts, must be prudent and geographically balanced and respect technical capacities, while considering staff members' skills. Staff members' comments on the reform's impact on them and on the stability of their working environment must be taken into account, and dialogue and consultations with them and the ILO Staff Union must continue throughout the reform process.
- 357.** The reform must be considered in a broader context to ensure its alignment with other strategies, including in relation to human resources and development cooperation. He commended the efforts made to highlight the importance of the ILO's independence and unique mandate. He called on all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations towards the ILO. The Government Body played an essential role in supervising the reform's implementation. His group supported the draft decision.
- 358. Speaking on behalf of the GCC countries,** a Government representative of Qatar stated his group's support for the overall effort to render the Organization simpler, more flexible and more responsive. That support stemmed from its belief in the need to reinforce the ILO's capacity to protect workers' rights and promote social justice; a reduction in the ILO's workforce should therefore be a measure of last resort. Guarantees were required that the merging of departments would not marginalize any of the pillars of decent work or other vital areas, such as migration. Technology and AI should be used to enhance staff members' efficiency and productivity, not to replace them. While his group supported strategically justified decentralization and the strengthening of field activities through the relocation of technical experts, those measures must not lead to the fragmentation of headquarters. Effective interaction between headquarters and regional offices must be ensured, and the reform must not affect the ILO's normative action or its legal and supervisory mandate. He strongly urged all Member States to fulfil their financial commitments towards the ILO without

delay. The restructuring must be sustainable and must not rely heavily on volatile financial support from extrabudgetary sources.

- 359. Speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries,**¹² a Government representative of Denmark said that his group aligned itself with the statement made by the EU and its Member States and supported its proposed amendment. The Nordic countries supported the reform process, which should be aligned with the UN80 Initiative and contribute to the reinforcement of the UN system as a whole, and the strategic vision aiming to deliver on the ILO's core mandate by safeguarding normative work and technical programme support. The Nordics supported the reprioritization proposals and welcomed efforts to improve administrative efficiency; they encouraged further review of staff compensation packages and stressed that the success of reforms depended on concrete implementation. The proposals could be more ambitious, and more could and should be done by all departments. They welcomed work done to reinforce capacity in the regions and to achieve greater mobility to them, closer to the constituents.
- 360.** They requested clarification from the Office regarding the term "relevant consultations" in respect of the timing of the implementation and asked which ILO deliverables and budget areas should be reduced. They would welcome concrete proposals on how initiatives such as the regional reset and expertise on demand could support streamlining. In view of the budget reductions, more activities should be identified that could be deprioritized. He asked whether the Office would continue the exercise and present further proposals to the Governing Body.
- 361.** Asking how the figure of 12.5 per cent of savings in expenditure had been reached, he questioned whether it was enough, given the financial challenges and insecurities facing the Organization. At the previous session, the Nordics had supported immediate 20 per cent savings and favoured more ambitious cuts and immediate action to accumulate savings and avoid possible greater personnel cuts later. Rapid actions could lead to a sustainable, effective and efficient ILO that delivered for people in need. Staff were the ILO's most valuable asset and their well-being and involvement throughout the process must remain a high priority. Cautioning against too many working groups and requesting a clear overview of existing ones, he said that the Office should focus on implementing reform and that ILO management should take a proactive approach to reprioritization in order to achieve significant savings.
- 362. A Government representative of India** offered its full and constructive support for the critical review process and aligned itself with its overarching objective. A streamlined, agile and resilient ILO was essential for advancing social justice through decent work. Regarding the proposed reduction of approximately 120 positions, such fundamental restructuring must be undertaken with the continuous and meaningful engagement of constituents and staff. The retention of institutional expertise and maintenance of cutting-edge technical leadership must remain the top priorities. He stressed the need for prudent financial management and said that a predictable and adequate budget was the life blood of the ILO's normative and technical work. The focus on reinforcing the ILO's role as a global centre of excellence was particularly important in a context of rapid change and growing uncertainty. Sound data analysis and forward-looking diagnostics were essential to anticipate emerging issues and inform evidence-based policy advice to constituents. International labour standards constituted the bedrock of social justice and must remain at the heart of the ILO's mandate. Reinforced field capacity should deliver context-specific policy advice to developing countries, whose distinct challenges must be accorded special consideration. Noting the proposal to put the potential relocation of ILO functions on hold, he requested further information on the structured multi-criteria

¹² Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

assessment framework. Transparency in such evaluations was essential for informed decision-making. He called for the Global Coalition for Social Justice to play a more catalytic role to further mainstream the Organization's tripartite approach through strengthened cooperation with international partners. He requested the Director-General to provide a future update on the implementation of the reform process.

- 363. A Government representative of China** thanked the Director-General for incorporating the views of all parties into the proposals. It had consistently and constructively engaged in the reform process, with the aim of enhancing the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency. He said, firstly, that international labour standards and their supervisory mechanisms should reflect the characteristics of the times and be consistent with the national circumstances of each country. The reform should promote a more objective, impartial and inclusive supervisory system, returning to its original purpose of advancing human development and safeguarding social justice. Secondly, climate change, demographic shifts and technological developments, characterized by AI, were bringing multiple challenges to the world of work and the ILO should leverage its expertise and provide more practical technical support, particularly in the Global South, ensuring alignment with local needs. Thirdly, while supporting the promotion of efficiency, the RBTC account should not become a primary target for budget cuts. He requested detailed information on the impact. Fourthly, regarding areas where activities may be adjusted, consolidated or discontinued, it should be noted that the consolidation of flagship reports must be undertaken prudently to ensure timeliness, relevance and quality. Fifthly, on the organizational structure, he welcomed the appointment of the Chief Economist, requesting information on the role's responsibilities and coordination mechanisms. He requested the Office to continue reporting on the review results, implementation plan and next steps. He requested information on the composition and mandate of the Governance Committee and the composition and terms of reference of the restructured management team. The Office should uphold a people-centred approach throughout the reform process and any human resources reform must not undermine efforts to improve geographical representation.
- 364. A Government representative of Brazil** reaffirmed Brazil's support for efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the ILO. Recognizing the relevance of the ILO's normative and supervisory pillars, she underscored that the strengthening of regional and national technical capacities was a key pillar of the reform, which must be implemented without delay. Ensuring coherence between ILO reform efforts and the UN80 Initiative was crucial, as was enhancing coordination with other UN entities, with due attention to be accorded to preventing gaps in the protection of rights. She emphasized the crucial role of work on cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, gender equality, the Global Coalition for Social Justice and South-South and triangular cooperation in the implementation of the ILO's core mandate. She expressed concern regarding the potential impact of reorienting ILO activities in the context of humanitarian crisis or vulnerability, questioning whether the projected savings of less than US\$1 million over two years would justify that measure. Any transition should occur gradually and without prejudice to the populations benefiting from ILO action. Brazil would welcome greater detail regarding the impact of administrative reform on field-level operations, including clear evidence-based assessments of risks and benefits. She requested clarification on projected cost savings and the methodology for relocating functions outside headquarters, noting that decentralization decisions should not be based on criteria that could reinforce geographic imbalances. Questions remained about the proposed global service centre, particularly concerning the risks of concentrating functions, the safeguards needed to prevent operational disruptions and potential implications on other aspects of the reform, including the strengthening of field capacities. Any decisions affecting staff must follow transparent and constructive dialogue with the Staff Union. Brazil supported the amendment proposed by the

Workers' group. Regarding the amendment submitted by the EU, she expressed doubt about the possible adoption of new measures resulting from the continuing assessment of overlaps and synergies with other UN agencies without prior debate in the Governing Body.

- 365. A Government representative of Malawi** reaffirmed Malawi's commitment to the ILO's mandate and reiterated the call for its strengthened presence in the field. Reinforcing the capacity of regions and field offices was critical to the reform process and an ILO with a strengthened field presence would remain effective and relevant. Expressing concern that the Office was reducing support for technical activities on the ground and using the funds for activities at headquarters, he said it was alarming to note that over 70 per cent of the ILO budget was for staff-related costs, something that raised serious concerns regarding the essence of the ILO's existence. The ILO required a budget aligned to organizational goals, that was fit for purpose, not top heavy, that prioritized the delivery of field services to the tripartite partners and that did not prioritize administrative and other related costs. Painful decisions, including job losses, were inevitable in any reform process of an organization and he expressed sympathy for all staff who might be affected by possible lay-offs. He noted the continued engagement of the Staff Union, the ILO staff in the field and the social partners in the reform process and asked Member States to engage in the reform and the reprioritization of activities and technical experts needed in the field. Malawi supported the draft decision as subamended by the Africa group.
- 366. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** expressed support for the strategic objectives of the reform, which were quite ambitious, aiming to strengthen the Organization's work and save budgetary resources. Considerable hard work would be needed to avoid the risks associated with the already implemented and forthcoming changes to the Organization. Outlining the priorities of the Russian Federation in respect of the reform, he underlined the need to protect as far as possible the operational potential of the Organization, strictly sticking to the principles of multilingualism and fair geographical distribution and accountability to the Governing Body at all stages of the reform. He urged considerable care in respect of the question of synchronizing ILO reform with the UN80 Initiative. Regarding the duplication of functions with other organizations, he said that in setting up a global service centre, the Secretariat should take into account the reform processes under way in UN system organizations and the possibility of taking advantage of economies of scale. He trusted that the Governing Body would retain its function of monitoring the implementation of the reform and particularly its authority to make any necessary adjustments to the process. Oversight services should assess possible long-term risks. There should be an independent evaluation of the outcome of the reorganization to provide a critical review. He wished to avoid a situation where it became necessary to trigger the contingency measures outlined in document GB.356/PFA/4, which would constitute a serious blow to the operational potential of the Organization. All possible measures should be taken to avoid that outcome.
- 367. A Government representative of France** said that France aligned itself with the EU and IMEC statements. She recalled that, according to the document, the measures involved in the reform should result in savings that could reach 12.5 per cent by 2029, much of which would come from the first axis of the reform and notably from the recently started restructuring of the Secretariat. She requested additional information on the planned timeline and the date by which the anticipated savings would be made and be measurable. Further savings were expected from reinforcing field capacity and various processes and working modalities. It was particularly important to consider the reform in the light of the UN80 Initiative, not in order to impose any additional constraints, but to ensure a coherent response to the widespread re-evaluation of the multilateral system. Only through collective reflection could the ILO be

refocused on its mandate, in particular international labour standards and its supervisory mechanism, and its capacity to act effectively in the field be strengthened to meet constituents' needs. The same applied to reflections relating to processes and reprioritization in order to identify potential synergies with other organizations. So as to play its role fully, the Governing Body must have precise information that could be monitored and compared over time. The success of the reform was a matter of collective responsibility.

- 368. A Government representative of Hungary** said that Hungary supported the strategic vision that would allow greater emphasis to be placed on the ILO's core mandate. It was key to preserve the integrity of the international labour standards system and to strengthen the supervisory mechanism. She endorsed active and constructive participation in the broader process of the UN80 Initiative and encouraged the Office to continue exploring potential overlaps with other entities. She noted the prioritization exercise and considered the implementation of the proposals essential for the Organization's resilience and long-term sustainability. It was important to strengthen capacities in the field and regions, and she noted with interest the beginning of preparatory work on the possible relocation of regional offices, including the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, requesting information on recent developments in that regard. Hungary welcomed information on relocating functions and services and supported the establishment of a global service centre, viewing such measures as cost-efficient and aligned with successful practices in other UN agencies and international organizations. She encouraged the Office to continue examining the established practice of partners, including its own as a host country. She requested further details on the task team's work and the envisaged timeline for establishing the centre. She reaffirmed Hungary's firm commitment to supporting the ILO throughout the reform process.
- 369. A Government representative of the Sudan** said that despite the four-year conflict that had severely damaged the country's economy, labour market and infrastructure, increasing unemployment and vulnerability, especially for young people and women, his Government viewed decent work as essential for peace and recovery and emphasized the importance of strengthening the role of the ILO in a rapidly changing multilateral environment. Through its national reform programme the Government aimed to expand social protection, improve employment opportunities through training and entrepreneurship support, and strengthen labour market institutions in line with international labour standards, in partnership with the ILO. Sudan welcomed the Governing Body's focus on development cooperation, supply chains and human resources strategies and expressed its readiness to work with the ILO and all partners to promote resilience and inclusive growth and to ensure that no one was left behind in the labour market.
- 370. A Government representative of Nepal** expressed appreciation for the ILO's continued efforts to promote effective labour governance and improve organizational effectiveness. He supported measures to reduce fragmentation, revise the Office structure and establish a Governance Committee to monitor progress in the implementation of the ILO reform. He reiterated Nepal's support for the strategic vision for the ILO and the proposals for reprioritization and stressed the need for immediate operationalization of efficiency measures and long-term structural reforms. Multilateralism was in a critical phase and faced serious challenges. It was essential to review the current structure, strengthen the governance framework and focus on the core mandate. The optimization of resources, results-oriented action, and technical and capacity-building assistance to developing countries should be prioritized during the reform process. The ILO should avoid overlapping and duplication of functions with other UN agencies, and efforts to strengthen labour governance should be coherent, complementary and well aligned with the UN80 Initiative. An integrated approach

with the tripartite constituents as “One ILO” was crucial to the success of the reform in the field. Nepal reaffirmed its commitment to constructive engagement and looked forward to receiving regular updates on the reform process.

- 371. A Government representative of South Africa** recalled the decisions taken at the 355th Session regarding the critical issue of reform. The Governing Body had been unequivocal that the reform must be guided by and fully respect the ILO’s constitutional mandate, tripartite Government structure and fundamental principles. He recognized that the Director-General had the prerogative to decide on the structure of the Office. He sought clarification regarding how the streamlining outlined by the Director-General had reinforced the core mandate, particularly the normative mandate and social dialogue. He asked, first, how the Office had strengthened its normative and supervisory work, specifically the International Labour Standards Department. Second, how the Office had strengthened its capacity to realize fundamental principles and rights at work, particularly the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Third, why, in a constrained organizational and financial context where streamlining was expected, had the Director-General chosen to establish the new Office of the Chief Economist, how would it be staffed, would its creation weaken other policy departments, and how would policy coherence be achieved between it and the Research and Statistics Department and the Employment, Skills and Sustainable Enterprises Department. Fourth, which efficiency gains justified locating the Office of the Chief Economist outside the Policy cluster when an alternative approach would have been to reinforce the existing mandate and work of one of the departments already within that particular cluster. It was essential to ensure that the reform process remained true to the guidance and priorities set by the Governing Body and to the core mandate.
- 372. A Government representative of Gabon** welcomed the progress made so far, including under the UN80 Initiative, which would allow the ILO to strengthen its cooperation with international organizations while promoting its unique mandate. Internally, it was important to protect posts occupied by individuals from under-represented countries. The ILO must ensure that its work remained human-centred while focusing on its normative mandate and strengthening its technical assistance for the tripartite constituents, one of its priority areas. The Organization’s strengthened presence in the field was crucial if it was to undertake capacity-building activities that responded effectively to national needs in key areas. She expressed concern at the Organization’s financial situation and called for urgent action to resolve the budget deficit to avoid having to implement the proposed contingency plan, which would have a considerable and long-lasting negative impact on the reform process. She invited the ILO’s major contributors to pay their financial contributions and urged the Office to seek new partners to expand its donor base. The reform should be pursued in a spirit of transparency, inclusivity and constructive dialogue with staff representatives.
- 373. A Government representative of Canada** expressed support for the Director-General’s efforts to rationalize operations, refocus activities and seek efficiencies. Her Government agreed broadly with the outcomes of the reprioritization exercise, although it noted with concern the proposed streamlining or discontinuation of gender equality courses at the International Training Centre of the ILO. She called on the Office to ensure adequate resources for gender equality activities. She supported the proposed suspension or discontinuation of certain databases and publications and a more selective approach to statistical and research activities provided that the ILO’s ability to maintain robust, high-quality data and analytical capacity was not hampered.
- 374.** She encouraged the Office to continue to engage with the UN80 Initiative, particularly through its work on cost containment. Full transparency and engagement with the Governing Body

must be ensured throughout the reform process. Results must be tracked and assessed on an ongoing basis, with good practices and lessons learned during implementation highlighted. The Organization's staff was its most important resource, and she encouraged the Office to engage fully and meaningfully with the ILO Staff Union throughout the reform process, particularly with regard to the proposed contingency measures.

- 375. A Government representative of Italy** highlighted the need for the reform measures to contribute not only to the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency in the face of the current serious financial constraints, but also to its long-term resilience, financial sustainability and functioning. Her Government therefore welcomed the proposed relocation measures where they were consistent with the ILO's mandate and generated sustainable efficiencies, particularly by reducing the need for more disruptive staffing measures, and she expressed its interest in contributing to those efforts, including by hosting ILO offices or functions. Transparent, structured dialogue with Member States and social partners must take place throughout the reform process.
- 376. A Government representative of Colombia** said that his Government welcomed the more specific reprioritization framework and measures to ensure the ILO's institutional sustainability. Given the need for strategic measures that responded to budgetary challenges while allowing the ILO to fulfil its constitutional mandate, the protection of its central functions – its normative and supervisory work, technical assistance and capacity-building for constituents in particular – must remain at the heart of the reform process. Constituents and social partners must be consulted on reprioritization efforts and their priorities taken into account. Capacity-building for field offices and improvements to strategic planning and support services constituted essential parts of the reform since they could improve institutional coherence and maximize the impact of ILO activities.
- 377.** Measures intended to generate efficiencies and savings must be based on rigorous technical analysis and implemented carefully to avoid disproportionately affecting programmes and technical assistance for developing countries. It was also important to preserve the Organization's technical memory; the possible loss of experienced officials posed significant challenges, and measures were therefore required that ensured the continuity and quality of the ILO's work. In that connection, forums for dialogue with the ILO Staff Union should be strengthened. Moreover, individuals appointed to management-level positions by the Director-General should have proven experience of promoting decent work and social justice and be fully aligned with the ILO's principles.
- 378.** He underscored the contribution of the social and solidarity economy to promoting decent work, social inclusion and sustainable development, and recognized the role of cooperatives and other associations in building economic models centred on people, communities and territories. He emphasized the importance of strengthening institutional forums dedicated to the social and solidarity economy within the multilateral system. His Government welcomed the emphasis placed on strengthening the ILO's presence in the field, which would render its technical cooperation more relevant and effective and enhance its guidance for constituents on promoting decent work. It was vital to guarantee sufficient resources to ensure a solid technical presence that was relevant to national realities and able to respond to Member States' priorities. The reform must strengthen the ILO's capacity to fulfil its mandate while preserving its tripartite nature and institutional autonomy and the balance between its functions.
- 379. A Government representative of Germany** voiced support for the direction of the reform, the ultimate aim of which should be to ensure that the ILO was able to fulfil its core mandate

efficiently through, most importantly, social dialogue; the memorandum of understanding between the Office and the ILO Staff Union was a significant milestone and should drive the reform, with the support of the Governing Body. Sufficient time should be given to the process, which must take place within the ILO's constitutional framework. Member States must aim to ensure that the contingency measures set out in document GB.356/PFA/4 did not need to be taken. The Organization's long-term resilience in the event of assessed contribution shortfalls should be guaranteed by adaptations to its financial architecture.

- 380. A Government representative of Japan**, expressing concern at the deteriorating financial and budgetary situation, urged Member States that had not yet paid their contributions for previous years to do so without delay and the Office to make further efforts to address those challenges. When operationalizing the proposed reprioritizations, which his Government supported, the Office should ensure that decisions were geared towards the ILO's long-term sustainability, beyond the interests of individual departments or staff members, emphasizing maximizing efficiencies across the Office. The reprioritization of projects with regard to the mandates of other UN entities was welcome, although projects for which donor funding had already been committed should be implemented as planned, including the EIIP. The reform should effectively strengthen technical capacity at the regional and field levels. Although discussions on the reform naturally emphasized cost reductions, further insights from the Office on how the process would improve the ILO's contribution to advancing social justice and promoting decent work would be welcome.
- 381. A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** expressed concern regarding the implementation of the strategic pathways as set out in the document. Global, regional and national realities must be fully understood, and regional technical capacity must therefore be strengthened, taking account of the needs of Member States and social partners, particularly the challenges facing developing countries. His Government wholly supported the reprioritization criteria, particularly tripartite relevance and constituents' demand. Member States should be actively involved in determining priorities.
- 382. A Government representative of Barbados** called upon all Member States to demonstrate their commitment to decent work and sustainable, human-centred development through financial support for the ILO. Although the document set out a strong framework, there was a relative lack of concrete proposals. His Government supported the proposed reduction of non-staff allocations. The ILO must make every effort to minimize job losses and retain expertise and experience. He trusted that the measures to support mental health and well-being described in the document were in place. He expressed support for the strengthening of technical capacity in regional and subregional offices; working in coordination with a leaner headquarters, they would be better positioned to deliver relevant outcomes.
- 383.** He was pleased to note the special consideration given to the distinct challenges facing developing countries. The ILO's core mandate – to undertake action in relation to the world of work, underpinned by social justice and social dialogue – must remain its focus, and for small island developing States that meant centring important matters such as the climate crisis, the social and solidarity economy, informality and global supply chains. The significant challenges facing the multilateral system must continue to be addressed through the Global Coalition for Social Justice. The UN80 and "One ILO" approaches would be critical to carrying out effective work with reduced resources, and duplication must be eliminated across the UN system and within the ILO. His Government proposed that UN resident coordinators be encouraged to become part of the extended ILO team. The Governing Body must retain a strong policy direction and oversight role.

- 384. A Government representative of the United States** expressed support for the idea that normative leadership and technical support were mutually reinforcing and at the heart of the value added by the ILO. Welcoming the cessation of activities outside the ILO's core mandate, such as humanitarian services and climate adaptation, he called for more ambitious reprioritization to identify other activities that should cease fully. Although the Office planned to discontinue its engagement on environmental management, for example, it proposed maintaining some just transition projects; such half measures were an attempt to preserve out-of-scope engagement.
- 385.** It was clear that the priority action programmes had run their course and should be dissolved. The ILO should cease its participation in the Global Coalition for Social Justice, which exceeded the Organization's mandate and was designed to accelerate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, which infringed state sovereignty. It was unhelpful to continue to use the Sustainable Development Goals to frame ILO activity. Given the reduction in resources, decisions on the prioritization of activities should be guided by the fundamental principles and rights at work and the ILO supervisory system. His Government disagreed that the four priority areas of the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–29 remained fully valid and urged the Office to review the matter as part of the reform process.
- 386.** While the proposed additional cost savings were welcome, he encouraged the Office to adopt further measures, including by considering the elimination of home leave for staff at non-hardship duty stations, the university education allowance for dependants and business-class travel. He requested the Office to present additional measures to the Governing Body no later than its June 2026 session, following consultation with the ILO Staff Union. His Government welcomed the ILO's engagement with the UN80 Initiative, as well as the reinforcing of staff capacity in the regions. He asked how many technical specialists would be deployed to the field in 2026, how many were specialists in labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work and how information-sharing and information management processes would be reinforced to ensure that the relocation of staff enhanced the cohesive delivery of the ILO's mandate. The Office should practise merit-based hiring in its staff relocation efforts.
- 387.** His Government interpreted "gender" as referring to men and women, and "gender balance" and "gender equality" as referring to equal opportunities for men and women; the Office should avoid ambiguous terminology. While the ILO's mandate was grounded in clearly defined standards and principles, the document conflated it with social justice, a vague concept whose meaning had shifted over the years, thereby risking obscuring the Organization's objectives and reinforcing concerns that the reform was driven by imprecise goals. Precise, mandate-based language should be used. The ILO enjoyed his Government's full support as it continued with the reform process.
- 388. A Government representative of Bangladesh** highlighted that social justice, which entailed examining countries' diverse needs, had been the ILO's main contribution to the multilateral system and related to all four pillars of decent work. The ILO should retain its ability to support constituents when delivering its mandate and to deliver its services in emergency situations. His Government was deeply concerned that financial instability and uncertainty had compelled the ILO to reprioritize and deprioritize actions and programmes. In particular, it was concerned at the scaling down and discontinuation of priority action programmes at a time when there was a need for them to be enhanced. The ILO's work and unique tripartism and social dialogue must be further promoted across the multilateral system. The current financial crisis required the rationalization of field offices in terms of both human resources and critical financial resources, in accordance with countries' particular needs and priorities; his Government

proposed that country offices should be appropriately sited to afford least developed countries and small island developing States greater access to ILO services. The reform should place the ILO back on the path towards good faith international cooperation, in which the Organization was an important catalyst, and discourage punitive mechanisms. He supported the draft decision.

- 389. A Government representative of Tunisia** said that while the ILO's normative function lay at the heart of its mandate, the Organization played a vital role in development. Reducing its core mandate to standard-setting and supervision, the promotion and application of international labour standards, policy and legal advice and institutional capacity-building disregarded the fact that constituents expected operational support and technical assistance from the ILO. The proposed measures would impact the ILO's constituents unequally since the vast majority were linked to technical assistance. A more balanced approach between the Organization's functions would have better reflected constituents' expectations and the guidance provided by the Governing Body at its previous session. Social finance initiatives and employment programmes, in particular, allowed the ILO to provide specific support for development policies and have real impact on the ground.
- 390.** The redeployment of specialists to the field must be undertaken in a differentiated manner according to real needs, while prioritizing developing countries. More information was urgently needed on that measure, particularly in terms of reprofiling and the regions concerned. A balance must be struck between preserving the ILO's leadership on matters relevant to its mandate and reinforcing coherence, and avoiding overlap, with other international organizations' work. The Global Coalition for Social Justice was an excellent example of successful cooperation in that regard.
- 391. A Government representative of Mexico** welcomed the structuring of the reform around three pillars, which formed a solid base for an orderly, purposeful transformation. He agreed that the ILO's engagement in contexts of crisis and fragility should focus on settings where it had a comparative advantage. He also welcomed the repositioning of the EIIP to reinforce its policy-oriented and institutional capacity-building role. The work on mandates completed under Workstream 2 of the UN80 Initiative could provide a model for all specialized agencies, while the expertise-on-demand mechanism under Workstream 3 could prove useful for the ILO through the resident coordinators. While welcoming the measures proposed to rationalize communication, training and knowledge generation and management, he highlighted the need for any modernization process to maintain the quality of language services to ensure equitable participation by all constituents.
- 392.** His Government supported postponing the partial relocation of headquarters units to avoid operational risks and an adverse impact on staff. It urged the Office to continue to make progress in the process, drawing on comparable, transparent criteria intended to ensure that assistance reached persons most in need in a timely manner. It would be useful for the constituents to know what parameters would be used to redeploy specialists and reconfigure field offices. His Government trusted that careful resource management and the use of follow-up tools would allow risks to be minimized and the process to be adjusted as necessary. The Office should maintain an open dialogue with the constituents, preserve vital technical capacities and continue to provide detailed information on the implementation of the reform and the financial situation.
- 393. A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran**, expressing support for a strategic vision for the ILO built on effectiveness, efficiency and multilateral engagement, said that the Organization's effectiveness should be measured by its ability to speak out when

workers could not. Coordinated military strikes launched against his country on 28 February 2026 had resulted in the deaths and injury of hundreds of workers, the destruction of thousands of homes, workplaces and public institutions, and the killing of schoolchildren and teachers. The targeting of fuel and energy infrastructure had exposed workers to toxic substances in violation of the right to a safe and healthy working environment. A Member State that refused to pay its assessed contributions to the ILO had allocated significant resources to military operations against his country. He urged the Governing Body to recognize the damage caused by the aggression as a direct violation of international occupational safety and health standards; ensure non-discriminatory access for Iranian workers and employers to ILO services during the conflict and reconstruction; commission an independent assessment of the toxic contamination and a long-term health monitoring programme, in cooperation with the World Health Organization; and establish an ILO emergency response mechanism for sudden catastrophic events. He recalled that his country had never failed to meet its obligations to the Organization and that, as stated in the ILO Constitution, lasting peace could be established only if it was based on social justice.

- 394. A Government representative of Cuba**, expressing support for the strategic vision, said that measures to strengthen the standards system and its supervisory mechanisms should be accompanied by national capacity-building and technical assistance. Decentralization should not reduce core resources for technical cooperation, especially for developing countries, including small island developing States. Development cooperation should be funded primarily from the regular budget, with extrabudgetary resources accepted only when aligned with ILO priorities. She expressed concern about the proposed 30 per cent cut to the RBTC account, underscoring the importance of maintaining adequate funding for activities in countries with limited institutional capacity. She supported the ILO's engagement in the UN system reform, provided that its mandate, tripartite structure and technical autonomy was safeguarded. She called for clarity and transparency in the reform process, including in respect of the restructuring of field offices, the role of the global service centre and the linkages between the ILO reform and the UN system reform. Any redefinition of priorities required constituent approval and must not undermine the ILO's mandate or reduce its capacity in key areas such as employment, social protection and the transition from informality to formality. The reform must be gradual and must not result in the loss of expertise. She reaffirmed Cuba's commitment to a reform that strengthened, rather than altered, the Organization's essence.
- 395. A Government representative of the Niger** expressed concern about the proposal to integrate the ILO's critical HIV and AIDS work into a broader non-discrimination agenda, warning that de-prioritizing that work could dilute focus, weaken long-standing expertise and partnerships, and reduce support for countries with a high HIV burden, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The transition should be managed with a dedicated, well-resourced workstream to be maintained for at least the next biennium, ensuring that the fight against HIV in the world of work remained a visible and active priority.
- 396.** He strongly opposed the proposed cut of 30 per cent to the RBTC account, which was particularly damaging to Africa. Such a reduction would undermine field reinforcement efforts and the practical implementation of ILO standards and sent a message that institutional capacity-building in the developing world was expendable. He urged the Governing Body to consider, instead of the blanket cut, a smaller, temporary reduction combined with the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources to fill the gap and to protect core technical cooperation activities in the regions with the greatest need.
- 397. A Government representative of Switzerland**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing

Body, said that Switzerland – the ILO's host country – was concerned about the ILO's current and anticipated financial and liquidity challenges. She reaffirmed Switzerland's support for an ILO that was functional, efficient, effective and sustainable, stressing that any efficiency enhancing measures had to be based on a rigorous cost-benefit analysis, including of their impact on staff. Switzerland's offer of support to the ILO under the package of urgent measures for International Geneva for 2025–26, which was not reflected in the document, was conditional on maintaining ILO headquarters, core functions and the standard-setting and policy departments in Geneva for a ten-year period. As the Office had not been able to commit to those conditions in 2025, it had not benefited from the proposed measures. However, Switzerland's offer remained open and given that the Governing Body had decided in November 2025 to keep the ILO's headquarters and necessary normative, technical and policy expertise in Geneva, the ILO could benefit from the urgent measures in 2026, which would generate a rapid cost saving of almost US\$3 million. Regarding the 114th Session (2026) of the International Labour Conference, she confirmed that Switzerland would cover the costs of renting the Geneva International Conference Centre, amounting to more than half a million Swiss francs, and was open to discussing additional support.

- 398. A Government representative of Namibia**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that the ongoing reforms should strengthen the ILO's ability to deliver on its mandate. While acknowledging the financial pressures facing the Organization, he cautioned that efficiency measures must not weaken its mandate or diminish the support it provided, especially to developing countries. All Member States should pay their assessed contributions on time and any arrears. He strongly supported the proposal to appoint national coordinators in selected countries, noting their importance for countries without a physical ILO office. He emphasized the need to preserve the autonomy and mandates of the specialized agencies in the context of the UN80 Initiative and to ensure that cooperation was aligned with the ILO's core mandate, and cautioned that declining extrabudgetary resources could dilute the ILO's strategic focus. He expressed deep concern about the proposed 30 per cent cut to the RBTC budget, stressing that Namibia relied heavily on that support to advance the priorities set out in its Decent Work Country Programme. Any cost-saving measures must preserve the ILO's capacity to support Member States and must not disproportionately affect developing countries. He reaffirmed Namibia's commitment to a reform process that strengthened the ILO's ability to deliver meaningful and inclusive results.
- 399. A Government representative of Indonesia**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that the ILO's effectiveness should be measured by its tangible support to Member States, particularly in respect of advancing decent work. She underscored the need to prioritize technical assistance in key areas such as social protection, digital skills and the just transition and the need to strengthen support and capacity-building for developing countries, including small island developing States. Enhancing the ILO's responsiveness to national and regional contexts and its field presence would be key to ensuring more effective delivery. She called for a balanced approach between normative leadership and strong technical support and affirmed Indonesia's readiness to engage constructively in reforms that enhanced the ILO's efficiency and effectiveness while remaining inclusive, balanced and responsive to Members' needs and priorities.
- 400. A Government representative of Zimbabwe**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that the ILO was at a pivotal moment as it prepared to implement its programme

of work for 2026–27 amid financial pressures and organizational reforms. Noting that its mandate for decent work and social justice remained more relevant than ever, he stressed the need for the ILO to move away from fragmented small-scale projects towards larger scale integrated initiatives that strengthened the ILO's core mandate. He welcomed the strategic vision and the proposed reprioritization and other measures for 2026–29, highlighting that emphasis should be placed on programme reprioritization, Office reorganization and the reinforcement of field capacity. Reforms should be strategic rather than merely administrative and a separate document on reprioritization, reflecting regional realities, should be prepared for discussion at the next session. The Director-General should ensure that the projected savings of US\$82.5 million in 2026–27 would be reinvested to strengthen the ILO's core mandate and address emerging challenges.

401. **A Government representative of the United States** said that his delegation was focused on collectively finding ways to make the ILO more effective and efficient in delivering on its core mandate and did not intend to engage in politicized exchanges. Nevertheless, in response to the comments made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he recalled his Government's clear explanations, including in the UN Security Council, regarding the military operation launched on 28 February, which he said had been undertaken to counter ongoing security threats posed by the Iranian regime. He affirmed that the operation was targeting military and strategic assets and that all feasible precautions were being taken to minimize civilian harm.
402. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the number of statements made demonstrated the importance of the item. He invited the Office to provide written responses to the many pertinent questions raised and proposed that the discussion should be resumed the following week, taking into account the discussion on PFA/4.
403. **The Worker spokesperson** said that INS/7 should be considered alongside PFA/4 and called for further consultations among the groups that had tabled amendments. Her group was open to the subamendments proposed by the Africa group but could not support the amendments proposed by the EU Member States as they currently stood. She welcomed the strong reaffirmation by Governments of the ILO's mandate. In response to a comment made by the representative of the United States, she recalled that social justice and the Global Coalition for Social Justice were firmly grounded in the ILO Constitution and that the concept of social justice had been guiding the Organization since 1919 and continued to enjoy broad support from the constituents.
404. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General for the Regions and Director of the Office of the Director-General) confirmed that the Governing Body's November 2025 decision continued to guide the reform process and that the decision taken at the current session would guide the process going forward. She also confirmed that the reform agenda did not pre-empt the discussions to be held in November 2026 on the programme and budget for the next biennium. She appreciated the recognition of the work of the ILO's staff and noted that careful consideration had been given to the need to maintain expertise. The elimination of posts had not had a negative impact on gender balance or on the representation of under-represented countries. The Office would ensure a balanced approach to the implementation of the reform and ensure transparency and accountability throughout the process. The Office of the Chief Economist had been established to strengthen coherence across the Office and with international financial institutions. Rather than weakening policy departments, it should help consolidate global and regional knowledge products focusing on the labour dimensions of economic policies, in line with the Declaration of Philadelphia. The Office would prepare written responses to the other questions raised.

(The Governing Body resumed consideration of the item at a later sitting, after the Office had circulated a written response to the questions raised.)

405. The Governing Body had before it a document that contained the Office response to the issues raised during the discussion, which had been made available online ([GB.356/INS/7/Office response](#)).

406. The Governing Body also had before it an amended version of the draft decision, proposed by the Employers' and Workers' groups following consultations and circulated by the Office, which read:

65. The Governing Body:

(a) reiterated its concern regarding the financial and budgetary challenges facing the Organization;

(b) recalling and reaffirming its decision of November 2025, endorsed the strategic vision for the ILO as further developed and requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance in the reform process;

(c) welcomed~~endorsed~~ the proposals for reprioritization and other measures to generate efficiency gains in the current biennium as part of the plan for 2026–29, and requested the Director-General to ensure take into account its guidance when further developing and implementing them, ensuring that any savings realized are managed prudently and applied strictly in accordance with the priorities set out in the approved Programme and Budget;

(d) requested the Director-General to continue examining overlaps and synergies with other UN agencies that could contribute to additional efficiencies and savings, while preserving the ILO's constitutional mandate;

(~~e~~) requested the Director-General to present an update on the implementation of the reform process to the 357th Session of the Governing Body (~~November~~ June 2026).

407. The Worker spokesperson thanked the Office for its extensive response and highlighted the need for further clarity on some issues and assurances as the reform advanced. She reaffirmed that discussions must remain anchored in the Governing Body's November 2025 decision. She welcomed the clarification that the 12.5 per cent saving was the result of underlying assumptions and not a target for the next budget, and took note of the explanation on the relationship between the figures given in documents INS/7 and PFA/4. She reiterated her group's concerns about the potential abolition of posts and asked to be kept informed of the criteria behind any decisions in that regard.

408. Reprioritization must remain aligned with the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–29 and preserve the integrity of the Decent Work Agenda. In that regard, she sought clarification on the labour protection floor, particularly in relation to labour migration, and expressed her group's ongoing concerns about the repositioning of the Sectoral Activities Department. She called for closer consultation with the social partners on strengthening sectoral work and favoured streamlining sectoral meetings over cuts. She noted her group's interest in strengthening the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022 (MNE Declaration), ahead of its 50th anniversary in 2027. She welcomed the improved relations with the Staff Union and encouraged progress towards a workplace adjustment agreement. The creation of the Office of the Chief Economist should not weaken other departments and the new Employment, Skills and Sustainable Enterprises Department should maintain a strong focus on the public sector. She reiterated her group's concerns about staff relocations and requested clearer responses regarding the relocation of the Regional Office for the Arab States to Doha, given the current political situation in the region. She welcomed the clarifications on the term "gender equality", recalling the commitment in the

Centenary Declaration to a transformative agenda on gender equality. On the UN80 Initiative, she encouraged further alignment with UN agencies that were not mentioned in the Office response. Lastly, she stressed that the work to reinforce the ILO's core mandate must involve all relevant policy departments.

409. She introduced the amended version of the draft decision, noting that it reflected a compromise developed with the Employers' group in consultation with the Governments.
410. **The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for its written response, noting that comprehensive information was still needed on several issues raised during the discussion, pending the completion of the Office's assessment of the situation, in particular with respect to reprioritization, relocations and the implementation of the reform strategy. The Office must accelerate its work in that regard. He emphasized the importance of clarifying priorities well before triggering any potential contingency measures and stressed the need to continue the discussion at the June session, on the basis of more substantive information. The Office should engage closely with the constituents on both reprioritization and the overall reform strategy ahead of the June session. He noted that decisions on relocations would be taken only after the discussions in June and encouraged the Office, in cooperation with the host country, to review possible support from the host country and to address any obstacles in that regard. He confirmed his group's support for the amended version of the draft decision.
411. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of South Africa expressed support for amended version of the draft decision. While the Office had to navigate the current financial crisis with strategic clarity and creativity, the most effective way to preserve the ILO's core mandate was for Member States to meet their financial obligations. Noting the importance of technical assistance for Africa, he requested clarity on how critical capacity would be protected in practice and asked for clear criteria in June distinguishing statutory functions from programmatic work. A stronger link should be established between the reform process and the contingency plan and a mechanism should be set up to ensure that efficiency gains would be used to reduce the scale of contingency cuts. Short-term crisis measures should not undermine long-term reforms.
412. The Office should explore alternative revenue sources, notably the rental of underutilized office space, and conduct a feasibility study on that subject before the June session. It should consider borrowing under the financial regulations as a temporary bridge to avoid irreversible staffing cuts and make a concrete proposal in that regard, outlining sources, terms and a repayment plan. It should also establish clear criteria for deactivating contingency measures as appropriate. He reiterated the urgent need for Member States to pay their contributions, noting that even partial payments would help avert cuts. The Office should clarify whether offers of assistance had been received. Before any redundancies were finalized, alternatives such as reduced working hours and paid leave or expanded retirement options should be assessed, in consultation with the Staff Union. Calling for strengthened transparency, he said that the Office document for the June session should include an assessment of the impact of reductions on regional operations, particularly in Africa. He stressed the need for shared accountability among all Members in safeguarding the ILO's mandate.
413. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom welcomed the additional information provided by the Office and reaffirmed IMEC's support for preserving the integrity of the ILO's core mandate and the Decent Work Agenda. He underscored the importance of an up-to-date and effective normative and supervisory system – including a focus on the fundamental principles and rights at work – to achieving decent work. IMEC welcomed the Office's active engagement in the UN80 Initiative and encouraged the Director-

General and the Office to be at the forefront of efforts to translate the work under that initiative into reforms across the UN system.

414. Clearer and more detailed information was needed on several issues, including on the impact of the contingency measures on the reform process. Before any redeployments took place, the Office should indicate the number and profile of the specialists expected to be deployed in 2026, the regions they may be deployed to and why, and their areas of expertise. Noting with appreciation the clarification provided regarding the role of the Chief Economist, he asked how closer coordination with international financial institutions would help to build a resilient and more predictable resource space in the longer term.
415. IMEC continued to support efforts to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of sectoral meetings and offered to assist the Office further in that regard. It welcomed the plan to provide more information through the reform website and emphasized the need for continued transparency throughout implementation. He reiterated IMEC's support for a meaningful, pragmatic and constructive reform process. IMEC encouraged the Office to pursue reform and financial measures in the immediate term in consultation with the Staff Union and to continue to engage with the tripartite constituents. IMEC looked forward to further updates and supported the amended version of the draft decision.
416. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Paraguay expressed appreciation for the additional information and for the joint efforts behind the proposed amended version of the draft decision. While her group would have preferred to use the word "encouraged" rather than "requested" in the new subparagraph (d), in the interests of consensus, it could support the proposed amended version.
417. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus thanked the social partners for their constructive engagement and the other regional groups for their fruitful exchanges during the consultations on the draft decision, noting that the amended version currently before the Governing Body integrated the amendments already proposed and reflected a mutual compromise and a shared goal of strengthening the Organization's ability to deliver on its mandate more effectively and efficiently. Her group therefore supported the amended version proposed by the Employers' and Workers' groups.
418. **A Government representative of China** thanked the Office for its written response. The Office should explore further measures to reduce non-staff costs and do its utmost to maintain technical support for all Members, particularly developing countries. Decisions on relocations should fully reflect regional and national circumstances and needs and detailed information should be provided in June on the number of staff, the regions and the areas of work concerned. He welcomed the breakdown of information on agreed separations and underlined the need for balanced staff representation and for a careful assessment of whether posts should be abolished, downgraded or maintained. He noted with interest the forthcoming website on the reform and reiterated that all reform-related measures should be fully discussed and endorsed by the Governing Body. China supported the amended version of the draft decision.
419. **A Government representative of the United States** thanked the Office for its detailed written response. He emphasized that reprioritization should involve targeted and strategic actions that protected essential functions, maintained technical excellence and ensured that limited resources had maximum impact, rather than uniform reductions. That could mean discontinuing activities that did not advance or align with the ILO's core mandate. The focus should be on the fundamental principles and rights at work and the supervisory system. In that regard, he welcomed the importance given to promoting an up-to-date and effective

normative and supervisory system as part of the reform efforts and noted the ongoing review of partnerships with UN entities and other international organizations. The Office should consider which partnerships would add value to the ILO's ability to achieve its core mandate and should not pursue those that did not, which included collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. He reaffirmed his Government's full support for the ILO reform and expressed support for the amended version of the draft decision.

420. A representative of the Director-General (Assistant Director-General for the Regions and Director of the Office of the Director-General) thanked the Governing Body for its comments and gave her assurances that its guidance would be taken into account. She reaffirmed that consultations with the constituents – in particular the social partners – would continue on the implementation of the reprioritization proposals and the reorganization of headquarters departments, to ensure the ILO's core mandate was preserved and strengthened. The Office would accelerate the work of the task teams, including the team responsible for assessing regional technical capacity needs and conducting the cost-benefit analysis of relocations, with the aim of presenting an update to the Governing Body in June. She also confirmed the Office's ongoing engagement with the host country and said that all resulting opportunities would be carefully evaluated.

421. The Worker spokesperson welcomed the spirit of consensus and remarked that genuine social dialogue could achieve remarkable results.

Decision

422. The Governing Body:

- (a) **reiterated its concern regarding the financial and budgetary challenges facing the Organization;**
- (b) **recalling and reaffirming the decision adopted in November 2025, endorsed the strategic vision for the ILO as further developed and requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance in the reform process;**
- (c) **welcomed the proposals for reprioritization and other measures to generate efficiency gains in the current biennium as part of the plan for 2026–29, and requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance when further developing and implementing them, ensuring that any savings realized are managed prudently and applied strictly in accordance with the priorities set out in the approved programme and budget;**
- (d) **requested the Director-General to continue examining overlaps and synergies with other United Nations agencies that could contribute to additional efficiencies and savings, while preserving the ILO's constitutional mandate;**
- (e) **requested the Director-General to present an update on the implementation of the reform process to the Governing Body at its 357th Session (June 2026).**

(GB.356/INS/7, paragraph 65, as amended by the Governing Body)

8. Proposals for improving efficiency in the production of official documents – A more cost-effective approach to recording the proceedings of sessions of the ILO's governance organs and certain official meetings (GB.356/INS/8)

- 423. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the Office's efforts to leverage AI and new technologies to enhance efficiency and generate cost savings and requested clarification of the scope of the document: while the Governing Body had recommended examining the length and production of official ILO documents, the document addressed the records of the Governing Body and other entities. Any redeployment of staff must respect their interests and well-being while preserving sufficient capacity for quality assurance, since human oversight of AI-generated content was indispensable. She urged the Office to continue dialogue and negotiations with the ILO Staff Union with regard to the effect of the proposed changes on staff.
- 424.** Given the important institutional memory contained in Governing Body minutes, any new tools or modalities must remain clear, concise and accessible. Users should continue to be able to consult them easily to uphold transparency, continuity and informed decision-making; easily searchable written transcripts were therefore essential. Her group strongly supported the continued production of written summaries of the proceedings of the Credentials, Finance, General Affairs and standard-setting committees of the Conference. In particular, the records of proceedings of standard-setting committees played a key role in interpreting international labour standards, and it was of great importance that written summaries continued to be produced for the Committee on the Application of Standards.
- 425.** Data protection and security risks must be addressed, and she trusted that the Office was considering the potential costs of storing and managing large quantities of audio and video recordings. A cost-benefit analysis would be useful in that regard. Following the trial phase, clear recording policies must be established, including consent procedures, along with robust and secure data storage systems and the human oversight of AI-generated outputs. Furthermore, there must be transparent communication with participants regarding the use of AI, and the possibility for participants to submit corrections to their interventions should be maintained.
- 426.** A progressive approach to implementation should be taken, beginning only with the plenary and committees of the Conference and followed later by the Governing Body. Appropriate legal safeguards should be developed in close consultation with the Legal Adviser. Once the trial had demonstrated the value of the new system, priority should be given to ensuring its long-term viability and the continuous improvement of the relevant systems, supported by a dedicated human resources team responsible for maintenance and providing a rapid response on technical issues.
- 427. The Employer spokesperson** highlighted that without the work of ILO staff members to accurately reflect participants' interventions in meeting records, the foundation of the ILO's work would be significantly weakened. Increased efficiency in producing official documents was not merely a technical matter; it reflected a broader shift in how the ILO undertook its work and how sometimes complex and sensitive debates were captured. The piloting of the AI-powered speech-to-text tool developed with the World Intellectual Property Organization had demonstrated the practical benefits of digitalization and the possibility of streamlining the ILO's work while maintaining accuracy and accessibility.
- 428.** She encouraged the Office to assess the full implications of storing, hosting and archiving transcripts and video and audio recordings and to compare those costs with the existing

system. Given the vital need to understand the intention behind agreed language in ILO standards, particularly when they were transposed into domestic law, documentation must be user-friendly, with users able to search across meetings and retrieve relevant interventions. A briefing on how to use the new tools would be beneficial.

429. Noting that one of the expected benefits of the proposed changes was eliminating the need for participants to request changes to summaries of their statements, she pointed out that transcripts might be unclear owing to speakers' pronunciation, dialects or accents, and participants should be able to request corrections. Consideration should also be given to the materials' long-term accessibility. It should be borne in mind that individual interventions might be extracted or circulated outside their original context, and it was therefore important to ensure that debates' integrity and context were preserved. The proposed changes could affect some participants' willingness to speak freely, and the option to submit written interventions on sensitive matters should therefore remain available. Her group supported the trialling of the new approach with a view to reassessing it at the November 2026 session.
430. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Senegal noted that the current six-step process of producing meeting records was long and costly in terms of both human and financial resources and did not fulfil the demand for modernization in document production. His group therefore welcomed the proposed new approach, although it was of the view that human oversight would be vital to ensure quality, reliability and accuracy. The Africa group welcomed the proposed phased implementation of the changes.
431. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom expressed support for improvements to efficiency and resource use while preserving the transparency, multilingualism and institutional value of official ILO records. Given the Office's reprioritization efforts and efficiency goals, the modernization of meeting records was the next logical step following the integration of new technologies, including AI, into document production. Recognizing the importance of safeguards and the transparent use of new technology, he requested clarification as to how the accuracy of AI-generated transcripts would be ensured, how errors would be corrected, what archiving arrangements would be in place, what the costs of publishing would be and how the proposed changes would affect constituents' ability to exchange views freely.
432. The documentation of the work of the ILO's key governance bodies, particularly the Governing Body and standard-setting discussions at the Conference, was vital since it ensured that the Organization's deliberations were accurately preserved, provided a dependable basis for future reference and supported transparency and accountability. The use of modern tools should not undermine the dependability of official records, which were a valued and frequently consulted resource. The proposed changes did, however, offer opportunities to expand multilingual accessibility, and IMEC would welcome details on how the system would work in practice, including with regard to searchability, navigation and language coverage. He supported the proposed next steps and asked whether written records would continue to be produced in their current format during the trial. The Office should set out clear criteria for assessing the trial, addressing usability, linguistic quality, timeliness and overall value.
433. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Official Relations, Meetings and Language Services Department) emphasized that the proposals, which had been made in full recognition of the value and importance of the records of proceedings, did not aim to do away with those records, but to change their format and use new technology to provide the same service. A dedicated team would be established to assist constituents in using the new tools and finding the necessary records, and briefing sessions would be organized to ensure a

smooth transition. The trial would allow for lessons learned to be built on. Users from all groups would be consulted by means of a survey as part of the assessment of the trial, taking into account the criteria listed by the representative of IMEC.

- 434.** The document contained a hyperlink to a sample record of a Governing Body session, and the records of the Conference would take a similar form. The costs of data storage had already been partially taken into account, and the proposed changes were not expected to lead to an increase in costs since recordings were already made and retained during most Governing Body sittings; the Office would nevertheless ensure that costs were considered. Other UN agencies, notably the UN Office at Geneva, had been using similar platforms for some years.

Decision

435. The Governing Body:

- (a) endorsed, in principle, the proposal set out in document GB.356/INS/8 to replace the current approach to recording the proceedings of official meetings by an approach that consists of producing a record containing links to online audio or video recordings and automatically generated transcripts for the following meetings:**
 - plenary sittings, recurrent discussion committees and general discussion committees of the International Labour Conference;
 - Governing Body sessions;
 - regional meetings;
 - technical meetings;
- (b) requested the Office to:**
 - (i) implement, on a trial basis, the new approach to recording the proceedings at the 114th Session of the Conference and at the 357th Session of the Governing Body in June 2026;**
 - (ii) make available online, for the purpose of the trial, the audio or video recordings of sittings of the Governing Body and of Conference recurrent discussion and general discussion committees, accompanied by automatically generated transcripts;**
 - (iii) submit to its 358th Session (November 2026) the result of the assessment of the trial and any amendments to the applicable standing orders and rules that may be required to apply the new approach to sessions of the Conference and the Governing Body, and regional and technical meetings.**

(GB.356/INS/8, paragraph 28)

9. Rules concerning the Director-General

9.1. Draft rules governing the handling of allegations of misconduct against a Director-General (GB.356/INS/9/1)

- 436.** The Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, proposed by the Russian Federation, which had been circulated by the Office. It read:
- 9. The Governing Body approved the rules governing the handling of allegations of misconduct against a Director-General of the ILO, as set out and amended in Appendix I

to GB.356/INS/9/1, and decided that they should be included in a new annex to the Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office.

Amendment to Appendix I, paragraph 13

13. For each report of misconduct meeting the above criteria, the Director of the IAO will prepare a fact-based report documenting the findings, which will include one of the following two recommendations:
 - (i) a referral recommendation, if the allegations, wholly or in part, warrant referral to an external investigation entity ¹ for formal review; or
 - (ii) a closure recommendation, if the allegations, wholly or in part, do not warrant further review or investigation, and the reasons for such a recommendation.

¹The entity shall be the investigation function of a United Nations entity's internal oversight office, such as the internal investigation function of another United Nations specialized agency or the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services.

(The amendment proposed by the Russian Federation was not put into discussion at the Governing Body as it was not seconded.)

437. **The Worker spokesperson** noted that in November 2021, the Governing Body had taken note of the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit regarding the development and adoption of appropriate formal procedures for the investigations of complaints of misconduct by executive heads and the adoption of appropriate policies by the end of 2021. In the event of misconduct, the Governing Body was the disciplinary authority, based on an established procedure incorporating principles of international administrative law. Allegations of misconduct would be reported to the Governing Body Chairperson and the terms of reference of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) had been amended for the provision of advice in cases of allegations of misconduct or retaliation. The Office had prepared draft rules consistent with the principles of natural justice, including the presumption of innocence, full confidentiality, and the protection of reputations of the individuals concerned. Due process and fairness were also developed in the draft rules which aimed at ensuring timely and effective justice and the maintenance of trust in the ILO governance mechanisms. The rules would be reviewed every five years or on request by the Governing Body. Any disciplinary measures taken could be subject to review by the ILO Administrative Tribunal.
438. Documents GB.356/INS/9/1 and GB.356/INS/9/2 should be read together as both placed the Organization's continuing governance in case of incapacity of the Director-General on a solid footing. GB.356/INS/9/1 presented the possibility of terminating a Director-General's contract, placing him or her on administrative leave or of suspension. GB.356/INS/9/2 provided clear steps as to which actions should be taken if that happened. Both documents therefore addressed the need to ensure the continuous and efficient functioning of the Office in case of incapacity, provided by interim or final disciplinary measures. The Workers' group supported the proposed conclusions.
439. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the Employers' group supported the adoption of a formal framework, which would fill a long-standing gap in the Organization's governance, as a solid basis to ensure that all allegations of misconduct would be dealt with in a credible, independent manner, in accordance with the rules and which preserved the Organization's integrity. Disciplinary authority lay solely with the Governing Body. Of importance also was the integration of essential procedural guarantees such as the presumption of innocence, strict confidentiality, protection against retaliation and the Director-General's right to be assisted by a lawyer. An investigation procedure conducted by an external investigation body guaranteed the independence and compliance of professional standards with international practice. Lastly,

the respective roles of the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight (IAO), the IOAC, the Governing Body Officers and finally the Governing Body itself had been clarified.

- 440.** The Employers' group sought clarification and legal certainty in implementation of the rules. Firstly, as to the scope the rules referred to all allegations of misconduct against the Director-General, both internal and external including from members of staff and external actors. Given the potential differences in context, in particular allegations with diplomatic aspects, the new framework should be applied consistently to internal and external allegations, while allowing appropriate procedural management. As for the distinction between a report on misconduct and a staff grievance, the latter should be referred to the internal dispute settlement mechanism. Clarification should be provided as to whether a grievance or allegation of misconduct was the responsibility of the IAO, and whether that classification was made according to established internal procedures and subject to appropriate supervision. The draft framework provided that allegations were considered sufficient to justify referral when they were made in good faith and were neither frivolous nor vexatious. That threshold implied that allegations should be supported by sufficiently precise and verifiable elements to justify more in-depth examination. Such an understanding was important to guarantee that the process was not initiated on the basis of statements devoid of material evidence and to guarantee institutional stability and the rights of all parties. The text referred to the observance of misconduct beyond all reasonable doubt. That was in accordance with the case law of the ILO Administrative Tribunal and must therefore be interpreted in the framework of international administrative law rather than as a strict criminal law standard. The Employers' group expressed satisfaction that interim measures remained under the authority of the Governing Body as a precaution and should only be applied where necessary and proportionate so as to protect the integrity of the investigation and the Organization's interests. The framework under consideration reflected an approach balanced between responsibilities and legal procedures. No such framework might anticipate possible scenarios. Its strength lay not only in its provisions but also in the manner in which it was applied in good faith and with restraint in compliance with the Governing Body's roles and responsibilities. The Employers' group was ready to support the effective implementation of these rules and to contribute to any future revision thereof. It supported the draft decision.
- 441. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of Gabon welcomed the work done which, while taking note of the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit, the representatives of the UN system investigation services and the policies in force in other specialized agencies, preserved the specific nature of the ILO. The Africa group recognized that the Governing Body had exclusive authority in the case of misconduct by a Director-General and provided the Director-General with his instructions so that he could perform the tasks entrusted, in accordance with article 8.1 of the ILO Constitution. In that regard, the Officers should ensure that the investigation was conducted impartially via a transparent process which respected the fundamental rights of the individuals concerned. Geographical representation should be ensured within the internal oversight bodies, especially the IAO and the IOAC. More information should be provided on the internal procedure for adopting the assessment report produced by the IAO prior to its transmission to the IOAC and the Governing Body Officers. The Africa group welcomed the principles stated in the draft rules and insisted on the need to apply the rules, in accordance with the presumption of innocence and protection of the reputation of the persons concerned by the investigation, and to grant appropriate protection to whistle-blowers. It recalled the duty of good faith which must underpin any action taken by persons participating in the process to guarantee its credibility, preserve the independence of the internal supervisory and external investigation bodies and avoid any conflict of interests and external influence, guarantee the confidentiality of the

essential conclusions, and preserve the integrity of the proceedings and reliability of the investigation report. Rigorous application of the rules in cases of allegations against the Director-General would preserve the credibility and objectivity of the oversight function and respect for the principles of responsibility and equality for all. The Africa group supported the draft decision.

- 442. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Brazil said that his region valued the definition of clear, transparent and objective investigation procedures and possible determination of responsibility in cases of misconduct. The region anticipated that it would never be necessary to invoke such rules and trusted that Directors-General would continue acting as per their responsibilities and all applicable rules. As to the rules contained in Appendix I of document GB.356/INS/9/1, the scope of application of the procedure did not define expressly what was meant by misconduct by a Director-General, and referred only to article 12.12 of the Staff Regulations and paragraph 8 of IGDS No. 551 on reporting of serious failure of protection against reprisals. It should therefore be clarified why the definition of such conduct would be moved to other ILO standard-setting documents which could be amended in the future by authorities other than the Governing Body. GRULAC supported the draft decision.
- 443. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Germany emphasized the principle of ensuring that all credible allegations of misconduct by a Director-General, members of his Office or ILO staff members were investigated fully and fairly. The proposed rules aligned with the principle of international administrative law as applied by the ILO Administrative Tribunal, including the presumption of innocence, due process and protections against retaliation. The rules integrated existing ILO instruments, such as the Staff Regulations and standards of conduct, ensuring consistency with the ILO Constitution which designated the Governing Body as the sole disciplinary authority over the Director-General. To address potential vulnerabilities, the criteria for subjective good faith should be clarified, as they could otherwise lead to disputes if allegations were dismissed as frivolous. IMEC saw merit in ensuring that any decision not to refer or close a matter was accompanied by sufficiently reasoned documentation so that the IAO and the Governing Body Officers could exercise oversight while preserving confidentiality. The proposal signalled collective commitment to transparency and equality before the law, regardless of rank. Within the ILO's tripartite structure, the rules promoted inclusivity by empowering the Governing Body Officers who represented all groups to make key decisions. Independent external investigations further built trust in the ILO as a neutral institution. In terms of practical implementation, the clear process chain ensured efficiency and independence with no financial implications. Furthermore, to reinforce confidence in the process, it would also be useful to clarify the criteria for selecting the external investigation entity, including demonstrable investigative expertise, availability and the absence of any perceived conflict of interest. Interim measures such as administrative leave allowed for swift responses although risks included delays due to case complexity. IMEC would welcome a clearer expectation of periodic progress reporting to the Governing Body Officers. It also recommended strengthening institutional safeguards such as ensuring reporting arrangements to the IOAC and clearer guidance for the assessment made by the IAO. Strict confidentiality should be combined with appropriate institutional transparency and accountability towards the Governing Body so that confidence in the process could be maintained. IMEC supported the adoption of the rules as outlined in Appendix I and their inclusion as a new annex to the *Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*.

- 444. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** considered that the adoption of the rules governing the conduct of investigations into accusations against the Director-General would close a serious gap in the ILO supervisory and reporting system. A clear definition should be provided of precisely who was to perform the functions of the external investigation authority. Such powers should be entrusted only to a division of one of the UN agencies and the use of other such authorities, especially private companies, was unacceptable for a number of reasons. An investigation into the head of an international Organization required special expertise, recognition of the context and the observance of confidentiality. The financial aspect was also important. Such requirements could only be fulfilled by a division of another international organization and not a private subcontractor. That would guarantee the integrity of the ILO's legal process, the investigators could perform reporting functions and the governing authority exercise quality control. In most organizations where such an investigative mechanism operated, external investigation functions were carried out solely by UN bodies. The Russian Federation's amendment was therefore aimed at making use of advanced-level experience.
- 445. A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller), responding to the requests for clarification, said that the scope of allegations should cover all those that came to light. As to admissibility and verification of what needed to happen, the draft rules put in place a scenario so that the right way forward could be determined. All allegations would be subject to review and would be documented. A report would be made to the IOAC that allegations had been received and a decision would need to be taken to proceed or not to consider them further. As to the transmission process, all allegations would be received centrally by the IAO and moved across to the IOAC for review. The idea was to have checks and balances in the system. The recommendations would be made by the IOAC and the decision would be taken by the Governing Body Officers. Concerning the choice of external investigating entity, there was no identified process across the agencies of whom to choose, so as to guarantee independence, impartiality and professional expertise. Following consultations with the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (UNOIOS) and one or two other internal audit functions of the specialized agencies, reciprocal arrangements would be made by way of a Memorandum of Understanding. In specialized cases, based on specific need or in respect of timing, the use of a private company could not be excluded. Given that all agencies were facing budgetary constraints, it might not be possible to call upon resources from UNOIOS in sufficient time to undertake an investigation.
- 446. Another representative of the Director-General** (Director of Internal Audit) reconfirmed that all incoming allegations would be reviewed by IAO and reported to the IOAC. The private session between the Director of the IAO and the IOAC would be the opportunity to discuss in full confidence the outcome of all such allegations received.
- 447. Another representative of the Director-General** (Legal Adviser) explained that the question of the difference between misconduct and grievances under the Staff Regulations and Rules arose not only in the case of the Director-General but also more generally. As noted by GRULAC, the definition of misconduct was very broad, although there was a personal dimension of non-respect for the applicable rules of the Office and the standards of behaviour required in the international civil service. By contrast, grievances related rather to administrative matters such as performance appraisals, or the refusal of a grant or allowance. As the rules indicate, the Office of the Legal Adviser would advise the IAO as to whether allegations constituted misconduct. The burden of proof was the rule applied in international administrative law by the ILO Administrative Tribunal to ensure safety and certainty. In fact, it

was also applied by the competent internal bodies, namely the Disciplinary Committee and the Joint Advisory Appeals Board.

- 448. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Brazil said he had not commented on the substance of the definition of misconduct by the Director-General. The definition of misconduct in Appendix I of document GB.356/INS/9/1 referred to the definition in other legal documents but did not include those other definitions. Why was that the case? Also, did the Governing Body have the power to change the rules in IGDS No. 551 relating to the reporting of serious misconduct and protection against retaliation? The main concern was that a definition of the rules was being supported that would make them more transparent. What was the purpose if there was a definition in this rule that could be changed by another authority?
- 449. The representative of the Director-General** (Legal Adviser), responding to the question as to why the definition was not reflected exactly in the rules, said that it was common legislative practice to refer to the main rules that were the source of the definition to ensure consistency in the body of the applicable rules. Article 12(1) of the Staff Regulations contained a general definition of misconduct, which was also reflected in the relevant IGDS: "Misconduct" is understood as the failure to comply with the Staff Regulations, Financial Regulations, Financial Rules or other relevant internal rules and procedures or to observe the standards of conduct required of an international civil servant". The Staff Regulations were adopted by the Governing Body and the Director-General was subject to those Regulations to the extent that they were compatible with his or her constitutional status and responsibility to the Governing Body. IGDS No. 551, referred to in paragraph 3 of the rules, was an Office Directive. It came under the authority of the Director-General in relation to the efficient conduct of the Office, in accordance with article 8.1 of the Constitution, as an internal procedure for the implementation of the Staff Regulations.
- 450. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Gabon asked whether it was possible that certain members of the IAO could contest the assessment report produced, in particular the recommendation transmitted to the Governing Body Officers.
- 451. The representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) emphasized that it would be the responsibility of the Director of the IAO to establish the facts of each reported case in the assessment report. The facts would be passed on to the Governing Body Officers via the IOAC.
- 452. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Brazil said that a coherent framework was required but without reference to legal rules that could be amended in other instances. It was strange that the definition of misconduct by the Director-General could be modified by the Director-General himself or herself in the relevant Office Directive.
- 453. The representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) emphasized that the Staff Regulations could not be amended without the approval of the Governing Body. The Office Directive, IGDS No. 551, provided protection for whistle-blowers where allegations were made by them against the Director-General or any other person. In theory, the Director-General could change the internal procedures but the main provisions would be aligned with the regulatory texts.

Decision

- 454. The Governing Body approved the rules governing the handling of allegations of misconduct against a Director-General of the ILO, as set out in Appendix I to**

GB.356/INS/9/1, and decided that they should be included in a new annex to the Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office.

(GB.356/INS/9/1, paragraph 9)

9.2. Draft rules governing situations in which a Director-General is unable to exercise her or his functions (GB.356/INS/9/2)

- 455. The Employer spokesperson** welcomed the systematization of the practice governing circumstances in which a Director-General was unable to exercise his or her functions. In the absence of written rules, that helped to strengthen legal certainty, institutional continuity and credibility, particularly in exceptional situations where clear answers were needed. The approach set out in Appendix I reflected two crucial fundamental principles: the need to ensure uninterrupted operational continuity, achieved through the automatic assumption of duties by the highest-ranking official, preventing any institutional vacuums and ensuring the proper functioning of the Organization, and the reaffirmation of the central role of the Governing Body in the supervision and oversight of decisions relating to the designation of an interim Director-General or the beginning of a procedure for the appointment of a new one. The balance between operational autonomy and institutional oversight was appropriate and consistent with past practice. The rules set out in Appendix I constituted a solid, pragmatic foundation aligned with UN system practices.
- 456.** In a constructive spirit she shared some technical reflections aimed at improving the clarity and future applicability of the framework. Regarding temporary incapacity, it was understood that the rules covered transitional situations to ensure the operational continuity of the Office. In cases of prolonged absence the Governing Body would assess the situation and determine the appropriate measures to be taken, in accordance with the rules applicable to the appointment of a Director-General, including initiating an election procedure if necessary. She stressed the important role played by the Governing Body Officers in such circumstances. While not explicitly stipulated in the rules, in practice the Officers should be consulted in any situation relating to the determination or extension of incapacity, in line with the guidance of the Governing Body. Regarding recognition of temporary incapacity, the text described situations in which the Director-General could not perform his or her duties, without specifying the mechanism for formally recognizing incapacity when the Director-General was unable to do so. It could be useful to clarify whether formal recognition should be carried out by the Officers on the basis of available information, such as medical reports. She highlighted the importance of a smooth transition from a routine absence to a possible incapacity. According to paragraph 7 of Appendix I, the Director-General retained the inherent authority to designate an officer-in-charge in case of routine absences. In practice, if such an absence was prolonged, the Governing Body, supported by recommendations from the Officers, should address the situation using the framework provided in the rules.
- 457.** Her comments were intended to record elements relevant for the interpretation and application of the rules, and not to question the value of the proposal before the Governing Body. The text provided a clear framework that enabled swift, coherent and legally sound action to be taken in exceptional circumstances. She welcomed the fact that the proposed rules were based on established institutional practice and were flexible enough to adapt to different circumstances, including temporary incapacity. The adoption of the rules constituted an important step in strengthening the Organization's governance, while demonstrating

commitment to predictability, transparency and institutional continuity. The Employers' group supported the first paragraph of the draft decision.

- 458. The Worker spokesperson** said that it had been noted during the discussion at the 355th Session that clarity was needed in the rules on who would assume the responsibilities of a Director-General in the event of their resignation or temporary or permanent incapacity to perform their duties. The Workers' group had said that the Governing Body must approve such a replacement, requiring an amendment to article 4.2(c) or a new provision. The Office had been requested to prepare a proposal to address the identified ambiguities and provide greater constitutional and legal clarity in the future. The past practice illustrated that there had been three instances in which a Director-General had needed to be replaced due to permanent incapacity. In such cases, the matter was either referred as soon as possible to the Governing Body or, in case of a temporary incapacity, there was an automatic assumption of functions by the most senior highest-ranking official understood as the longest serving official of the highest grade, with the matter reported to the Officers of the Governing Body without delay.
- 459.** The proposed rules that would codify previous practice had two aims: to consolidate the Governing Body's authority with regard to the appointment of a Director-General and the exercise of their functions; and to ensure in a transparent manner the continuous efficient conduct of the Office and business continuity.
- 460.** He welcomed the draft rules and was satisfied that they aimed to guarantee the uninterrupted, efficient conduct of the Office. He also welcomed the definitions of "incapacity" and "incapacitated" and the clear role set out for the Governing Body and for its Officers. He concurred with many of the points made by the Employer spokesperson. The Workers' group supported the first paragraph of the draft decision.
- 461. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Brazil said that the adoption of clear, transparent and objective rules, duly approved by the competent body – in this case, the Governing Body – contributed to enhancing legal certainty and giving legitimacy to any procedures that might need to be followed in situations where a Director-General was unable to discharge their functions, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. Noting that in the event of a Director-General's incapacity, the official with the highest rank by grade and seniority would be entrusted with ensuring the uninterrupted efficient conduct of the Office, he asked if there was full certainty as to the identification of the official with the highest rank by grade and seniority. It was important to ascertain whether a situation could arise in which the highest hierarchical rank and the greatest seniority were not held by the same individual. Further, he requested clarification regarding the precise scope of the expression "ensure the uninterrupted efficient conduct of the Office". He noted that irrespective of the interpretation of who met the criteria of highest rank by grade and seniority, that official would not have been appointed by the Governing Body.
- 462. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Ethiopia said that in view of the fact that the gap in the regulatory framework carried potential risks for institutional stability and effective governance, his group welcomed the initiative to codify existing practices and to align the ILO's framework with those of other UN system organizations. Recognizing the need for an immediate and automatic mechanism to guarantee the uninterrupted functioning of the Office, he said that the proposal ensured operational continuity and a clear chain of command, while allowing the Governing Body to make informed decisions, as appropriate. The Africa group supported the first paragraph of the draft decision.
- 463. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Germany said that clear and predictable institutional rules were essential to ensure continuity of leadership and the

effective functioning of the Organization. IMEC welcomed the fact that the proposed framework distinguished situations of incapacity from short-term or foreseeable absence, ensuring that the rules remained confined to exceptional circumstances and did not interfere with the normal functioning of the Office. The proposal was well anchored in the ILO's existing constitutional framework. The proposed rules respected the rule that the appointment of the Director-General fell within the authority of the Governing Body, ensuring that the Governing Body would retain the authority to decide on the designation of an Acting Director-General or, in situations of permanent incapacity, would initiate the process to appoint a new Director-General, to ensure a timely return to normal constitutional order. The draft rules largely codified existing practice and did not introduce new institutional structures or complex procedures, providing greater legal clarity and predictability in circumstances that might require rapid actions. The proposal struck an appropriate balance between ensuring institutional continuity and preserving the Governing Body's oversight role. The provision for the highest-ranking official to assume responsibility on an immediate and automatic basis was a pragmatic solution that would prevent any institutional vacuum, while the Governing Body would retain its authority to determine further measures, including the designation of an Acting Director-General depending on the circumstances and expected duration of the incapacity. IMEC noted positively that the proposed rules foresaw timely consideration by the Governing Body, ensuring prompt collective oversight and safeguarding operational continuity and collective governance. The mechanism proposed appeared well suited to guaranteeing business continuity while allowing flexible responses. The draft rules represented a reasonable and necessary step towards strengthening institutional clarity and governance within the Organization and alignment with practice across the UN system. IMEC supported the draft decision.

- 464. A representative of the Director-General** (Legal Adviser) indicated that the guidance provided by the Governing Body would be taken into account should the procedure need to be applied in the future. Noting that the rules would apply within the existing constitutional and regulatory framework, she confirmed that both an official who would automatically replace a Director-General and an Acting Director-General would be subject to the same rules, including the duty to inform the Officers of the Governing Body of any important event in the work of the Office pursuant to the Standing Orders of the Governing Body. If there were a prolonged incapacity, the Officers, and thereafter the Governing Body, would be called upon to take appropriate decisions. The rules were the codification of the practice and were designed to apply within the existing constitutional institutional framework.
- 465.** Regarding the question raised by GRULAC concerning the determination of the highest-ranking official by grade and seniority, she recalled that the classification of jobs by categories and grades was clearly set out in the Staff Regulations. In the case of two high-ranking officials having the same grade, seniority would be the determining factor. Regarding the question on ensuring the uninterrupted efficient conduct of the Office, she clarified that that related to the interim phase, when the highest-ranking official took over pending a Governing Body decision, on the recommendation of its Officers, to designate an Acting Director-General. During that interim phase, the bare minimum would be done to ensure a minimum level of administrative functioning.
- 466. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, the Government representative of Brazil thanked the Legal Adviser for the clarification. It was GRULAC's understanding that the actions that could be taken by the official in question would be those that could be taken in regular situations. GRULAC's concern was that unusual or emergency situations were increasingly being discussed; the possibility of laying off 350 staff was being discussed. It was GRULAC's

understanding that the official in question would not be able to take such an action. GRULAC joined the consensus.

Decision

- 467.** The Governing Body approved the rules governing the replacement of a Director-General who is unable to exercise the functions of the office, set out in Appendix I to document GB.356/INS/9/2, and decided that these rules should be included in a new annex to the Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office.

(GB.356/INS/9/2, paragraph 13)

10. Developments in the application of the resolution concerning the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine from the perspective of the mandate of the International Labour Organization (GB.356/INS/10)

- 468.** The Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, which had been proposed by the Government of the Russian Federation, seconded by the Government of China and circulated by the Office. The proposal was to amend subparagraphs (b), (c), (d) and (g) to read:

- (b) reiterated its most profound concern at the ~~continuing aggression by the Russian Federation, aided by the Belarusian Government, against~~situation in Ukraine, and at the impact that this ~~situation~~aggression is having on the tripartite constituents – workers, employers and the democratically elected Government – in Ukraine, and on the world of work beyond Ukraine;
- (c) urged ~~all parties to the conflict~~the Russian Federation again to immediately cease armed activities~~and unconditionally cease its aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine;~~
- (d) urged ~~all parties to the conflict~~the Russian Federation, in line with the request made by the Committee of Experts at its 95th Session (25 November to 7 December 2024), to take all necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of appropriate ILO Conventions, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and of the Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115), including the protection of workers against ionizing radiations in the course of their work; and to ensure the full protection provided by applicable ILO instruments;
- ...
- (g) requested the Director-General to continue to monitor the impact on the world of work of the ~~Russian Federation's aggression against~~situation in Ukraine and to report to the Governing Body at its 357th future Session (~~June 2026~~) on developments in the light of the resolution, including the ILO's continued engagement with the relevant United Nations bodies involved in monitoring human rights violations and the situation of workers particularly affected by the armed conflict.

- 469. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the Office for its report and continued engagement under extremely difficult conditions. She said that the ongoing war continued to have a devastating impact on the world of work in Ukraine. Missile and drone attacks had directly affected workplaces, transport systems and energy infrastructure, with fatal consequences for workers, including energy workers, emergency responders, medical staff and transport workers. She noted the continued displacement of millions, the growing vulnerability of workers and their families, and the important role played by trade unions in providing humanitarian, legal and psychological support.

470. She expressed grave concern at the situation in the occupied territories, where trade unions were banned, offices seized and serious labour rights violations continued. She reiterated the request for dedicated reporting on those violations in future updates and also drew attention to reports concerning the coercive recruitment of migrant workers as combatants.
471. Turning to labour law reform, she said that the tripartite memorandum signed in Rome in 2025 had raised cautious optimism, but that trade unions now reported that the draft law had been submitted to Parliament without proper process of social dialogue and agreed procedures. She stressed that labour law reform, particularly in wartime, must be grounded in genuine tripartite dialogue and full respect for ILO standards, and warned against reconstruction being based on weakened labour protections or diminished trade union rights.
472. She called on the Government of Ukraine to ensure that the parliamentary process fully reflected trade union input and on the Office to continue to monitor the process closely. She reiterated the Workers' group's support for Ukrainian workers, their unions and the ILO's work on the ground. With those comments, she supported the original draft decision and rejected the amendment proposed by the Government of the Russian Federation.
473. **The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for the update on developments and for the ILO's continued support to the tripartite constituents in Ukraine in line with the March 2022 resolution. He reaffirmed the Employers' group's support and solidarity with the people, businesses and workers of Ukraine, and acknowledged the Office's efforts to respond to constituents' needs within the ILO mandate and available resources.
474. He noted that, despite fragile macroeconomic conditions, continued attacks on energy infrastructure and persistent labour shortages, the Ukrainian economy had shown resilience. He welcomed the Government's continued commitment to labour law reform, including the approval of the draft Labour Code and its submission to Parliament, as well as the adoption of the National Employment Strategy 2030 and its operational plan. He said that those measures could help to modernize the labour market and address key challenges, including skills mismatches, labour integration for veterans and the digitalization of employment services. He underlined that the systematic involvement of the social partners remained essential for building trust, strengthening cohesion and improving policy outcomes, and encouraged the Government to continue associating them closely with its reforms.
475. He also welcomed the ILO's continued support to employer and business membership organizations, including new services responding to wartime challenges, and referred in particular to the industrial service launched by the Federation of Employers of Ukraine with ILO support. He further welcomed the five-year Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work programme financed by Switzerland.
476. Finally, he expressed appreciation for the ILO team in Ukraine for continuing to deliver meaningful results under extremely difficult conditions. He supported the draft decision and rejected the proposed amendment.
477. **A Government representative of the Russian Federation** said that, once again, the report lacked impartiality and contained unfair accusations against her country. She stressed that workers in territories of the Russian Federation affected by attacks from the Ukrainian armed forces were also suffering, including threats to their safety and labour rights.
478. She said that, despite the suspension of ILO technical cooperation, the Russian Federation continued to pursue policies in the areas of occupational safety and health, labour protection, youth employment and job quality, while ensuring compliance with ratified ILO Conventions.

She added that labour market indicators remained stable, with low unemployment, rising employment and wage growth in 2025.

479. She stated that the report was not objective, as it relied exclusively on information from Ukrainian sources and Western NGOs, and failed to mention attacks affecting industrial infrastructure and workers in certain regions of the Russian Federation. She also argued that the report did not address legislative changes in Ukraine raising concerns regarding forced labour and the lack of proper tripartite dialogue in labour law reform.
480. She considered that references to the “aggression of the Russian Federation” went beyond the ILO’s mandate and introduced political considerations into the work of the Governing Body. She warned against the politicization of the Organization and said that anti-Russian decisions were harmful to the rights and interests of ordinary Russian workers.
481. She therefore expressed disagreement with the report and the draft decision, recalled that amendments had been proposed with a view to making the text more balanced and less politicized, and said that, if those amendments were not accepted, the Russian Federation would request that they be put to a vote. She also proposed that reports on the matter should no longer be submitted to each session of the Governing Body. Despite those concerns, she affirmed the importance of continuing cooperation within the ILO on the basis of solidarity, tripartism and the protection of workers’ rights.
482. **Speaking on behalf of a group of 34 countries,**¹³ a Government representative of Cyprus thanked the Office for its report. She said that it clearly demonstrated that the Russian Federation’s brutal, illegal, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale invasion of Ukraine continued to cause immense human suffering and economic devastation, and confirmed its persistent violations of international law and disregard for ILO principles.
483. She strongly condemned the continued endangerment of workers as a result of the aggression, including attacks on infrastructure, particularly in the energy and transport sectors, which placed workers at life-threatening risk. She also expressed grave concern at the reported continuing violations of the fundamental rights of workers at the illegally seized Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.
484. She commended the resilience of the people of Ukraine in keeping enterprises functioning under extremely difficult conditions, noted the reported economic growth in 2025 and welcomed progress in labour and social policy, including support for working parents and developments relating to the draft Labour Code, while underlining the importance of continued tripartite consultations before its final adoption.
485. She thanked the Office for its sustained support to Ukraine, including on labour law reform and social dialogue, and reiterated appreciation for the ILO’s collaboration with the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in integrating labour standards into the monitoring of human rights and humanitarian law.
486. She said that, in the light of the Russian Federation’s ongoing violations of its obligations as an ILO Member State, her group continued to question the appropriateness of maintaining the subregional office in Moscow, particularly in the context of ongoing reforms, cost-saving considerations and the limited level of activity there.

¹³ Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Kingdom of the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Poland and Ukraine.

487. She reaffirmed the group's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The group could not support the amendments proposed by the Russian Federation.
488. **Speaking on behalf of a group of 41 countries,**¹⁴ a Government representative of Poland reiterated strong condemnation of the Russian Federation's continued illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine. He said that the human cost remained devastating, with 2025 reported to have been the deadliest year for Ukrainian civilians since 2022, and workers across sectors continuing to face unacceptable risks simply by going to work.
489. He condemned repeated strikes on critical civilian infrastructure, particularly in the energy sector, which had forced workers to operate under extremely hazardous conditions. He said that those acts confirmed the Russian Federation's ongoing and systematic violations of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and its disregard for ILO principles. He also regretted the lack of updated information in the report on the situation of workers in the occupied territories, including at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, and urged the Office to continue monitoring those issues closely and to report regularly to the Governing Body.
490. He noted that the aggression continued to affect every aspect of Ukraine's labour market and economic life, with millions displaced, enterprises operating under constant threat and labour shortages becoming increasingly acute. Despite those challenges, Ukraine's tripartite constituents had remained resilient and committed to reforms supporting recovery and reconstruction. He commended the Office for continuing to deliver meaningful results in extremely difficult conditions, including in the areas of social dialogue, labour reform and institutional resilience.
491. Referring to the Organization's severe financial constraints, he questioned the justification for maintaining the subregional office in Moscow, given its high operational costs and reduced occupancy, and said that relocating the office would both better serve constituents in the region and contribute to necessary savings. He would also welcome any update from the Office regarding previously raised concerns about the protection of workers under occupation.
492. He reaffirmed his group's commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and called on the Russian Federation immediately and unconditionally to withdraw its forces from the territory of Ukraine and to end its violations of workers' rights and human rights. He supported the original draft decision. **A Government representative of France** aligned herself with the statements made by Cyprus and Poland. She reiterated France's strongest condemnation of the Russian Federation's continued war of aggression against Ukraine, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, and expressed full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.
494. She said that the Russian Federation must immediately cease its attacks, in particular indiscriminate attacks against civilian premises and infrastructure, which further aggravated the situation and constituted serious violations of international humanitarian law. The Russian Federation must also withdraw immediately, completely and unconditionally from all occupied Ukrainian territories, with full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within

¹⁴ Ukraine, Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Poland.

its internationally recognized borders. That was an essential condition for establishing lasting peace and preserving an international order based on the rule of law.

495. She deplored once again the heavy price paid by workers and employers in Ukraine, particularly in the light of repeated attacks by the Russian Federation on energy infrastructure. Nevertheless, she noted that the Ukrainian Government had continued its reform efforts, including through the adoption of the draft Labour Code and the development, together with the social partners, of the National Employment Strategy 2030 to address labour market challenges, including reskilling and the reintegration of former combatants.
496. She paid tribute to the officials of the ILO office in Kyiv for their dedicated work alongside the Ukrainian Government and the social partners in promoting fundamental principles and rights at work under extremely difficult circumstances. She emphasized that the Russian disinformation was not convincing anyone and called on the Russian Federation to respect its international obligations, including towards the ILO. She supported the draft decision and rejected the amendments proposed by the Russian Federation.
497. **A Government representative of China** said that her Government had taken note of the latest information provided by the Office. She recalled that, since the outbreak of the conflict, the item had repeatedly been brought before the Governing Body and decisions had each time been adopted by a vote, with limited practical effect, while consuming considerable time and resources. China expressed serious concern in that regard.
498. She said that China remained deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict and its growing impact on the world of work. She opposed unilateral sanctions and commended the ILO for its continued efforts to mobilize resources, provide assistance to the affected countries and their tripartite constituents, and implement the transitional strategy, encouraging the Office to continue those efforts.
499. She considered that the draft decision addressed issues such as sovereignty and armed conflict that fell outside the ILO's competence and reflected political bias. Stressing that the ILO, as a specialized agency of the UN in the field of labour, should focus on its core mandate and provide technical support and services to all Member States, she reaffirmed China's opposition to any attempt to politicize, instrumentalize or weaponize the Organization. In view of the above, she supported the amendment to the draft decision proposed by the Russian Federation.
500. **A Government representative of Ukraine**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, said that the report once again highlighted the catastrophic consequences of the Russian Federation's war on Ukraine's labour market and socio-economic conditions, and stressed that the issue should remain high on the agenda of the Organization.
501. He expressed grave concern at the systematic violations of workers' rights in the temporarily occupied territories, including at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, and called on the Office to strengthen cooperation with the relevant UN human rights mechanisms in order to identify and report such violations.
502. He noted that, since March 2022, the Russian Federation had failed to comply with any of the relevant Governing Body decisions, which he said represented a clear breach of the ILO Constitution and of the Organization's principles. He again called for a decision on the continued maintenance of the office in Moscow, particularly in the light of severe budgetary constraints.

- 503.** He commended the ILO office in Kyiv for its work under wartime conditions and welcomed the ILO's continued assistance in labour law reform, approximation to the EU labour *acquis*, support for SMEs and the reintegration of war veterans. He urged the Governing Body to take decisive action in response to the Russian Federation's continued disregard for the Charter of the UN and the ILO Constitution.
- 504. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia) thanked members for their interventions and welcomed the engagement of new partners in the work of the ILO office in Kyiv. He also paid tribute to the professionalism and resilience of the staff in Ukraine.
- 505.** On the draft Labour Code, he took note of the concerns raised regarding the process and tripartite dialogue, and said that the Office remained engaged in support of consultations and consistency with international labour standards.
- 506.** He recalled that the Office continued to act in line with the Governing Body's 2022 decision, including with regard to the suspension of technical cooperation with the Russian Federation and the review of arrangements concerning the Moscow office, including its costs.
- 507.** On workers in the occupied territories, including at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, he confirmed that the Office remained in regular contact with the relevant UN human rights mechanisms and was continuing its cooperation with them, including through training activities. While no recent update was currently available, he said that the Office would continue to follow up on the matter and took note, as encouraged by the Worker spokesperson, of the interest in further information on the impact on workers.
- 508. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the representative of the Director-General for his explanations and commitment, and said that the Workers' group, and in particular the trade unions in Ukraine, looked forward to continued ILO support in promoting tripartism under the current difficult circumstances.
- 509. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** expressed regret that the amendments she had proposed to the draft decision had not been accepted and requested that the amendments be put to a vote.

(The amendment proposed by the Russian Federation was rejected with 4 votes in favour, 41 votes against and 7 abstentions.)

- 510. A Government representative of Brazil** reiterated his Government's view that a decision urging the parties to cease armed activities would go beyond the ILO's mandate and fall within the competence of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly. For that reason, Brazil had abstained on the amendment proposed by the Government of the Russian Federation and did not support the corresponding language in the original draft decision.
- 511. The Worker spokesperson** said that, for several years, the Government of the Russian Federation had sought to describe the war in Ukraine as a mere "situation". She stressed that, given the scale of the loss of life among workers, families and children, such terminology was inappropriate, and said that the conflict should be called what it was: a war. In the house of social justice and peace, she urged that such wording should no longer be used.
- 512. A Government representative of the United States** said that the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine must end without delay and that her Government supported efforts to promote a negotiated agreement capable of ending the bloodshed and destruction. She stressed that the ILO was a technical Organization focused on labour rights and workplace issues, not a forum for resolving geopolitical conflicts. In her view, the language of the draft

decision was not conducive to creating an environment favourable to a negotiated settlement. She therefore called on all concerned to lower the rhetoric and engage in good faith.

- 513. The Employer spokesperson, echoed by the Worker spokesperson,** said that the Office document and the draft decision were fully in line with the ILO's mandate.

Decision

- 514. In the light of the developments in Ukraine outlined in document GB.356/INS/10 and the resolution concerning the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine from the perspective of the mandate of the International Labour Organization (ILO), adopted at its 344th Session (March 2022), and taking into account the discussions held and the guidance provided during its 356th Session, the Governing Body:**

- (a) noted the information provided in the document;
- (b) reiterated its most profound concern at the continuing aggression by the Russian Federation, aided by the Belarusian Government, against Ukraine, and at the impact that this aggression is having on the tripartite constituents – workers, employers and the democratically elected Government – in Ukraine, and on the world of work beyond Ukraine;
- (c) urged the Russian Federation again to immediately and unconditionally cease its aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine;
- (d) urged the Russian Federation, in line with the request made by the Committee of Experts at its 95th Session (25 November to 7 December 2024), to take all necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and of the Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115), including the protection of workers against ionizing radiations in the course of their work; and to ensure the full protection provided by applicable ILO instruments;
- (e) reiterated its unwavering support for the tripartite constituents in Ukraine, and requested the Director-General to continue to respond to the constituents' needs in Ukraine and to expand the ILO's resource mobilization efforts, including in forthcoming international donor conferences on recovery and reconstruction;
- (f) requested the Director-General to continue to enhance resource mobilization efforts for other affected countries across Eastern Europe and Central Asia;
- (g) requested the Director-General to continue to monitor the impact on the world of work of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and to report to the Governing Body at its 357th Session (June 2026) on developments in the light of the resolution, including the ILO's continued engagement with the relevant United Nations bodies involved in monitoring human rights violations and the situation of workers particularly affected by the armed conflict.

(GB.356/INS/10, paragraph 30)

11. Report by the Government of Bangladesh on progress made in the implementation of the road map to address all outstanding issues mentioned in the article 26 complaint concerning alleged non-observance of Conventions Nos 81, 87 and 98 (GB.356/INS/11(Rev.2))

- 515. A Government representative of Bangladesh** (Adviser, Ministry of Labour and Employment) referred to the parliamentary elections held on 12 February 2026. The priorities of the newly elected Government were closely aligned with the work of the ILO and its Decent Work Agenda. Very positive developments had been achieved as regards the progress made in implementing the road map in connection with the complaint under article 26 of the ILO Constitution. A special parliamentary committee had endorsed the Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 for placement before Parliament, and every effort would be made to expedite its enactment. These amendments were comprehensive, reflecting inputs from workers' and employers' representatives, the ILO supervisory bodies and development partners.
- 516.** The amendments included several key changes. First, the scope of the Bangladesh Labour Act had been significantly expanded, by extending freedom of expression, freedom of association and collective bargaining rights to workers previously excluded. Second, the Government was committed to ensuring human rights, including freedom of expression and association. The minimum membership requirement for trade union registration had been reduced, documentation requirements simplified and confidentiality safeguards strengthened. The law removed penalties for unregistered union activities, prevented arbitrary rejection of applications, increased the maximum number of trade unions in factories from three to five and prohibited black listing of workers. Third, provisions had been introduced to enable unannounced inspections and strengthen penalties for violations, including anti-union discrimination, unfair labour practices, child labour and gender-based violence and harassment. The law also criminalized forced labour and black listing of workers. Fourth, the scope of social dialogue had been expanded through the recognition of national-level trade union confederations and the establishment of a national social dialogue forum alongside the existing tripartite mechanisms. Fifth, provisions had been included on institutionalizing an employment injury scheme, strengthening occupational safety and health, revising minimum wages every three years (instead of five) and clearly defining sexual violence and harassment. In line with these amendments, the Government was reviewing the Bangladesh Labour Rules. The Export Processing Zone (EPZ) Authority had signed a two-year agreement with the ILO to revise the EPZ Labour Act in alignment with the amended Labour Act.
- 517.** The Government remained fully engaged with the ILO and had continued dialogue with employers' and workers' organizations in a spirit of trust and transparency. The labour inspection department had been expanded to 1,129 approved posts, including 724 inspectors. Currently 554 inspectors were in place, with 122 new inspectors joining soon. A digitalized labour inspection system had been fully implemented, and efforts would continue to strengthen capacity and standards through dialogue and consultation. Six new labour courts had been operationalized, case backlogs had been reduced and an independent alternative dispute settlement system had been introduced with a clear legal framework. Through a coordinated effort of the concerned ministries, all 45 criminal cases filed against labour leaders and workers after the November 2023 minimum wage protests had been settled through due process. Bangladesh had recently ratified three ILO Conventions, becoming the first Asian country to have ratified all fundamental Conventions. In total, 39 ILO Conventions and one Protocol had been ratified, the highest number in the region. This reflected a political

commitment to international labour standards and to the rights of workers, while acknowledging the efforts required for the implementation of these ratifications.

- 518.** The Government remained dedicated to making every effort to ensure tangible progress. The Governing Body was requested to consider the country's capacity constraints, given the scale of the workforce, as well as ongoing efforts to advance legal and institutional reforms. Continued ILO technical assistance and cooperation of development partners were welcomed in supporting the implementation. On behalf of the Prime Minister and the elected Government, he reaffirmed the commitment to strengthening democratic institutions, upholding fundamental values, ensuring the rights of workers, implementing international labour standards and promoting fair and equitable opportunities for all. In light of the significant progress made under the road map, particularly with regard to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), he requested the Governing Body to close the case and to reconsider the draft decision.
- 519. The Worker spokesperson** noted that Bangladesh was at a transitional moment and that the interim Government had made advances in addressing long-delayed commitments under the 2021 road map, including amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act in November 2025. The Workers' group hoped and expected the new Government would maintain this forward momentum. While the advances had to be acknowledged, the road map remained incomplete and the group therefore urged that the item remain open until the March 2027 Governing Body session, so that long-pending matters – such as those concerning union registration, anti-union discrimination and violence, and the recognition of freedom of association and collective bargaining in EPZs – could finally be realized. There was no doubt that this could be achieved within the given time frame.
- 520.** Regarding labour law reform, the road map had called for comprehensive, consultative amendments to be adopted by Parliament and gazetted by November 2022. Obviously, this process had been significantly delayed, with amendments ultimately promulgated by ordinance in November 2025. As an ordinance, the amendments had still to be placed before Parliament for ratification. The group understood that a bill, not providing for any substantive changes, was currently before Parliament and was expected to be adopted shortly. On a positive note, the amendment process had involved consultation with worker and employer representatives, reflecting a level of tripartite engagement that had not been seen in previous reform efforts. This had resulted in some improvements, for example, an expanded definition of the term "worker" extending protections to groups not previously covered, such as domestic workers who were now considered workers for the purposes of freedom of association and collective bargaining; increased dismissal compensation; and provisions allowing trade unions to benefit from a check-off system for union dues. However, the Workers' group still had a number of serious concerns regarding the Bangladesh Labour Act. Although the minimum membership requirement had been reduced, the amendments had introduced inconsistent and sometimes prohibitively high thresholds based on the size of the workforce. In smaller establishments, the required threshold might approach full workforce participation and even in larger enterprises the minimum number might still be impermissibly high. While compensation for anti-union discrimination had been introduced by the Ordinance, there was still no right to reinstatement, which was an essential remedy for anti-union discrimination. The repeal of provisions under section 180 regarding the election of external officers in trade union executive committees and state enterprises raised concerns. The Bangladesh Labour Act had previously allowed up to 10 per cent of leadership to be drawn from outside the

establishment. The Ordinance also continued to prohibit strikes in new or foreign-owned establishments for two years. While this was previously three years, it was still a ban on the right to strike and therefore impermissible. Provisions governing the election and functioning of union executive committees might create administrative complexity and risks in union governance. The amended section 188 now granted the Director-General authority to resolve disputes over changes in union officers, a function that had previously been exercised by the labour courts. This risked introducing new avenues for discretionary interference in internal union affairs. In summary, the Workers' group considered that the November 2025 Ordinance represented progress, but still fell short of the road map's commitments, leaving key concerns on freedom of association and trade union rights partially or completely unaddressed. The practical impact of the amendments would also depend on the implementing rules, which had yet to be finalized. It was nevertheless noted that a tripartite committee had been established to review further amendments. Although the road map also envisaged amendments, by December 2026, to the EPZ Labour Act, the current review by the committee had not been sufficiently transparent and there was little evidence of structured consultations with the national trade union federations. Limiting engagement to worker welfare associations, given their limited capacity, did not constitute adequate participatory reform. More importantly, the Government had not indicated any intention to extend the Bangladesh Labour Act to workers in EPZs (which in the group's view was the best solution) or fully afford freedom of association and collective bargaining.

- 521.** Looking at the legislative situation as a whole, many issues raised by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) concerning Conventions Nos 87 and 98 still had not been addressed, even with the recent amendments under the 2025 Ordinance. As to union registration, the road map had committed to simplifying registration through tripartite consultation, upgrading the online system, establishing preapplication support services, maintaining offline options in low connectivity areas, training relevant officials and publishing a publicly accessible, regularly updated registration database. The Workers' group understood that the online registration system had still not meaningfully reduced procedural barriers or constrained discretionary authority of Department of Labour officials. Preapplication support services that had been introduced were no longer operational. Arbitrary rejection and prolonged processing of applications continued to be widely reported and the 55-day requirement for the Department of Labour to give a decision on an application under section 182 of the Act was regularly ignored in practice. There was broad consensus among stakeholders on the need for clear procedural standards and more objective criteria to ensure the registration progress was transparent, predictable and legally grounded. The amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act had introduced changes to the registration framework that might address some of these concerns. However, the practical impact remained to be assessed and close monitoring would be required to determine whether the amendments in practice reduced procedural barriers. On anti-union discrimination, the Workers' group had previously noted that workers and unions had no ability to directly file unfair labour practices. Only the Department of Labour had the authority to do so. This did not appear to have been addressed by the November 2025 amendments. Additionally, the Workers' group had raised in the Governing Body and before the Committee on Freedom of Association serious concerns about the conduct of the police which had frequently led to excessive force perpetrated against trade unionists, as well as arbitrary arrests and detention. The Workers' group had understood that the Government had provided training to the police on proper procedures for addressing peaceful assemblies, demonstrations and strikes, and was hopeful that this training would translate into the end of police violence against trade unionists. Finally, the article 26 complaint also concerned labour inspection and labour justice.

While acknowledging the increases in labour inspectors and tribunals aimed at reducing case backlogs, it was hoped that under the new Government, there would be more effective and efficient administration of labour justice, including the rapid treatment of cases alleging anti-union dismissals and other unfair labour practices.

522. In conclusion, the Workers' group urged the Government to take advantage of the positive support to implement the road map and address the outstanding legal and practical violations under the article 26 complaint and Committee on Freedom of Association complaints. The Government should facilitate a visit by the social partners and the ILO before the end of 2026, and some discussions had already taken place about a potential visit in September or October. The Workers' group therefore supported deferring the decision on further action until March 2027.

523. The Employer spokesperson noted that the case had been on the agenda of the Governing Body since 2019. This underlined the importance that the Governing Body attached to achieving tangible and sustained progress and reinforced the need for continued focus and time-bound efforts by the Government. In this regard, it was the group's reiterated hope that, given the constructive engagement, continued effort and demonstrated progress, the conditions could be met to allow for the eventual closure of the case. It was recognized that the recent change of Government in Bangladesh including the recent parliamentary elections and the accompanying national referendum on the broad institutional and constitutional reform package, had important practical implications. This included the need for time, regulatory and policy space for the new administration to establish its priorities, engage all relevant ministries at the domestic level involved in implementing the road map and advancing ongoing commitments at the international level. He trusted that the Office remained available to provide hands-on support to the new Government by offering practical guidance and tailored advice on how to meet the requirements outlined in the road map including interpreting specific provisions, identifying gaps and developing actionable implementation strategies. The Government of Bangladesh was encouraged to continue pursuing its efforts to ensure the timely and effective implementation of its road map of actions across all four priorities areas. In doing so, it was important that all necessary measures were taken to translate commitments into concrete outcomes while maintaining a current and results-oriented approach. It was important to keep the 2021–26 timeline firmly in view and advance the implementation progress by the end of the year. The group had noted the Government's active engagement with the ILO as well as the workers' and employers' organizations. Such engagement should be guided by a spirit of tripartite cooperation and a sense of responsibility. The Government and the social partners were encouraged to continue their constructive consultations and to take further measures to advance all aspects of labour law reform and the remaining elements concerning EPZs. In this regard, the importance of continued ILO technical assistance as well as the valuable support that could be provided by the secretariats of the Employers' and Workers' groups to ensure that reforms were effective and implementable, was re-emphasized. The Employers' group approached the process with a positive outlook and stood ready to support efforts leading to the eventual closure of the case, when meaningful and sustained progress was achieved in line with the agreed commitment.

524. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States, a Government representative of Cyprus stated that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland and Norway, as well as Switzerland and the United Kingdom aligned themselves with the statement. She thanked the Government for its engagement in addressing labour rights issues according to its international commitments. The efforts made in adopting the Ordinance amending the Bangladesh Labour Act, which had been preceded by tripartite

consultations, were welcomed and now needed to be endorsed by the new Government and the newly elected Parliament. Continued tripartite consultations were encouraged to advance all necessary labour law reforms and their implementation in practice. In line with the observations of the CEACR on Convention No. 87, it was expected that the reform of the Bangladesh Labour Act fully aligned with international labour standards. In particular, trade union registration should be possible for workers in all sectors, through a fair and transparent process that limited administrative hurdles to the necessary and was free from outside interference. While the road map and the national action plan on labour rights were both foreseen to conclude this year, work on amending the EPZ Act was still ongoing. As its reform was an integral part of both frameworks, the process should be expedited. Bangladesh was also urged to lift the remaining obstacles to the unionization of workers, as well as to address the systematic refusal of workers' rights regarding wage payments, overtime and working conditions. The decision of the former interim Government to drop criminal cases involving thousands of workers and labour leaders, filed over several years following the protests over minimum wage, was welcomed. However, the 2023 cases involving workers and labour activists being injured, killed, harassed or intimidated for association with trade unions or in connection with wage-related demands and protests had still not been investigated. Investigations had to be swiftly conducted, to hold those responsible to account and to effectively implement preventative measures – including through meaningful social dialogue. Continued and intensified efforts were needed in training, including on any use of force to meet the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, for the relevant law enforcement authorities to deal with strikes and protests and more broadly to respect human rights, including labour rights. Certain efforts to ensure independent and free inspections were acknowledged and the Government encouraged to build on these efforts and further strengthen effective enforcement and the full functionality of labour inspectorates, through a sufficient number of adequately trained labour inspectors. She encouraged the Government to build on the progress achieved and to tackle the remaining challenges with due urgency. The EU and its Member States would continue to closely monitor the progress in the implementation of the road map and supported the point for decision.

- 525. Speaking on behalf of the Arab group**, a Government representative of Oman stated that the progress achieved at both legislative and institutional levels constituted tangible developments. The quantitative developments achieved reflected a serious commitment to the implementation of the road map and called for an objective and balanced assessment by the Governing Body. He urged that positive consideration be given to the closure of the complaint process, while emphasizing the importance of continued support for national efforts and of building on the progress achieved.
- 526. Speaking on behalf of the GCC countries**, a Government representative of Qatar indicated that the State of the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the State of Kuwait aligned themselves with the statement. In view of several institutional and legislative developments, the recent ratifications, and the continued engagement of the Government of Bangladesh with the ILO supervisory bodies, the GCC countries considered it important for the Governing Body to find ways to close the complaint. This would encourage the consolidation of the progress already achieved and support the sustainability of reforms through continued technical cooperation.
- 527. A Government representative of Japan** welcomed the steady progress made by Bangladesh under the road map and commended the recent ratification of several ILO Conventions which demonstrated Bangladesh's commitment to upholding international labour standards. He expressed the strong hope that advancement in labour reforms would continue under the new

leadership. Japan remained confident that the important agenda could be brought to a timely conclusion.

- 528. A Government representative of China** noted that, in recent years, the Government of Bangladesh had made sustained efforts to cooperate fully with the Governing Body's review, maintaining close engagement with the ILO, and developing and implementing an action-oriented road map, while continuously reporting on progress. This demonstrated a constructive and cooperative attitude. She emphasized that the achievements as reflected in the report submitted by the Government of Bangladesh should be highly recognized. The Government had demonstrated respect for the ILO's supervisory mechanisms through a positive attitude and concrete actions. In light of the significant and continued progress achieved, the case should be closed as soon as possible.
- 529. A Government representative of Canada** welcomed the progress made in advancing labour law reform, in particular the adoption of the Ordinance amending the Bangladesh Labour Act. The newly elected Government of Bangladesh should proceed in a decisive manner to ensure that it was enshrined in law by Parliament in good time. The Government should revise the timeline of the road map, considering the continued need for reforms and their effective implementation. In this regard, the Government was encouraged to take concrete measures to operationalize these reforms, including through the effective application of labour legislation and the adoption of the Bangladesh Labour Regulations. This included strengthening the dialogue with workers and employers in order to improve labour inspection, access to justice, trade union registration and protection against anti-union discrimination. Canada supported the draft decision point.
- 530. A Government representative of Gabon** welcomed the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to improving workers' rights and human rights, particularly through labour law reform and the ratification of the ILO's fundamental Conventions. It was positive to observe the Government's full cooperation with the ILO supervisory bodies, as well as the progress made with the implementation of the road map focused on the four priority areas. The Government and the social partners were encouraged to continue their tripartite consultations and to take all necessary measures to make progress in all other aspects of the reform of labour law, including those relating to EPZs. He called on the ILO to continue to support the Government and the workers' and employers' groups in carrying forward the reform process.
- 531. A Government representative of Oman** noted that the Government of Bangladesh had undertaken sustainable efforts and expressed appreciation for the significant and concrete progress made in the implementation of the road map. He urged the Governing Body to consider all these positive developments and to act towards closing the complaint.
- 532. A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** noted that Bangladesh had demonstrated sustained, measurable and good-faith progress across all four areas identified in the road map. Referring in detail to the progress achieved, he indicated that, taking into account the record of progress, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran respectfully called the Governing Body to close the case and to allow Bangladesh to continue its reform agenda with ILO technical support, rather than under the shadow of a formal complaint.
- 533. A Government representative of Nepal** noted the progress made by the Government of Bangladesh in the implementation of the road map. Taking into consideration the progress achieved thus far, and in view of the commitment made by the Government to further improve the situation and resolve the outstanding issues, he urged – in a constructive spirit – that the ILO provide the necessary technical assistance to Bangladesh and support the early closure of the complaint.

- 534. A Government representative of Mozambique** noted the progress made with the implementation of the 2021–26 road map, together with the ILO and the social partners, which reflected a positive commitment to upholding international labour standards. It was important for the Government of Bangladesh to maintain these efforts and continue working closely with employers and the workers, fostering social dialogue and building trust among all parties. At the same time, he encouraged the Governing Body to consider closing this case as soon as possible in light of the advances already achieved.
- 535. A Government representative of the Philippines** expressed support for the Government of Bangladesh and acknowledged the country's continued commitment to advancing labour rights and promoting social justice in line with international labour standards. The Philippines encouraged Bangladesh to sustain its progress, particularly in ensuring safe, fair and inclusive working environments for all.
- 536. A Government representative of the United States** expressed strong appreciation for the commitment shown to address the long-standing issues raised in the complaint. The United States recognized the important steps taken by Bangladesh, fully supported imminent action by the Government to ratify and enact the amended Bangladesh Labour Act and expressed its support for the point for decision.
- 537. A Government representative of Cuba** welcomed the Government's commitment and cooperation with the ILO and referred to the actions undertaken in a range of areas, in terms of normative, legislative, training and capacity-building measures. Positive note was taken of the seven sessions held to discuss the application of the road map in successive Governing Body meetings, during which Bangladesh demonstrated sustained commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities. In light of the commitments made and the responsibilities assumed, Cuba supported the request for the Governing Body to consider closing the complaint.
- 538. A Government representative of Niger** expressed appreciation for the significant progress made by Bangladesh in implementing the road map, in cooperation with the social partners and the ILO. The Government's ninth report was the last in a series of reports regularly submitted by Bangladesh since 2021 and confirmed that the road map continued to be progressively implemented. He noted that the report had been considered by a tripartite committee before transmission to the ILO, reflecting the good faith and commitment to address all matters raised in the complaint. He indicated that in the view of the Government of Niger, the moment had come to duly close this case.
- 539. A Government representative of Uzbekistan** noted the efforts undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh, the progress achieved in advancing the implementation of the road map, and the readiness to continue addressing the remaining issues and to maintain constructive engagement with the ILO and the social partners was positively noted, and this was viewed as an important indication of openness to dialogue and commitment to fulfilling international obligations. At the same time, emphasis was placed on the importance of ensuring effective implementation of the measures adopted in practice, as well as the consistent continuation of efforts to address the outstanding issues identified by the ILO supervisory bodies. In this regard, sustaining cooperation with the ILO, including continued technical assistance and tripartite dialogue, was considered essential for achieving tangible and lasting results. Continued progress in the implementation of the road map was viewed as enabling further advancement towards the resolution of the matter in accordance with established procedures.
- 540. A Government representative of Tunisia** expressed appreciation for the cooperation by the Government of Bangladesh with the Governing Body and the ILO in addressing the complaint.

The gradual progress achieved in the context of the 2021–26 road map, and the various measures undertaken reflected the commitment of the Government. She stated that the Government should continue its efforts in implementing the road map in cooperation with ILO and the social partners. Tunisia considered the continued provision of technical assistance by the Office essential to support the implementation of the required reforms, and the Governing Body was called upon to identify a formula allowing the complaint to be brought to an end.

- 541. A Government representative of Ethiopia** noted the tangible legislative and institutional reform through tripartite consultations, as well as the engagement with the ILO supervisory mechanism. The strong commitment of the Government to addressing all issues raised in the complaint had to be commended. The Office should provide continued technical cooperation, particularly regarding capacity-building, digitalization and mechanisms for social dialogue. The Governing Body should facilitate the earliest possible closure of the case.
- 542. A Government representative of Libya** noted the Government's clear political will and determination to advance substantial reforms aimed at strengthening compliance with international labour standards. The progress achieved reflected a serious and credible effort to implement the objectives of the road map. He therefore called for a balanced and objective assessment by the Governing Body and encouraged positive consideration of the path towards closing the complaint, while emphasizing the importance of sustaining national efforts.
- 543. A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** welcomed the progress made by the Government in implementing the road map. While taking into consideration the achievements gained, she urged the Government of Bangladesh to continue its efforts in ensuring timely implementation of the road map, bearing in mind the 2021–26 timeline. Considering the progress achieved up to March 2026, the evident political will and the sincere collaborative engagement with the social partners, development partners and the ILO, the United Republic of Tanzania supported the closure of the case to allow Bangladesh to move forward with ongoing labour reforms under the ILO standard supervisory mechanisms.
- 544. A Government representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic** commended the Government of Bangladesh for its active efforts and important progress made in implementing the road map of actions to address all the outstanding issues mentioned in the article 26 complaint. Given the tangible progress made by the Government, his delegation was of the view that the Governing Body should consider closing the case.
- 545. A Government representative of Bangladesh** expressed sincere thanks and gratitude to the Member States, regional groups and the Employers' group for their broad support. The Government was particularly thankful to the Member States that had unequivocally stated their support for the closure of the case. The broad recognition of the progress and commitment was encouraging. The Government was committed to ensuring the smooth functioning of the institutions, mechanisms and processes as part of its electoral pledge of good governance. He assured that the Government would ensure proper mechanism of tripartism and social dialogue in its journey forward. He reiterated that the Parliament was expected to enact the amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act soon, as the special parliamentary committee had already commenced the process. The Government had also initiated the process of amending the Bangladesh Labour Rules; once the amended Labour Act would be enacted, the process would be further expedited. He affirmed that the Government was committed to strengthening the tripartite mechanism to ensure that the EPZ Labour Law amendment was conducted through consultations held in good faith, and that the Government was engaging constructively with all its partners, including the ILO and stakeholders. Having heard the broad support for closure of the case, he indicated that the

Government was respectful of the voices supporting the next discussion in March 2027. He expressed the belief that the Governing Body would then close the case by consensus.

Decision

546. Taking note of the report on progress made with the implementation of the road map of actions to address all outstanding issues mentioned in the article 26 complaint alleging non-observance by Bangladesh of Conventions Nos 81, 87 and 98 and mindful of the recent parliamentary elections and the accompanying national referendum on a broad institutional and constitutional reform package, the Governing Body, on the recommendation of its Officers:

- (a) urged the Government to pursue its efforts in ensuring a timely implementation of its road map of actions in all its priority areas and to take all necessary actions to that effect, bearing in mind the road map's 2021–26 timeline;
- (b) welcomed the tripartite engagement of the Government and the social partners leading to the adoption of an ordinance amending the Bangladesh Labour Act and encouraged the Government and the social partners to pursue their tripartite consultations and to take any other measures to advance all other aspects of the labour law reform in a constructive manner with a view to bringing about all necessary reforms as a matter of priority, including in export processing zones, with the ILO's technical assistance and the support that could be provided by the secretariats of the Employers' and Workers' groups;
- (c) requested the Government to report on further progress made in the implementation of the road map of actions to address all the outstanding issues mentioned in the article 26 complaint at its 359th Session (March 2027);
- (d) deferred the decision on further action in respect of the complaint to that session or any subsequent session.

(GB.356/INS/11(Rev.2), paragraph 11)

12. Follow-up to the resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Belarus (GB.356/INS/12(Rev.2))

547. The ILO Special Envoy to Belarus (Special Envoy) recalled that, in November 2025, the Governing Body had supported the renewal of his mandate for 2026 and expressed his appreciation for the Governing Body's confidence in him. He regretted that the Government of Belarus continued to refuse to engage with his mandate but reiterated his hope that that position would change so that he might assist in resolving the situation in a spirit of dialogue and mutual respect.

548. Noting that the Government questioned his impartiality because of his engagement with the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), he recalled that the Governing Body had specifically mandated him to engage with the Government of Belarus and all social partners, including those mentioned in the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry such as the BKDP. While the Special Envoy remained fully open to dialogue with other relevant stakeholders such as the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) and employers' organizations active in Belarus, his invitation to meet with the FPB representatives had been

declined. He hoped that the FPB would reconsider its position so that he might hear its views and concrete proposals on addressing outstanding ILO requests.

549. The Special Envoy clarified that his mandate was not to oversee the implementation of the article 33 resolution or the Governing Body's decisions but to assist and facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the ILO supervisory bodies, an essential step towards returning the Belarus case to the regular supervisory cycle. He hoped that the clarification would alleviate the Government's concerns and reassure it of his neutrality and commitment to supporting Belarus in meeting its obligations under the freedom of association Conventions.
550. He had not observed tangible progress from the perspective of his mandate: more than 50 trade union leaders and labour activists remained under criminal prosecution, including at least 19 individuals still in prison. He was especially concerned about the health condition of Mr Václav Areshka, who had become blind and suffered from additional health complications. He made a humanitarian appeal to the Government for Mr Areshka's immediate release.
551. While welcoming the release of Mr Maksim Senik on 13 December 2025, after more than three years in detention, he regretted his immediate deportation to Ukraine. He also regretted that, despite the Governing Body's request in November 2025, the Government had not returned the passports to Mr Yarashuk and Mr Fiadynich nor reinstated their pensions.
552. He continued to engage with a broad range of stakeholders. During his mission to Brussels, the European Economic and Social Committee and the officials of the Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission reiterated their strong support for his mandate. He had maintained close collaboration with the International Organisation of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). Both organizations had reiterated that the case of Belarus concerned the fundamental right of workers and employers to freely choose their representatives, an issue rooted in freedom of association, not politics. He had also continued dialogue with the Group of Independent Experts on the situation of human rights in Belarus and the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of peaceful assembly and association and on the human rights situation in Belarus.
553. The Special Envoy considered his mandate an opportunity for constructive engagement to resolve the challenging situation. His immediate priority was the release of trade unionists imprisoned for exercising their fundamental rights. While in prison, the released trade unionists had feared that the world had forgotten them and learning about the Governing Body's continued support and commitment to restore their freedom had meant the world to them. That underscored the importance of every step the Special Envoy, the Governing Body and other stakeholders took in the process. He hoped that his efforts would ultimately help foster enduring respect for freedom of association in Belarus to the benefit of its workers, employers and the society. He was also grateful to the Office for its continued support in implementing his mandate.
554. **A Government representative of Belarus** (Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection), authorized to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, reiterated that there were no grounds for applying article 33 of the ILO Constitution to his country. Belarus complied with its obligations under Conventions Nos 87 and 98, and almost all of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations had been implemented, while certain recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies were outside the scope of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 and did not meet the national interests of Belarus. No one was persecuted for trade union activities in Belarus and the genuine work of trade unions was appreciated by his Government. All convicted citizens were punished for specific criminal offenses unrelated to

protecting labour and socio-economic rights of workers. The ILO Conventions did not give trade unions carte blanche to violate laws and engage in destructive activities. Attempts to present the situation in a different light constituted manipulation to exert unlawful pressure on Belarus.

- 555.** The main source of false information about Belarus was an illegitimate structure operating abroad referring to itself as the BKDP. While there had indeed been an association under that name, in 2020, the BKDP's focus had shifted completely from protecting workers' rights to destructive activities. Accordingly, the BKDP was liquidated by the Supreme Court's decision. The BKDP did not meet the ILO criteria for trade union independence and representativeness. Trade unions that were part of the BKDP had no members or primary organizations at enterprises across the country since workers wanted to belong to genuine trade unions, especially since the BKDP's office and leadership were based abroad and its unlawful activities were financed by foreign patrons. The BKDP's work was unrelated to protecting the rights of workers, instead, it focused on promoting false narratives about Belarus and justifying sanctions against it. For that reason, the Government of Belarus had repeatedly indicated that there was no legal basis for interacting with the BKDP and regarded its participation in meetings on the Belarusian case and its positioning as legitimate representatives of workers as unacceptable. His Government demanded to stop attempts by the BKDP and the Workers' group to discredit the FPB and to block its participation in the activities of ILO bodies. The FPB was a genuine and independent association representing the interests of approximately 4 million workers in Belarus, hence blocking its participation in the Workers' group meetings and attempts to deprive its delegation of powers during the sessions of the International Labour Conference must be condemned in the strongest terms. He stressed his Government's right, as an ILO Member State, to ensure that its representative workers' and employers' organizations could participate freely in ILO activities and express their positions openly and called on the Governing Body to withdraw from pursuing anti-Belarusian rhetoric out of inertia, considering that the Belarusian case built on distorted facts, false accusations, and a politicized approach had exhausted itself and went beyond the ILO's mandate. The document prepared by the Office confirmed the situation of a deadlock, with the solution being to abandon the undue pressure on the country, accept its realities and sovereign interests, recognize the FPB as a legitimate workers' association, and resume cooperation with his Government. Otherwise, ILO resources would continue to be spent on unproductive processes. He rejected the draft decision, considering it unconstructive, and requested that it be put to a vote.
- 556. A Worker member from Belarus** (Mr Yarashuk) stated that he was pleased to see all participants again after a long break but did not feel any joy regarding the actions of Belarus, considering that the authorities continued to disregard the resolution under article 33 of the ILO Constitution, the mandate of the Special Envoy remained unrecognized, 20 members of independent trade unions were still imprisoned, and the decision to dissolve the BKDP and all its affiliated organizations had not been revoked. In response to the Governing Body's request to return him his passport, the Government had claimed not to know its whereabouts; regarding the restoration of his pension, the Government proposed that he humbly request the return of at least part of it. He reflected that one could only wonder what prevailed in the Government's responses – cynicism, rudeness, malice, or contempt for human rights; he concluded that clearly all were present in equal measure, revealing the face of any totalitarian regime – arrogant, hypocritical, and pharisaic. If even he, a Governing Body member, could have been subjected to such blatant violations – fabricated charges, unlawful conviction, and forced deportation following the so-called "pardon" one month before the end of his imprisonment term as well as deprivation of documents and civil rights – the situation of ordinary workers could only be worse. The labour rights situation in Belarus had become so

intolerable that it justified comparisons to conditions akin to slavery, with the sphere of labour relations becoming increasingly totalitarian, forced labour becoming the norm, and any attempt by workers to exercise their right to freedom of association and to establish independent trade unions resulting in the loss of freedom. The constituents could not allow themselves to admit their helplessness against an evil challenge directed at the ILO by the Belarusian Government, which must not prevail and remain unpunished. The Governing Body had sufficient tools and the necessary will at its disposal to compel the Government of Belarus to comply with article 33 of the ILO Constitution.

- 557. The Worker spokesperson** reiterated that the Government continued to violate its obligations, repress independent trade unions and their members, and persecute those who showed courage in standing up for fundamental workers' rights. While the release of Mr Yarashuk, who could participate in the session in person, was welcomed, her group was deeply concerned about trade unionists still behind bars and those newly arrested, sentenced by the regime for exercising trade union rights and held in inhumane and degrading conditions, causing lasting damage to their physical and mental health. She highlighted the case of Mr Areshka, who had lost his sight in detention and had not been released despite his critical health condition. Moreover, those released, including Mr Yarashuk, had been taken to the border and forcibly deported from Belarus without documents, effectively transferred from prison into exile, deprived of access to their homes and families, with pensions unpaid and at risk of statelessness. Independent trade unions, including the BKDP, remained unable to operate in Belarus, while any engagement with them entailed criminal liability. Although the Government of Belarus insisted that the FPB was independent and representative, the evidence showed otherwise. Notably, in November 2025, the Committee on Freedom of Association noted that the FPB chairperson was included in the list of Belarusian state officials; in March 2026, the FPB chairperson echoed the Government's assertions and a new FPB leader, who had previously served as a Belarusian military officer, a chief adviser to the President and the Deputy Minister of Information, was elected.
- 558.** She commended the efforts of the Special Envoy and welcomed steps taken by certain Governments to mitigate the impact of the Belarusian passport regulations. She reiterated the call for national tripartite meetings to review relations with Belarus, welcomed the relevant recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council, and underscored that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, while welcoming the releases of political prisoners, had also stressed that many of those released, including trade unionists and civil activists, had been convicted without a fair trial. She urged the redoubling of efforts to release the imprisoned trade unionists and address the violations of freedom of association. Her group supported the draft decision, while noting that it did not fully address such issues as forced deportation and deprivation of documents and pensions. She therefore called on Governments to use all available diplomatic means to address those matters and assist affected individuals.
- 559. The Employer spokesperson** reiterated his group's concern about the long-standing case of Belarus, discussed by the ILO supervisory bodies on many occasions. He welcomed the work of the UN Human Rights Council in addressing the human rights issues in Belarus at its 61st session but stressed that the ILO's efforts must remain within its own mandate. He noted that the findings of the Special Rapporteurs were of great concern, urged the Government of Belarus to handle the persistent human rights violations, and insisted on the immediate release of trade unionists in detention and the return of confiscated passports to those in forced exile. In that regard, he noted that some EU Member States had adopted measures to assist Belarusian nationals abroad affected by the restrictions on passport issuance. His group

was particularly concerned about the continued refusal by the Government of Belarus to recognize and cooperate with the mandate of the Special Envoy. He expressed appreciation for the Special Envoy's efforts in the promotion of the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations and his engagement with the international workers' and employers' associations, international organizations, and mandate holders. He supported the Special Envoy's priorities and looked forward to receiving the updated information from him at the special sitting of the Committee on the Application of Standards in June 2026. The Employers' group supported the draft decision.

- 560. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with the statement: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Iceland and Norway. She reiterated that, despite the Governing Body's request to take urgent steps to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the subsequent recommendations of the supervisory bodies and to fully cooperate with the Special Envoy, the Belarusian authorities had neither reviewed their position nor provided any substantive information demonstrating progress. Her group commended the work of the Special Envoy and urged Belarus to engage constructively with him, including by granting him full and unhindered access as necessary for implementing his mandate. Her group regretted that, despite the Special Envoy's good faith efforts to initiate dialogue with the Belarusian authorities, they had declined to engage with him and subsequently raised accusations concerning his contacts with the other social partners. Her group encouraged the ILO and the Special Envoy to continue close cooperation with other UN agencies and mechanisms to ensure coordinated and effective international action.
- 561.** Her group remained gravely concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus, wherein independent unions remained eradicated, and more than 900 people were still unjustly detained in inhumane conditions. Her group welcomed the release of political prisoners, including trade unionists, but noted with deep concern that many of those released had not been exonerated, had been forcibly deported from Belarus, left without means of subsistence, and had their passports confiscated. Those allowed to stay in Belarus remained under strict surveillance and faced restrictions that hindered their reintegration so that their punishment continued even after the release. Her group deplored the new arrests and re-arrests of political prisoners as well as the transnational repression of former prisoners and their families. They were deeply concerned about reports of political retaliation against businesses and employers who had supported peaceful protests or spoken out about human rights violations in the country. All political prisoners must be immediately and unconditionally released and rehabilitated and their civil and political rights should be fully restored and all charges should be dismissed. She urged the Belarusian authorities to refrain from further arbitrary arrests and to ensure the right to due process and a fair trial. Her group strongly denounced legislative developments that entrenched repression, including measures restricting access to certain professions for former political prisoners, and urged the Belarusian authorities to refrain from adopting them. Her group reiterated its call to the Government of Belarus to accept the humanitarian and tripartite missions without further delay and once again demanded that the Belarusian regime stop its involvement in the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and that it fully implement without further delay the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the subsequent recommendations of the supervisory bodies. Her group supported the draft decision.
- 562. Speaking on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries (Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden)**, a Government representative of Lithuania

confirmed his group alignment with the statement of the EU and its Member States and reiterated his group's concern that, despite repeated calls on Belarus for compliance with international labour standards, the situation in the country had not improved but deteriorated further, with grave consequences for its people, workers, and employers. The Belarusian authorities continued to systematically ignore their obligations while escalating the oppression of independent trade unions and workers, in defiance of ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98. His group thanked the United States for its support in securing the releases of trade unionists and other political prisoners but expressed deep concern that some of those released, who had expected to return to their homes and families, had instead been forcibly deported, left without means of subsistence and, in some cases, stripped of identity documents. His group emphasized that no released individual should be subjected to secondary victimization and urged the Belarusian authorities to accompany releases with concrete steps towards full compliance with the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations. His group further deplored the unfair convictions, the ongoing repressive surveillance, and the labour market exclusion of those who were allowed to stay in the country. They called on the Government of Belarus to ensure that those released domestically were not denied or restricted in the exercise of their rights, including access to employment and social protection.

- 563.** His group welcomed the Special Envoy's continued efforts to advance the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, deplored the continued lack of cooperation on the part of Belarus, and urged the Belarusian authorities to immediately ensure full and unhindered cooperation with the Special Envoy, including the provision of information and facilitation of access. His group further demanded that the Belarusian authorities immediately and unconditionally end all forms of support, direct or indirect, for the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, which continued to devastate the lives and livelihoods of the Ukrainian people. His group stood ready to take further steps to ensure effective follow-up to the resolution under article 33 of the ILO Constitution and supported the draft decision.
- 564. Speaking on behalf of Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom,** a Government representative of Canada said that the Government of Belarus had consistently failed to safeguard the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, demonstrating persistent disregard for the ILO supervisory system and the rights and dignity of the Belarusian workers. Her group acknowledged the release of Mr Senik alongside the other 122 political prisoners in December 2025 and the release of 250 political prisoners in March 2026. However, her group remained deeply concerned by Mr Senik's immediate deportation to Ukraine and by the fact that his release did not constitute exoneration nor recognition by the Belarusian authorities of the violations committed against him. Her group extended their wishes for his recovery from the inhumane treatment, arbitrary detention and persecution that he had endured at the hands of the Belarusian authorities. Her group remained concerned by the ongoing and systematic violations of human and labour rights of Belarusian workers and trade unionists, including the persecution of individuals designated as extremists solely for exercising their fundamental rights. Her group called on the Belarusian authorities to: accept an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent medical doctors might visit all imprisoned trade unionists, assess their health conditions and provide medical assistance as required; accept an ILO tripartite mission to evaluate the situation on the ground and visit the trade unionists currently imprisoned or detained; immediately and unconditionally release all trade unionists who had been imprisoned for exercising their fundamental labour rights; and cease all forms of oppression against workers and their representatives. Her group welcomed the activities of the Special Envoy and urged the authorities of Belarus to engage with him in good faith. Her group also reiterated their support for the ILO supervisory system and expressed their appreciation to the ILO

Director-General and to the Office for their efforts to foster genuine dialogue with the Government of Belarus, requesting that the Director-General continue to report to the Governing Body on all developments concerning the situation in the country. Her group further encouraged all ILO constituents to continue to take all appropriate measures in line with the resolution under article 33 of the ILO Constitution and supported the draft decision.

- 565. A Government representative of China** stated that, for many years, the Belarusian Government had consistently safeguarded and improved the well-being of its people and called for acknowledging its efforts to maintain social stability and development. She stressed that the ILO must avoid overemphasizing supervision based on one-sided assessments, while the Governing Body should be vigilant against the politicization of labour issues and the use of supervisory mechanisms for infringing on the sovereignty of ILO Member States and serving geopolitical purposes. Her Government opposed using the ILO mechanisms for legitimizing sanctions, which had severely impacted the economic and social development of Belarus and gravely affected the rights of Belarusian employers and workers, contrary to the ILO fundamental principles. She urged the constituents to assess the situation in Belarus comprehensively, with a view to restoring constructive dialogue and cooperation. Her Government opposed the draft decision.
- 566. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** stated her Government's disagreement with the document prepared by the secretariat and recalled that her delegation had repeatedly emphasized the biased nature of the ideas put forward against the Government of Belarus. She regretted that, despite the efforts of the Belarusian authorities in implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, the negative rhetoric toward Belarus had continued, alongside the promotion of political interests of a certain group of countries, harming the interests of Belarusian workers and employers. That constituted a dangerous precedent of political pressure on the country, including the legitimization of sanctions affecting the rights of the Belarusian population and the promotion of discriminatory recommendations calling on international organizations and the ILO Member States to review their relations with Belarus. She said that the statements regarding Belarus went beyond labour and employment issues and encroached upon the internal affairs of the country, which further rendered the initiatives increasingly political and solely based on a one-sided narrative. The national interests of Belarus in advancing its socio-economic development and promoting the well-being and high quality of life of its population should be recognized; in that regard, joint efforts and support from the ILO would be far more effective than sanctions. She called on the constituents not to politicize the issue under article 33 of the ILO Constitution, stated that her delegation could not agree with the draft decision, and requested that it be put to a vote.
- 567. A Government representative of France** aligned herself with the statement of the EU and its Member States. She commended the Special Envoy for his report and his commitment to facilitate the necessary conditions for implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. She again urged Belarus to accept that offer. France remained particularly concerned by the persistence of shortcomings in the application of fundamental Conventions Nos 87 and 98, as documented by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations and various UN mechanisms. The persistent refusal of the authorities of Belarus to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry had concrete impacts on the situation of independent trade unionists in Belarus. In that respect, she welcomed the fact that Mr Yarashuk was present at the session and had spoken about his experience. France urged Belarus to adopt without delay any measures guaranteeing the right to establish workers' organizations, including outside the Federation of Trade Unions of

Belarus, and the right to organize mass events, as well as to guarantee consultations with the social partners and the establishment of a labour dispute resolution system relying on independent and impartial investigations. She emphasized that that was a matter of respecting the commitments undertaken by Belarus in becoming a Member of the ILO and ratifying its Conventions.

- 568. A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** said that Belarus had implemented 10 out of 12 recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and fully demonstrated its capacity to engage with the ILO supervisory mechanisms. His Government called on the ILO to strengthen its technical cooperation with Belarus to advance the full implementation of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, thereby creating the conditions for genuine progress in protecting workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. His Government further emphasized the importance of maintaining space for dialogue and avoiding approaches that might hinder constructive cooperation, free from politicization and double standards, and called on constituents to foster genuine, fair, and non-discriminatory dialogue.
- 569. A Government representative of Cuba** acknowledged the efforts of the Government of Belarus aimed at promoting fundamental rights at work and stated that the right to self-determination and autonomy of Belarus must be duly respected. She stated that, while the ILO supervisory mechanisms should remain in line with the Organization's mandate, the action plan regarding Belarus was outside of it. She emphasized that politicization and double standards damaged the prestige and effectiveness of the ILO and that a constructive approach based on technical assistance and cooperation must be followed, as opposed to sanctions and unilateral coercive measures, which were contrary to international law and exacerbated unemployment and poverty. Her Government called for a halt in unilateral coercive measures against Belarus and rejected the politicized recommendations undermining the technical and tripartite nature of the ILO.
- 570. A Government representative of Colombia** stressed the importance of objectively assessing progress made in implementing the recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies and commended the Special Envoy's activities. At the same time, his Government underscored the importance of promoting cooperation with the ILO and called for strengthening efforts to create conditions for dialogue based on mutual respect, objectivity, and understanding of national particularities. His Government expressed its solidarity with the trade unionists who had been detained, particularly Mr Yarashuk, and called for the release of those still in prison.
- 571. A Government representative of Belarus** expressed gratitude to those who had supported Belarus and argued that certain countries continued to exert political pressure on Belarus in pursuit of their political goals, including by distorting facts and inventing new accusations. He stated that Belarus had repeatedly provided comprehensive responses to the Office and ILO bodies but those reports were being disregarded as the country's opponents were not interested in listening and instead sought to demonize Belarus and justify the sanctions and attempts to isolate it. He said that the repeated sittings on Belarus created only an illusion of dialogue, wasted the ILO's time and resources, and distracted from genuine labour issues, thereby harming the Organization's credibility. He emphasized his Government's long-standing support for the goals, objectives and principles of the ILO and called for respect for sovereignty and equality of its Member States. He stated that the draft decision failed to reflect the current situation and that some of its provisions went beyond the ILO's mandate, including the attempts to discredit the FPB. He rejected the calls to accept an international humanitarian mission or the ILO tripartite mission and to cooperate with the Special Envoy due to the artificially created hostile narratives regarding the country, which precluded any

objective assessment of the situation. While affirming his Government's openness to cooperation on condition of respect for the country's interests, he urged to put an end to speculations about the persecution of trade unions and the politicization of the ILO and to reverse unfair decisions regarding Belarus.

(The decision was adopted with 40 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 8 abstentions.)

- 572. A Government representative of the United States** acknowledged the progress made regarding the release of political prisoners, including trade unionists. Given that progress, her Government chose to abstain while urging Belarus to take concrete measures to fully implement the outstanding recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, the subsequent recommendations of the supervisory bodies and the decisions of the Governing Body.
- 573. A Government representative of Brazil** reaffirmed the strong support of his Government to the principles and values of the ILO and its supervisory mechanisms. He expressed concern about the lack of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and subsequent recommendations of the supervisory bodies. He reiterated his Government's full support for the mandate of the Special Envoy as well as its unwavering trust that Mr Lelio Bentes Corrêa had all the necessary qualities and was the most suitable person for his position. However, his Government could not support some provisions of the draft decision that, in its view, went beyond the mandate of the ILO, and for that reason opted to abstain on the voting.

Decision

574. The Governing Body:

- (a) **noted with growing concern the information provided in document GB.356/INS/12(Rev.2) and that the Government of Belarus once again provided no new information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and subsequent recommendations of the supervisory bodies;**
- (b) **called on the Government to review its position and to fully collaborate with the Special Envoy;**
- (c) **noted with utmost concern the failure of the Government of Belarus to return to Messrs Yarashuk and Fiadynich their confiscated passports and resume payment of their pensions and urged the Government to do so without further delay;**
- (d) **once again requested the Government of Belarus with the utmost urgency to accept:**
 - (i) **an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors could visit all imprisoned trade unionists to assess their health and offer medical assistance, as necessary; and**
 - (ii) **an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are in prison or detention;**
- (e) **urged the Government of Belarus to submit to the Director-General all information on concrete steps taken in that regard following the 356th Session of the Governing Body by 21 September 2026 for transmission to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026);**
- (f) **drew the attention of the Credentials Committee at the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference (2026) to the information set out in document GB.356/INS/12(Rev.2);**

- (g) requested the Special Envoy to report back to the 358th Session (November 2026) of the Governing Body and further provide all relevant information at the third special sitting of the Committee on the Application of Standards on the application by Belarus of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98);
- (h) invited the Organization's constituents – governments, employers and workers – to continue to take steps to ensure an effective follow-up to the Conference resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Belarus, including by holding national high-level tripartite meetings to assess and intensify efforts and to report back thereon to the Director-General for transmission to the Governing Body;
- (i) requested the Director-General to prepare an updated report for the 358th Session (November 2026) of the Governing Body.

(GB.356/INS/12(Rev.2), paragraph 23)

13. Follow-up to the resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Myanmar (GB.356/INS/13(Rev.2))

- 575. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) drew the Governing Body's attention to recently received communications, which, due to their late submission, could not be included in the Governing Body document. On 23 March, the Office had received a communication from Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) alleging serious and widespread violations of fundamental labour rights affecting workers across multiple sectors and regions of Myanmar, suggesting continued and systematic failure to comply with obligations under relevant international labour standards, including those addressed in the article 33 resolution. On 25 and 28 March, two communications had been received from the Education Workers' Federation of Myanmar contesting the statements of the military authorities regarding the release of labour leaders and alleging that, out of 66 union members who had been imprisoned, 25 remained in detention serving long-term prison sentences. These communications further alleged that education workers continued to face repression, discrimination and unfair treatment and were subjected to systematic control, intimidation and coercion, as well as restrictions on their freedom of movement. On 23 March, the ILO Liaison Office in Yangon had received a communication from an organization identifying itself as the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM), but which other sources denounced as a parallel trade union confederation supported by the military authorities. That communication reiterated arguments to justify the holding of a congress to elect new union leadership and described activities that it claimed were aimed at protecting workers' interests.
- 576.** On 25 March, the Office had received observations from the military authorities criticizing reference to information from opposition sources and certain groups without verification and stating that the Office document sought to discredit the general elections. The communication further rejected allegations concerning the continued detention of numerous trade unionists, argued that the monitoring mechanism, which referred to fundamental rights violations and related civil liberties, fell outside the scope of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and Convention No. 87, and opposed ILO coordination with country-specific UN mandates. In that

respect, it was important to recall that the mandate to establish a monitoring mechanism stemmed from the resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2025, which had called on the Director-General to develop relevant and appropriate monitoring mechanisms for the confidential and credible documentation of ongoing fundamental rights violations in the country, with a view to transparent reporting, accountability and expeditious and effective redress for victims.

- 577. The Employer spokesperson** expressed deep concern regarding the ongoing insecurity, deterioration of human rights, humanitarian challenges, political instability and economic difficulties in Myanmar. She reiterated strong solidarity with the people of Myanmar whose livelihoods, safety and fundamental rights continued to be at risk. The group reaffirmed its commitment to supporting efforts that promote dignity, stability and economic recovery for the people of Myanmar. Workers and employers worked in a difficult environment, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which accounted for approximately 90 per cent of companies in the country. Peace, stability and a predictable and secure environment were prerequisites for business continuity, sustained investment and trade flows, as well as for economic recovery and sustainable growth, as these conditions would restore confidence among domestic and international investors and support employment creation and sustainable growth. According to the Governing Body paper, the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry had not yet been fully implemented and it was essential to make progress in that regard. Respect for fundamental principles and rights at work remained critical, as there were concerns about serious and persistent cases of forced labour, child labour and restrictions on freedom of association. Workers' and employers' organizations must be able to operate freely, independently and autonomously but the situation in the country hindered their ability to fulfil their mandates. Practical and sustained ILO support to social partners on the ground, including to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was encouraged.
- 578.** Concerns were raised regarding the development of the monitoring mechanism by the Office. The Employers' group, including the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), had not been informed, consulted or involved despite a request to that effect formulated at the November 2025 Governing Body session. The IOE and the ITUC should be involved at every stage of the mechanism's development. The mechanism's scope should remain consistent with the ILO's mandate and the resolution of the International Labour Conference and should be responsive to the realities on the ground. It should foster trust among the tripartite constituents and contribute to tangible improvements in respect for fundamental principles and rights at work without creating reputational risks for businesses. The mechanism must include safeguards ensuring objectivity and confidentiality, be based on adequate standards of evidence and be designed and tested before full implementation. Any expansion of the scope of the mechanism that would shift responsibility for compliance and human rights due diligence to businesses would raise concerns, as monitoring company-level compliance was not the role of the ILO.
- 579.** The ILO should continue strengthening collaboration with the UN to uphold fundamental principles and rights at work in Myanmar, as coordinated and coherent effort was essential to ensure effective and responsive action. The recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry should be further disseminated and promoted to enhance awareness and coordination, particularly regarding freedom of association, the elimination of forced and child labour, and non-discrimination, and help to build the capacity of social partners to operate and engage meaningfully under challenging conditions. ASEAN played an important role in contributing to peace and stability in Myanmar. Its continued engagement through established frameworks,

including the Five-Point Consensus, and coordination with the international community were essential to support de-escalation and foster inclusive dialogue, respect for rights and sustainable recovery. The Employers' group looked forward to the participation of the social partners from Myanmar at the 2026 session of the International Labour Conference, particularly during the special sittings of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards.

- 580. The Worker spokesperson** acknowledged the presence in the room of the Assistant General Secretary of the authentic CTUM and noted that the military authorities had not implemented any of the 11 recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. Conditions in Myanmar demonstrated systematic and institutionalized repression of workers and trade unionists across the country and they remained fundamentally incompatible with the exercise of freedom of association and the elimination of forced labour. Trade union activity was being systematically criminalized and trade union reports pointed to the use of torture and sexual violence. In 2025, the Myanmar Industry, Craft and Services Trade Union Federation (MICS-TUsF) recorded 573 labour complaints involving wage abuses, excessive overtime, occupational safety and health concerns, forced recruitment in factories and military interference in labour disputes. More than 112 cases of labour rights violations were recorded in export-oriented factories, raising serious concerns regarding responsible business conduct.
- 581.** Since the military coup, 157 trade unionists had been arrested and 69 remained in detention, including workers from the railway and education sectors. CTUM leaders charged with high treason remained in detention or enforced exile and were not among the approximately 7,300 political prisoners reportedly pardoned. The imprisonment of trade unionists and the conditional nature of the amnesties created a chilling effect and prevented the effective exercise of freedom of association. The MICS-TUsF General Secretary had been conditionally released in October 2025 and provided a detailed account of torture and ill-treatment in detention. The leader of the Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar had also been released but faced legal proceedings. The military authorities were actively involved in dismantling the independent labour movement, including through the creation or sponsorship of parallel unions, such as the bogus CTUM, the Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar and the Agriculture and Farmers Federation of Myanmar-Food Allied Workers (AFFM-FAW) which had been expelled from the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). Factory workers were pressured to participate in the military-organized elections under the threat of conscription. A climate of fear, surveillance and risk of arrest undermined the ability of workers' organizations to serve their members.
- 582.** Many organizations reported the continued use of coercive military conscription practices, operated through extortion and collaboration between local authorities and brokers to meet recruitment quotas. Commuting workers were at particular risk of abduction. Reports were also received of forced labour in industrial workplaces through compulsory overtime and other coercive practices, as well as widespread forced labour in support of military operations, including portering, forced provision of food and livestock, agricultural labour, land confiscation and construction and maintenance of military facilities.
- 583.** Despite repeated calls of the Governing Body, there was no tangible progress towards restoring civilian rule or democratic order in Myanmar. The military-organized elections were reported to have taken place under conditions of fear, coercion, heavy military presence and procedural irregularities, and lacked credibility. The Office was advancing the establishment of a confidential monitoring mechanism to document violations of freedom of association and forced labour with the potential to expand its scope to support accountability and redress.

Member States should support full funding for the mechanism. Member States should also review their political, economic and trade relations with Myanmar to ensure that they did not contribute directly or indirectly to the continuation of violations, in line with the requirements of the resolution of the International Labour Conference. It was clear from their actions that the military authorities had no intention of complying with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

- 584. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with the statement: Montenegro, Albania, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Norway and Switzerland. The situation in Myanmar had further deteriorated, with no discernible progress towards the restoration of democratic governance or the re-establishment of conditions conducive to the effective exercise of fundamental rights and civil liberties. She expressed deep concern about the serious violations of fundamental labour rights, including restrictions on freedom of association, reprisals against labour activists and forced labour imposed by the military authorities, including in the context of conscription. While the release of several prominent trade unionists was welcomed, concern was expressed regarding reports of continued detention of other trade unionists and interference in the functioning of workers' and employers' organizations, including through the use of military-backed unions to undermine genuine freedom of association. The elections organized by the military took place amid armed conflict, widespread insecurity and significant political restrictions and lacked credibility, transparency and inclusiveness. The military authorities continued their deliberate non-compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.
- 585.** The EU and its Member States were committed to the full implementation of the article 33 resolution and underlined the importance of continued follow-up by all ILO constituents to ensure that any engagement did not enable, facilitate or prolong violations of fundamental rights. The confidential monitoring mechanism developed by the Office to document violations of fundamental rights, in particular freedom of association and the abolition of forced labour, was essential for supporting accountability, guiding responsible business conduct, including human rights due diligence, and informing Governing Body deliberations. The Office was encouraged to continue its work towards the operationalization of the mechanism, including the allocation of adequate resources, and any other initiative aimed at improving workers' conditions, in consultation with the social partners. The EU and its Member States would continue to work with the ILO and all relevant actors to secure meaningful compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.
- 586. Speaking on behalf of Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia**, a Government representative of Australia expressed gratitude to the ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar, human rights defenders, trade unions, journalists and other civil society actors documenting the situation in the country, as well as the work of the UN, including the Special Envoy, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. The regime's continued atrocities against the population and attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including airstrikes on schools, hospitals and religious sites, gave rise to grave concern. There were also serious concerns regarding reports of forced labour, including in the context of scam operations, detention and forced recruitment through arrest, abduction and extortion practices. Freedom of association and trade union activity were suppressed, including through arrests, detention, ill-treatment, torture, surveillance and judicial proceedings against trade unionists that severely limited workers' ability to engage in collective action.

- 587.** There was a need to cease violence, release those unjustly detained, ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access and promote genuine and inclusive political dialogue. The recent elections took place amid violence and repression and did not meet the conditions for free, fair and inclusive elections. Continued humanitarian support to the people of Myanmar remained essential and the military authorities should engage in genuine efforts to improve humanitarian access and advance a sustainable resolution reflecting the will of the people. Serious concerns persisted regarding the military regime's continued disregard for its obligations under Conventions Nos 87 and 29.
- 588.** Continued support was expressed for the measures set out in the resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference and for working with the ILO and its constituents to secure compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry in support of basic civil liberties and trade union rights. The development of the monitoring mechanism and the proposed action plan to advance implementation of the resolution were welcomed.
- 589. Speaking on behalf of ASEAN,** a Government representative of the Philippines indicated support for the appointment of Her Excellency Maria Theresa Lazaro, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar for 2026, and for the continued engagement of the ASEAN Chair through the Special Envoy with all stakeholders in Myanmar. Note was taken of the recent developments and measures taken by the Myanmar Government to meet its obligations under Conventions Nos 29 and 87. The resolution of the International Labour Conference called on the Director-General to engage with regional bodies, in particular ASEAN as well as Special Envoys and other partners, to explore coordinated frameworks supporting the full implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. These actions constituted steps towards fostering continued cooperation with the international community, including ASEAN and the ILO. The release of trade union leaders, as described in the report, was welcomed as a step towards fostering constructive domestic dialogue and cooperation with the international community and the ILO.
- 590.** ASEAN was committed to playing a central role in supporting Myanmar, including its social partners, in charting a peaceful and lasting solution that was Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led, while acknowledging that Myanmar remained an integral part of ASEAN. The Five-Point Consensus remained the main reference for addressing the political crisis in Myanmar, together with relevant ASEAN leaders' decisions, including the review and decision on the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus taken in Kuala Lumpur in October 2025. In implementing the Five-Point Consensus, it was important to support the restoration of safe and decent working conditions, promote the well-being of all workers in Myanmar and refrain from measures that could inadvertently harm workers' livelihoods and employment opportunities.
- 591. A Government representative of China** expressed regret that, due to the representation issue, the Myanmar Government had been unable to attend the Governing Body and that, in recent years, direct explanations from it had not been heard during deliberations. Myanmar attached importance to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and had submitted a progress report to the Governing Body in January 2026, covering areas such as increases in the minimum wage, labour skills development, social security benefits and education subsidies, employment creation, promoting resettlement, labour safety protection and labour dispute resolution mechanisms. The Myanmar Government had implemented labour-related recommendations in accordance with international laws, rules, policies and procedures and had taken steps to communicate and cooperate with the ILO and Governing

Body members. Those efforts were commended and support was expressed for continued exchanges and cooperation with the Governing Body and the ILO.

- 592.** Myanmar's current economic and social development required a peaceful and stable environment, as well as understanding and support from the international community, including the ILO. Relevant measures adopted by the Governing Body should enhance dialogue and cooperation and avoid the establishment of mechanisms not agreed to by the Myanmar Government. Support was expressed for Myanmar's continued fulfilment of its obligations as a Member State of the ILO, together with a call on all parties to respect its national sovereignty and adopt a constructive approach to promote cooperation and improve livelihoods. He requested that it be put on record that China did not join the consensus.
- 593. A Government representative of Japan** expressed deep concern regarding the situation in the country. The international community had made repeated calls to the Myanmar regime to work towards political progress, including the release of those detained and the initiation of sincere dialogue among the parties concerned. It was regrettable that such efforts had not been realized prior to the general elections. Efforts towards the restoration of the democratic political system would be closely monitored. Concrete actions should be taken in Myanmar to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. When implementing measures recommended under article 33 of the ILO Constitution, it was necessary to consider their impact on Myanmar's society and people who continued to face hardship, in particular the potential negative effects on economic stability, business activities, employment, wages and access to decent work. In line with its consistent policy, Japan would continue to provide humanitarian assistance and support for improving living conditions, including through ILO projects, in ways that directly benefited the people of Myanmar.
- 594. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** expressed concern about a high level of politicization in the Governing Body discussion of the situation in Myanmar. The Governing Body document employed terms such as "independent trade union organizations" to describe bodies which had never represented workers in Myanmar and which were political organizations deliberately hostile to the authorities in Nay Pyi Taw. The authorities of Myanmar continued to be prevented, on spurious grounds, from participating in Governing Body sessions. The Government of Myanmar had nevertheless taken steps to comply with the recommendations, including the release of two trade union activists and the dropping of charges against them. Such steps were either considered insufficient or disregarded. Similarly, legal and practical steps taken by the Government to improve the situation of workers and employers, as well as the difficult humanitarian situation, were ignored. The application of sanctions against Myanmar and their contribution to the worsening of the social and labour situation of workers and employers was not being adequately taken into account. The draft decision aimed at continuing illegal sanctions and other illegal measures against the authorities, illustrating the contested and politicized nature of the approach. The ILO supervisory system and the Governing Body should not be used for political purposes by a small group of States. Such practice undermined the authority of the ILO as an independent and impartial body addressing social and labour issues. The Russian Federation dissociated itself from the draft decision.
- 595. A Government representative of the United States** expressed concern at the continued deterioration of political, economic and humanitarian conditions in Myanmar, which had adversely affected workers, businesses and labour rights. Continued military interference in the activities of independent workers' organizations and reports of widespread forced labour were also concerning. The regime's submissions demonstrated a continued failure to protect against numerous abuses of rights under Conventions Nos 87 and 29. The military authorities'

ongoing failure to accept and address the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry relating to forced labour and freedom of association was concerning. She expressed support for the establishment and operationalization of a monitoring mechanism for the confidential and credible documentation of rights abuses, as mandated by the resolution of the International Labour Conference, as well as for the proposed plan of action. The United States was taking direct action to address forced labour in Myanmar, including through the imposition of economic sanctions targeting transnational criminal organizations operating cyber scam compounds in border regions that relied on trafficked individuals subjected to forced labour. Targeted sanctions and export controls were also used, and visa restrictions applied against individuals, entities and sectors to counter abuses by the military authorities. The United States would continue to consider all available tools and remained committed to working with the ILO, other Member States and social partners to give full effect to the resolution.

- 596. The Worker spokesperson** said that it was important to continue to refer to the “military authorities” when discussing the situation in Myanmar, as the use of alternative terminology would give credibility to elections that lacked any credibility.

Decision

- 597. Recalling the resolution for a return to democracy and respect for fundamental rights in Myanmar adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 109th Session (2021) and the resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Myanmar, adopted by the Conference at its 113th Session (2025), and noting with utmost concern that, while certain limited steps have been taken to release some detained unionists, those isolated measures fall short of demonstrating genuine engagement or credible progress towards full implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Commission of Inquiry in its 2023 report, which emphasized the urgency of the national situation, the Governing Body:**

(a) as regards the 2021 resolution:

- (i) deplored once again the continued absence of progress towards respecting the will of the people and restoring democratic institutions and processes over five years since the military coup, and expressed deep concern over the military-organized general elections;**
- (ii) called on the military authorities to end immediately all acts of violence, and the arbitrary arrest, detention and torture of trade unionists, labour activists and others, including the Rohingya, in the exercise of their human rights and ensure the immediate and unconditional release of those detained without resorting to section 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure;**

(b) as regards the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the 2025 resolution:

- (i) called on the military authorities to:**
 - immediately cease all violations identified by the Commission of Inquiry and ensure that employers’ and workers’ organizations be able to exercise their rights in a climate of freedom and security, free from violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, and revoke without delay any military orders, legislative or other measures, decreed since February 2021 and identified as**

restricting freedom of association and the basic civil liberties of trade unionists;

- take immediate action to put an end, in law and in practice, to any forced recruitment into the military contrary to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), including the forced recruitment of children;
 - provide the necessary guarantees and assurances at the highest level which would allow an ILO mission to visit the country and to carry out its mandate in full independence and security, with no retaliation, sanction or prejudice to any person being in contact with it, and continue to engage with the Office to determine the modalities of a possible mission;
 - submit to the Director-General all information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry by 24 April 2026 for transmission to the Committee on the Application of Standards for its special sitting and any relevant information on further developments by 21 September 2026 for transmission to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026);
- (ii) invited the Organization's constituents – governments, employers and workers – to continue taking steps to ensure an effective follow-up to the 2025 Conference resolution, including a review of their relations with the military authorities to ensure that they do not enable, facilitate or prolong, the violations of workers' rights in respect of freedom of association and forced labour, and respect for the principle of non-refoulement, and provide information to the Director-General on any measures taken and other developments by 21 September 2026 for transmission to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026);
- (iii) took note of the Office's plan of action to implement the Conference resolution and called on the Director-General to:
- continue taking steps to implement the 2025 Conference resolution, including through direct support to Myanmar workers, employers and their organizations in line with the United Nations Country Team programmatic engagement guidelines, and through increased collaboration within the United Nations system to ensure coordinated action on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry;
 - continue to closely monitor the situation in Myanmar with regard to the exercise of freedom of association and the prohibition of forced or compulsory labour, including through the finalization of the preparatory phase of the proposed monitoring mechanism, in consultation with the International Organisation of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, for the confidential and credible documentation of ongoing violations, subject to the identification of available resources under Part I of the programme and budget for the current biennium or, failing that, through the use of the provision for unforeseen expenditure under Part II given that the necessary financial and human resources were not budgeted in the Programme and Budget for 2026–27;

- submit a report on the latest developments in the country to inform the special sitting of the Committee on the Application of Standards at the 114th Session (2026) of the Conference;
 - submit to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026) a document providing an update on relevant developments in the country, including progress made by Myanmar regarding compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and measures taken by the Organization's constituents to implement the 2025 Conference resolution, as well as an update on the operationalization of the monitoring mechanism for documentation of ongoing violations of fundamental rights;
- (c) called once again on the military authorities to continue to ensure, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of 21 November 1947, that no restrictions be placed on the operation of the ILO's bank account, to approve all international staff visa extensions requested and to facilitate the ILO's continued operations to bring benefit to the people of Myanmar despite the expiry of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Decent Work Country Programme in September 2022.

(GB.356/INS/13(Rev.2), paragraph 78)

14. Developments in the full implementation by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of the agreed plan of action to give effect to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry in respect of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144 (GB.356/INS/14(Rev.1))

- 598. A Government representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** (Minister of People's Power for the Social Process of Labour) was authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak (via Zoom) in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to multilateralism and constructive dialogue as means of guaranteeing protection for the working class. He highlighted its ongoing cooperation with the ILO during technical assistance missions and forums for joint work and underlined that his Government considered the Organization a strategic ally in strengthening the social justice system and applying the Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention, 1928 (No. 26), Convention No. 87 and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). He expressed concern at the draft decision, which, in his view, did not accurately reflect the progress made, and he drew attention to his Government's full willingness to engage in social dialogue. In that connection, he highlighted the reactivation of the Social Dialogue Forum, whose fifth meeting was planned. One of his objectives as Minister was to institutionalize such forums to address transparently matters such as the minimum wage, freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- 599.** Judicial processes had been reviewed as part of a policy on reconciliation and social peace, allowing for the release from prison of citizens working for democracy under the recent Amnesty Law for Democratic Coexistence of February 2026. The court cases mentioned in the report were not linked to trade union activity, but to lawsuits unrelated to such activity or concerning crimes under Venezuelan legislation.
- 600.** With regard to setting minimum wage in line with the agreed methods, cooperation among all actors must be reciprocal since the full achievement of social goals could not be demanded while a population's economy was being suffocated. He highlighted the negative impact of

unilateral coercive measures on the economy and on the application of social policy. In response, his Government had strengthened social protection and demonstrated strong willingness to update the labour law framework.

- 601. Lastly, he reaffirmed his Government's willingness to continue to cooperate with the ILO and to make progress on a common road map based on dialogue, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters.
- 602. **The Employer spokesperson** indicated that although the report outlined a number of recent events, they should be considered within a broader context marked by the ongoing failure to fully implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. Despite the Office's efforts to maintain a dialogue and offer technical assistance, progress on central aspects of the plan of action remained limited and the absence of specific results in some areas remained a cause for concern.
- 603. With regard to social dialogue under Convention No. 144, he noted the reported consultation and the plans to convene the Social Dialogue Forum. He underlined, however, that the Forum had not been convened since February 2024 and the remote meeting requested by the Governing Body had not taken place. Despite the announcements, no date had been set for the Forum. Social dialogue could not be reduced to one-off exchanges, but required an institutionalized, inclusive and results-oriented framework. He trusted that the next session of the Forum would allow that path to be retaken with the full participation of the social partners and effective technical assistance from the ILO.
- 604. In relation to Convention No. 26, although consultation would begin in 2026, the minimum wage had not been updated since 2022, even though a method had been agreed at the Social Dialogue Forum. The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations had urged the Government to apply that method without delay. The challenge lay not in creating mechanisms, but in implementing them effectively. It was important to ensure that the process enjoyed technical assistance from the ILO.
- 605. Concerning freedom of association under Convention No. 87, while the release of several trade union leaders from prison was relevant, it did not resolve the underlying concerns. There remained serious allegations under examination by the supervisory bodies regarding respect for freedom of association. In particular, little progress had been made on the Workers' Production Councils and the questions surrounding their functioning and impact on the social partners' autonomy; there was a lack of concrete solutions in relation to the restitution of land to employers' officials; and there was a need to ensure genuine tripartite consultation on labour legislation – exchanges on economic matters did not fulfil that obligation.
- 606. Given the above, the situation continued to be characterized by insufficient compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, although he acknowledged the exchanges held with the Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production of Venezuela (FEDECAMARAS) and the opportunity that would be presented by the convening of a new session of the Social Dialogue Forum. For that process to be credible, however, it must be translated into verifiable results within a reasonable time frame. His group supported the draft decision and highlighted three vital aspects: ensuring that effective ILO technical assistance was provided, preferably in person; making progress without delay in applying the method for setting the minimum wage and convening the Social Dialogue Forum with a defined agenda and dates; and adopting specific measures to ensure full respect for freedom of association, including the review of the Workers' Production Councils in line with Convention No. 87. Given that several years had passed, the emphasis should be on results, which must be measurable, verifiable and sustained.

- 607. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the position expressed by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, particularly its openness to dialogue and recognition of the ILO as an ally. Tripartism was a proven method that must be translated into tangible results. His group rejected categorically the military operation launched in the country's territory in November 2025 and executed in January 2026 which, in its view, constituted a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The country's fate must be decided by the Venezuelan people, without external interference.
- 608.** He expressed satisfaction at the announced convening of the fifth session of the Social Dialogue Forum and hoped that it would lead to the adoption of an updated plan of action that helped strengthen social dialogue and social justice in the country. He also welcomed the release of 26 trade union leaders between January and March 2026 and the adoption of a general amnesty law, which was helping to build trust and reconciliation. There persisted, however, trade union rights violations, which were under examination by the Committee on Freedom of Association, and he urged the Government to prioritize the application of pending recommendations, particularly those relating to reinstatement, protection from anti-union discrimination and guarantees against interference.
- 609.** He expressed a critical stance with regard to the role of the National Electoral Council in matters affecting workers' organizations and urged the authorities to resume dialogue with those organizations to ensure full respect for freedom of association and of the principles of Convention No. 87, particularly concerning trade union autonomy and non-interference in election processes. He also took note of the ongoing debates on constitutional wage guarantees and of the launch of consultations on setting the minimum wage for 2026, and he highlighted the consequences of the failure to adjust that wage since 2022 for workers' purchasing power and the sustainability of social security. He urged the Government to set the minimum wage in line with the methods agreed through social dialogue and with international labour standards, stressing the importance of an effective, transparent and results-oriented process.
- 610.** He also urged the Government to facilitate dialogue that would allow frozen economic assets to be released; their immobilization hindered progress in labour and social protection, and there was a need to ensure transparency and accountability. ILO technical assistance in wage setting was important, and the Bureau for Workers' Activities should play a role in providing direct support for trade union organizations. While the ongoing legislative initiatives were of relevance, the degree to which representative workers' organizations were being consulted was cause for concern, and institutionalized dialogue would provide greater clarity and sustainability in that regard.
- 611.** Lastly, he reaffirmed his group's willingness to participate constructively in tripartite social dialogue with the support of the ILO. Sustained commitment, transparency and inclusive tripartism would be essential if durable progress was to be achieved. He recognized the support provided by international trade union structures in the case at hand and expressed his group's support for the draft decision.
- 612. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States,** a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with her statement: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland, Norway, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Noting the release of some trade union activists, she urged the Government to ensure the immediate, full and unconditional release of all such activists who remained in detention. She welcomed with satisfaction the scheduling of the fifth session of the Social Dialogue Forum after a hiatus of more than two years, and she urged the

authorities to avail themselves of ILO technical assistance to facilitate the effective operation of that tripartite mechanism with the comprehensive participation of the social partners.

- 613.** She hoped that those steps would help to foster trust, social dialogue, national reconciliation and social justice, although the reduction in civic space and the human rights situation, particularly in the areas of freedom of association and collective bargaining, was of concern. She urged the authorities to bring an end to all acts of repression against dissenting voices, including opposition members, civil society organizations, human rights defenders, labour activists, employers' and workers' organizations, journalists and media workers; their freedom, independence, autonomy and protection must be guaranteed.
- 614.** Justice system reform presented an opportunity to restore the rule of law, and she called for action to be taken on pending allegations of civil liberties and trade union rights violations, for fair trials and reparations to be guaranteed and for affected workers to be reinstated. She acknowledged the recent consultations on the minimum wage, which had not been adjusted in recent years, and urged the authorities to set it using the agreed methods and with the participation of employers' and workers' organizations, in line with international labour standards. She also stressed the importance of continued interaction with the Committee on Freedom of Association to build trust among social partners.
- 615.** The authorities' lack of collaboration with the ILO was concerning, and she regretted the failure to hold a meeting with the Director-General and the social partners as requested by the Governing Body, as well as the absence of the ILO special adviser from the country. She urged the authorities to take immediate steps to restore that cooperation and requested that the Government's expressions of willingness be translated into concrete measures through its acceptance and full application of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. She supported the draft decision.
- 616. A Government representative of China** indicated that the Venezuelan Government had endeavoured to fulfil its obligations, promote social dialogue and collaborate with the Office, and to adopt a series of measures in areas such as the minimum wage and trade union registration, demonstrating a constructive attitude. The United States had imposed unilateral measures and, in January 2026, had carried out military strikes against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela which had indirectly disrupted the country's efforts to protect labour rights and provide social security. All those factors must be taken into account, and the positive progress made by the Government must be recognized in full. Moreover, as a specialized agency of the UN system, the ILO must respect the reality in each country, adapt its support to the needs of local populations and provide technical assistance. He encouraged the ILO to strengthen its cooperation with the Government, continue to promote dialogue and collaborate in a range of ways in order to improve the situation and strengthen capacities and effectiveness in the application of international labour standards.
- 617. A Government representative of the United States** recognized that there had been a significant political transition in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and that the interim Government had not had the opportunity to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry or to act on the decisions adopted by the Governing Body. Understanding that the interim Government must address a series of issues created by the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro, she encouraged the interim Government to focus on stabilization, economic recovery and transition. The recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry remained relevant to that end, and a special adviser should be present in the country to help convene round tables on dialogue and implementation.

618. She drew the Government's attention to the following issues that the Maduro regime had failed to address: the continued detention of at least 11 trade unionists, although some had been released in 2026; recent cases before the Committee on Freedom of Association, several of which remained classified as serious and urgent, which contained serious allegations relating specifically to violations of freedom of association through arbitrary detention, the criminalization of trade union activity, intimidation and harassment; and the lack of arrangements for a special adviser on social dialogue to conduct in-country work in support of the plan of action.
619. Minimum wages had not been updated since 2022, and she trusted that, over time, the interim Government would fulfil its obligations under ILO Conventions, including by making progress in addressing violations of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144. She reiterated the importance of ILO support and accepted the draft decision.
620. **A Government representative of the Russian Federation** noted that the Venezuelan Government had adopted a series of specific measures to improve the situation of employers and workers in the country under the plan of action to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. The Government had indicated repeatedly its willingness to engage in social dialogue based on mutual respect and sovereignty. A process to review court decisions had been under way since December 2025 aimed at releasing a group of detained trade union leaders. In that context, the Amnesty Law for Democratic Coexistence had been drawn up in 2026 with the aim of strengthening peace, internal stability and social balance.
621. The plan of action provided for the fifth Social Dialogue Forum to take place in the second half of April, demonstrating that the Government was in favour of social dialogue and was willing to collaborate constructively with the ILO to fulfil the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. He requested the Governing Body to take into account the progress made in the application of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144, without forgetting the country's highly complex internal situation. Discussing the matter at each Governing Body session was a form of exerting pressure on the country, not encouraging social dialogue. He therefore requested that the possibility of reviewing the regularity of the Governing Body's examination of the matter be considered.
622. **A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** welcomed the progress and efforts made by the Venezuelan Government in applying Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144 in exceptional circumstances. Since 2014, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been subjected to more than 1,000 unilateral coercive measures, which must be considered when assessing the country's labour situation. Despite those pressures, the Government had taken meaningful steps, such as the launch of the minimum wage consultation process in January 2026, the release of several trade union leaders since 2025, the adoption of the Amnesty Law for Democratic Coexistence and the planning of the fifth Social Dialogue Forum for April 2026.
623. He requested a review of the frequency with which the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was placed on the Governing Body's agenda, given the progress being made. He encouraged the ILO to provide concrete technical assistance to the Venezuelan Government to facilitate the effective application of the aforementioned Conventions in a spirit of cooperation and respect for sovereignty and national priorities. Sustainable solutions could only be reached through sincere dialogue, technical cooperation and multilateral mechanisms guided by fairness, objectivity and mutual respect.
624. **A Government representative of Cuba** said that the progress made by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in applying and strengthening Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144 in a particularly complex international context was evidence of its willingness to fulfil

its obligations and commitments within the ILO. Since the Governing Body's last session, the Government had taken a range of actions, which were acknowledged in the report, and she welcomed with satisfaction the willingness that it had repeatedly expressed to continue to promote social dialogue and reconciliation at the national level by establishing forums for tripartite consultation and meeting its international commitments in the area of labour. In that context, the holding of the fifth Social Dialogue Forum was noteworthy. It was important that the Governing Body afforded governments the necessary space and time to apply the relevant measures, in line with their national legislation and considering each country's economic, social and labour variables.

- 625.** Furthermore, it should be taken into account that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was subjected to unilateral coercive measures that affected the exercise of fundamental rights, such as the rights to work and social security. If the Governing Body wished to accelerate the application of the recommendations, it should declare itself in favour of lifting those measures. She invited the Governing Body to note the progress made and to consider adjusting the regularity with which the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was examined as an agenda item, bearing in mind the positive progress made with the processes under way. The Governing Body's decisions should not be binding, and dialogue, cooperation and negotiated solutions were the most direct route to the ILO's total fulfilment of its mandate.
- 626. A Government representative of Colombia** reiterated the importance of tripartite social dialogue as the most effective mechanism for creating trust, reaching sustainable agreements and furthering the application of international labour standards. The Social Dialogue Forum therefore acted as a key platform for promoting inclusive national dialogue in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and making progress in the implementation of the plan of action agreed with the support of the ILO. He took note of the information submitted by the Venezuelan Government, particularly with regard to the launching of the minimum wage setting consultation process for 2026, the recent release of trade union leaders and the adoption of the Amnesty Law for Democratic Coexistence. Those measures, if upheld and applied quickly, could help create suitable conditions for progress in the application of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144. At the same time, it was important to proceed with specific measures in the implementation of the plan of action agreed at the Social Dialogue Forum, particularly concerning the effective application of the agreed minimum wage setting method, the strengthening of tripartite consultation and the addressing of matters relating to freedom of association.
- 627.** He urged the Government to convene the fifth Social Dialogue Forum promptly and highlighted the value of cooperation with the Office, including through technical assistance, in supporting the parties in applying the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the related Governing Body decisions. Lastly, he reiterated his call for continued progress in the full application of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144 through inclusive social dialogue – with the sustained participation of all sectors – that helped strengthen labour relations, protect trade union rights and promote social justice.
- 628. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) confirmed the Office's full willingness to respond efficiently to any request for technical assistance. The Office would be interested to know the dates of the Social Dialogue Forum so that it could continue to provide support as it had done so far. Addressing the Minister, she indicated on behalf of the Director-General that the Office was at his disposal to hold a bilateral meeting at the end of the current Governing Body session with a view to considering how to respond to his request for technical assistance.

- 629. The Government representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** (Minister of People's Power for the Social Process of Labour) indicated that, despite the recent events that had affected normal public administration, his country maintained a constructive position based on transparent working methods and respect for the ILO's rules of debate and national sovereignty. That approach was intended to promote deeper engagement in broad, inclusive and transparent dialogue and to promote technical assistance and cooperation in line with the country's needs in support of its labour policies. He highlighted the importance of the immediate and unconditional lifting of the unilateral coercive measures, which he deemed to be illegal, in accordance with the Venezuelan Constitution and national legislation. The fifth Social Dialogue Forum would be celebrated in April. His Government was, moreover, willing to enter into discussions with the Office to make progress on the relevant technical cooperation.
- 630. The Employer spokesperson** highlighted the constructive position expressed, which he hoped would be translated in to verifiable, sustainable results in the short term. Given that efforts to address the matter had been ongoing for several years, and plans had been made for so many meetings that had ultimately not been held, reasonable concern persisted, and he expected that the Government would soon be able to demonstrate specific progress. He noted the proposal to hold a bilateral meeting with the Office at the end of the current session and hoped that it would take place without delay. It was important to set a date for the meetings scheduled for April, with the social partners informed sufficiently in advance to ensure their effective participation in the dialogue process. He expressed his expectation that the opportunity would be seized and that, at its next session, the Governing Body would be able to evaluate specific results, rather than reiterating its concerns. His group would reserve its judgement while it awaited tangible progress and expected to be in a position to acknowledge, at the next session, developments in relation to the commitments assumed by the Government.
- 631. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the ILO for its assistance and congratulated the Minister on his appointment. Moments of change presented opportunities, and it was important that they were translated into tangible progress that benefited the workers of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He highlighted the need to move from discussion to action, and he welcomed the openness demonstrated, which would allow for continued headway on the pending labour issues.

Decision

- 632. Regretting the lack of progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry adopted in 2019 and the measures requested by the Governing Body at its 352nd (October–November 2024), 353rd (March 2025) and 355th (November 2025) Sessions, the Governing Body:**
- (a) expressed its firm expectation that, with the Office's technical assistance, preferably in person, the fifth session of the Social Dialogue Forum to be held in the second half of April 2026 would result in the adoption of an updated action plan leading to the full implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry in order to advance social dialogue and promote national reconciliation and social justice as foundations for lasting peace and prosperity in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;
 - (b) welcomed the release of several trade union leaders between January and March 2026 and urged the Government to address the serious violations of trade union

rights examined by the Committee on Freedom of Association by implementing its recommendations, as a matter of priority;

- (c) repeated its call to the Government to make the necessary arrangements to enable the Office to deliver technical assistance, preferably in person, to the social partners during and between sessions of the Social Dialogue Forum;
- (d) took note of the launch of the consultation process to determine the 2026 minimum wage, which has remained unchanged since 2022, and urged the Government to set the minimum wage or wages in line with the agreed methods;
- (e) invited the Government to submit to the Director-General, by 21 September 2026, information on concrete measures taken in relation to subparagraphs (a) to (d) above, with a view to transmitting the information to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026).

(GB.356/INS/14(Rev.1), paragraph 35)

15. Complaint submitted under article 26 of the ILO Constitution alleging non-observance by Saudi Arabia of Conventions Nos 29, 95 and 111 (GB.356/INS/15(Rev.2))

- 633. **The Worker spokesperson** noted that, based on the understanding that the parties to the complaint were attempting to find a way forward with dialogue, her group would refrain from taking a position on the item at that stage and supported the draft decision.
- 634. **The Employer spokesperson** indicated that his group supported the draft decision.
- 635. A Government representative of Senegal supported the draft decision.
- 636. **A Government representative of Saudi Arabia** (Deputy Minister of International Affairs) indicated that his country accepted the recommendation to defer the discussion to the November session of the Governing Body and looked forward to constructive dialogue and further interaction with international partners in the context of the ILO.

Decision

- 637. **The Governing Body** took note of the report and the information provided by the Office, encouraged the parties to further pursue their dialogue to address the outstanding issues between them and decided to defer the discussion on the item to its 358th Session (November 2026).

(GB.356/INS/15(Rev.2), paragraph 8)

16. Complaint submitted under article 26 of the ILO Constitution alleging non-observance by Chile of Conventions Nos 87, 98, 135 and 151 (GB.356/INS/16(Rev.1))

- 638. **A Government representative of Chile** said that the draft decision was in line with the Governing Body's previous practice in similar situations and confirmed the relevance of the ILO regular supervisory system. He reiterated his Government's commitment to the ILO's principles, to respect for international labour standards and to tripartite dialogue as a foundation for legitimate, effective and sustainable solutions in the world of work. Chile attached particular importance to the proper functioning of the Organization's supervisory

system and the responsible use of the various mechanisms available, while safeguarding their coherence, credibility and complementary nature. He therefore welcomed the draft decision's prioritization of the regular supervisory system and the special procedures already in place. The Government of Chile would continue to work in good faith with the ILO and to provide the relevant information on the measures adopted in law and in practice for the application of the relevant Conventions. It would do so with the conviction that strengthened industrial relations, freedom of association, collective bargaining and the proper functioning of institutions must be rooted in respect for the rule of law and social dialogue based on mutual respect. He reaffirmed his Government's willingness to continue to promote decent work, legal certainty, social peace and understanding among stakeholders in the world of work, in full conformity with the Organization's principles and objectives.

- 639. The Worker spokesperson** observed that the complaint contained allegations that Chilean labour laws and administrative practices discriminated against certain categories of trade unions and restricted the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike. It presented multiple case examples, particularly in the food handling and construction sectors. The matters raised in the complaint were already receiving the attention of the ILO supervisory bodies, including the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. As noted in the Office document, the complaint was the third article 26 complaint made in recent years alleging non-observance by Chile of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), and the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151). On the previous occasions, the Governing Body had transmitted the matters to the regular supervisory system. The same course of action needed to be adopted at the current time. She urged the Government to take measures to ensure full compliance in law and in practice with Conventions Nos 87, 98, 135 and 151, based on the comments of the supervisory bodies, and to continue to work with the ILO to address all outstanding issues.
- 640. The Employer spokesperson** recalled that the submission of a complaint under article 26 was a mechanism of last resort reserved for situations of proven gravity when the regular mechanisms had been clearly insufficient. In the light of the document presented and the information contained in the observations of the Government of Chile, his group was of the view that that threshold of exceptionality had not been met. The document presented by the Office recalled that it was the third complaint submitted in recent years in relation to the same Conventions and that on previous occasions the Governing Body had decided not to refer the case to a Commission of Inquiry, but to address the matters through the regular supervisory system.
- 641.** That practice reflected a coherent, prudent approach intended to preserve the integrity of the supervisory system. The report highlighted, moreover, a number of particularly relevant aspects. Firstly, the matters set out in the complaint had already been examined by other mechanisms, including the Committee on Freedom of Association, and it was even reported that an agreement between the parties had recently been reached in that context. Secondly, the Government itself indicated that the parallel submission of proceedings on the same facts raised serious concerns in terms of coherence and due process. Thirdly, no new elements had been identified that led to the conclusion that there was a serious, systematic and persistent pattern of violations that justified the activation of the most exceptional mechanism within the supervisory system.
- 642.** Establishing a Commission of Inquiry at the current stage would contradict the very logic of the ILO supervisory system, while the proposed draft decision offered a balanced, legally robust approach that was coherent with institutional practice. That approach did not, in any

way, mean minimizing the importance of the matters raised. On the contrary, it meant addressing them in the appropriate, competent and proportional setting. The strength of the ILO supervisory system lay in its coherence, predictability and balance; each mechanism had a specific function, and blurring those functions or applying them too broadly weakened the system as a whole. Each time an exceptional mechanism was used unduly, the wrong signal was sent, and overloading the most demanding mechanisms without justification diverted resources and attention from cases that truly warranted them.

- 643.** For those reasons, his group believed that the decision adopted must be clear and consistent with past practice. Chile was a country with consolidated democratic institutions, a developed industrial relations system and a history of active interaction with ILO mechanisms. The matters raised in the complaint were subjects that could, and should, continue to be addressed via the regular channels, where they were already being examined. The Employers' group therefore firmly supported the approach proposed in the draft decision.
- 644. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States,** a Government representative of Cyprus said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Norway and Switzerland aligned themselves with the statement. The EU and its Member States were committed to the respect, protection and fulfilment of labour rights and to the universal ratification and effective implementation of the fundamental ILO Conventions, and supported the effective and efficient functioning of the ILO supervisory system, which was central to the Organization's normative mandate.
- 645.** She acknowledged that the complaint was the third article 26 complaint made in recent years alleging non-observance by Chile of the same Conventions and that the Governing Body had closed the previous ones and transmitted them to the regular supervisory system. She also acknowledged that the substantive matters and circumstances covered by the current complaint had also been dealt with in an article 24 procedure and examined by the Committee on Freedom of Association. She welcomed the agreement reached on 22 January 2026 by the parties involved in that procedure and considered that the same matters should not be dealt with in two parallel proceedings within the ILO supervisory system. She commended the Government of Chile for its latest ratifications, including of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), which completed its ratification of all fundamental Conventions. The EU and its Member States supported all elements of the draft decision, with a view to reaching a constructive resolution of the matters raised in the complaint. She thanked the members of the Committee on Freedom of Association for their continuous work on the matters raised in the complaint.
- 646. A Government representative of the United States** expressed her Government's support for the effective functioning of the ILO supervisory system, reaffirming its important role in promoting respect for and the effective implementation of international labour standards. She noted the extensive concerns raised in the complaint and the ongoing nature of many of the issues and expressed the view that freedom of association and collective bargaining rights could be strengthened in Chile. While supporting the draft decision, her Government encouraged continued engagement and dialogue among the parties to ensure that concerns were addressed and resolved in a constructive manner.

Decision

- 647. Considering that this was the third complaint made under article 26 of the ILO Constitution in recent years alleging non-observance by Chile of those Conventions, and**

that for the two previous complaints it had decided to transmit the matters to the regular supervisory system, the Governing Body, on the recommendation of its Officers:

- (a) decided not to refer the complaint to a Commission of Inquiry and to close the procedure under article 26;
- (b) invited the Government of Chile to continue reporting to the ILO regular supervisory system on measures taken to apply in law and practice the Conventions concerned;
- (c) referred the allegations of violations of freedom of association in practice to the Committee on Freedom of Association in the framework of its special procedures.

(GB.356/INS/16(Rev.1), paragraph 7)

17. Update concerning the Commission of Inquiry established to examine the non-observance by Nicaragua of Conventions Nos 87, 98, 111 and 144 (GB.356/INS/17)

- 648. The Employer spokesperson** recalled that the decision to establish a Commission of Inquiry had been exceptional and strictly necessary in the face of an extremely serious situation characterized by persistent violations of the Conventions Nos 87, 98, 111 and 144, and also owing to the Government's repeated failure to cooperate with the ILO supervisory bodies. Since taking that decision, the Governing Body had acted with determination: it had appointed the Commission's members, defined its mandate and adopted provisions for its funding. It should be recognized, however, that its mandate had not been fulfilled. The Commission of Inquiry had been unable to begin its work owing to financial constraints. When the Governing Body adopted a decision of that nature, in one of the most important areas of the ILO's mandate, its implementation could not be subject to operational uncertainties, since the Organization's credibility depended on coherence between what it said and what it did.
- 649.** The lack of progress in launching the Commission sent a worrying signal not only in relation to Nicaragua, but also with regard to the ILO's commitment to defending the fundamental principles and rights at work. The activation of the Commission of Inquiry was a matter of principle, coherence and responsibility: responsibility towards employers and workers in Nicaragua, who were facing the eradication of their organizations, the suppression of social dialogue and the systematic violation of their fundamental rights; responsibility towards the Governing Body, which had acted in accordance with article 26 of the Constitution in the expectation that its decision would be implemented with the due urgency; and responsibility towards the ILO itself, whose relevance depended on its ability to act in line with its fundamental principles, which were being called into question.
- 650.** While he recognized the Office's efforts to review and adjust the Commission's budget in a complex financial context, he stressed that there should be no withholding of resources since commissions of inquiry were among the most important instruments provided for by the Constitution to address serious and persistent non-compliance, such as in the case under examination. The launch of the Commission of Inquiry must be an institutional priority, and it was essential that the Governing Body adopted a clear decision that ensured that the necessary financial resources were available for the Commission to begin its work immediately. The Employers' group had therefore proposed an amendment to the draft decision to make the allocation of resources explicit and to ensure that the Commission's work began without further delay. The ILO's strength was not measured solely by the decisions that it adopted, but by its capacity to implement them effectively and in a timely manner.

- 651. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the Office's efforts to reduce the costs of the Commission of Inquiry while maintaining the conditions needed for it to function properly. Commissions of inquiry constituted established mechanisms under the ILO Constitution, and it was important that they operated in a credible, efficient and balanced manner.
- 652.** She noted the case's particular context, including the Nicaraguan Government's notification of withdrawal from the ILO, which was regrettable. There was a need to respect fully the Constitution, the supervisory procedures and the independence of the Commission. She underlined the importance of ensuring the participation of regional workers' organizations, such as the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas, and she encouraged the Office to keep the Governing Body informed of the Commission's implementation and financial implications. She voiced support for the draft decision and the proposed financial arrangements.
- 653.** With regard to the amendment proposed by the Employers' group, her group understood and shared the concerns expressed, as well as the proposal's general message. She highlighted, however, an editorial issue concerning coherence between the tenses used in subparagraphs (a) and (b). She also requested the Office to provide more detailed clarification of subparagraph (b), particularly with regard to how it was envisaged to ensure funding, whether through available resources or other resources, and regarding the amendment's specific implications, in order to fully assess whether her group could support it.
- 654. A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) explained that costs relating to commissions of inquiry were not included in the ordinary budget approved for each biennium, but constituted additional costs. Subparagraph (b) provided for the financing of the Commission of Inquiry first with resources from Part I of the budget or, failing that, through the use of the provision for unforeseen expenditure under Part II. He warned, however, that given the current circumstances, Part I was not fully funded, and it would therefore be necessary to turn to the regular budget. The expression "to the extent possible" was used when the availability of funds was not guaranteed. Without that wording, it would be assumed that the resources were guaranteed. If the Governing Body adopted the amendment proposed by the Employers' group, it would mean authorizing the reallocation of funds between the Parts of the budget to finance the Commission.
- 655. The Employer spokesperson** stated that those explanations confirmed the need for the amendment given the undue delay in executing the Commission's mandate. It was a matter of priority, and, regardless of the source of the funds, resources must be reallocated from non-priority items. The words "to the extent possible" should be removed since they created uncertainty, and it should be stated clearly that the Commission would be financed. The objective was for the Commission to begin its work without further delay and for the Governing Body's mandate to be fulfilled effectively.
- 656. The Director-General** recognized the frustration expressed by the Employers, the Workers and some States that the Commission of Inquiry had yet to begin its work. Although the initial Budget of US\$1.3 million had been cut to US\$800,000, those resources were sufficient for the Office to ensure that the Commission's work began without further delay. Such a decision would, however, set a precedent since it would involve covering unforeseen expenses using internal reallocations. Although the Commission would begin its work in any event, the Office had submitted the matter for consideration by the Governing Body to obtain its approval.
- 657. The Worker spokesperson**, following the explanations received, expressed her agreement with the Employers' concerns and indicated that the wording "to the extent possible" did not offer clarity on the commitment being assumed. The Commission of Inquiry must begin its work without delay and enjoy guaranteed resources, since it would be inappropriate to cast

doubt on its financing once its work was under way. The conditions must be defined clearly and the necessary resources ensured. She supported the amendment proposed by the Employers' group.

- 658. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with her statement: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. She recalled the decisions of the Governing Body at its 353rd and 354th Sessions to establish the Commission of Inquiry and appoint its members to consider the non-compliance with Conventions Nos 87, 98, 111 and 144. It was regrettable that arrears in contributions had forced the Office to adopt cost containment measures that affected key functions such as the supervisory system. She urged Member States to meet their financial obligations and thanked the Office for the revised budget, trusting that it would allow the Commission to execute its mandate properly. There was an urgent need for the Commission to begin its work without delay, since any delay affected the victims. The draft decision did not offer sufficient guarantees in that regard, and she therefore supported the Employers' amendment.
- 659.** The EU and its Member States called on the Government of Nicaragua to reconsider its February 2025 notification of its intention to withdraw from the ILO and recalled that, regardless of its membership status, the country remained bound by the Conventions that it had ratified. She reiterated the commitment of the countries on whose behalf she was speaking to continuing to monitor the situation closely, supporting the Nicaraguan people in their aspirations, including labour rights, and keeping channels for dialogue open.
- 660. A Government representative of the United States** thanked the Office for the updated information on the financial status of the Commission of Inquiry. She expressed deep concern at the Nicaraguan Government's lack of progress in addressing allegations of non-compliance with Conventions Nos 87, 98, 111 and 144, including the dismantling of independent organizations, the absence of tripartite consultation and the repression of civic space. The Government's intention to withdraw from the ILO did not affect its obligations under the Conventions that it had ratified. Noting the proposed budgetary review, she reaffirmed her Government's support for a robust supervisory system and encouraged the Government of Nicaragua to cooperate with the Commission. She supported the draft decision as amended by the Employers' group.
- 661. A Government representative of Colombia** noted that the Commission had been unable to begin its work owing to financial constraints and emphasized the need to define conditions that ensured that it could do so in a timely manner, with independence and technical rigour. Noting the budgetary adjustments, he stressed the importance of balancing financial sustainability against the effectiveness of the supervisory mechanisms. Financing options that did not affect other ILO activities must be explored, and he reaffirmed the value of those mechanisms in a context of objectivity and tripartite dialogue. He supported the amendment proposed by the Employers' group.
- 662. A Government representative of Cuba** indicated that the nature of the case and the way in which it had been admitted reflected shortcomings in the complaints mechanisms that could cause them to be used for political purposes. She reiterated her Government's opposition to the case's inclusion on the agenda and called for dialogue and cooperation based on respect for sovereignty and non-interference as routes to progress on labour rights. The Governing Body did not have a mandate to require a State to act in contravention of its national legislation, and she rejected mechanisms that she deemed punitive and interfering. Those

approaches ran counter to the ILO's mandate and did not lead to practical results. She reiterated the Cuban Government's support for Nicaragua and its rejection of the politicization of the ILO.

- 663. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) indicated that the Office was in contact periodically with the members of the Commission of Inquiry, who were awaiting the green light to plan their work. They would require time to be able to intervene.
- 664. The Employer spokesperson** said that it was his understanding that the Workers' group supported the amendment, which should not set a negative precedent; what could set such a precedent was a failure to fulfil the mandates promptly.
- 665. The Worker spokesperson** expressed support for the amendment, as well as for the request made by the EU and its Member States for all ILO Member States to pay their dues on time, which would make a significant difference.

Decision

666. The Governing Body decided that:

- (a) **an honorarium of US\$350 per day would be paid to each member of the Commission of Inquiry;**
- (b) **as the cost of the Commission, which is estimated at US\$810,244, was not budgeted in the Programme and Budget for 2026–27, it will be financed using available resources under Part I of the budget for the current biennium or, failing that, through the use of the provision for unforeseen expenditure under Part II;**
- (c) **the work of the Commission shall start without any further delay.**

(GB.356/INS/17, paragraph 6, as amended by the Governing Body)

18. Reports of the Committee on Freedom of Association

18.1. 413th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association (GB.356/INS/18/1) and Addendum: Presentation of the Committee on Freedom of Association annual report for the year 2025 (GB.356/INS/18/1(Add.1))

18.2. 414th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association (GB.356/INS/18/2)

- 667. The Chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association**, referring to the Committee's 413th Report, said that the Committee had examined 15 cases on the merits and had reached definitive conclusions in respect of one of those, which meant that that particular case did not call for further examination and was effectively closed. The Committee had reached interim conclusions in respect of ten cases. Among those, it had considered it necessary to draw attention to five long-standing cases because of the seriousness and urgency of the matters dealt with therein.
- 668.** Elaborating on those long-standing cases, he said that, in Case No. 3269, the Committee had once again examined the matter of confiscation of trade union property in Afghanistan. The

Committee had deeply regretted that the de facto authorities had not provided their observations, even though they had been invited to do so on several occasions. The Committee had urged the de facto authorities to take immediate measures to ensure the physical safety of trade unionists and to ensure that the National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees could carry out its legitimate activities in a climate free from interference, violence and coercion.

- 669.** In Case No. 2318, concerning the murder of three trade union leaders and the continuing repression of trade unionists in Cambodia, the Committee had once again stressed the need to address impunity.
- 670.** In Case No. 3263, concerning Bangladesh, the Committee had once again examined the allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention of trade unionists, death threats and physical abuse while in detention, false criminal charges, surveillance, retaliation and intimidation, as well as the excessive use of police force during peaceful protests and the lack of investigation into those allegations. The Committee had urged the Government to investigate allegations of police violence and the excessive use of force in labour protests and to ensure independent and transparent inquiries. It had also called for stronger protection of trade union rights through legal reforms, efficient case handling, improved police training and the effective implementation of labour agreements and union registration procedures.
- 671.** In Case No. 2923, concerning the murder of a trade union official in El Salvador, the Committee had deeply deplored the absence of progress towards the resolution of the case, despite more than 15 years having passed since the murder. The Committee had urged the Government to speed up and conclude the investigations in order to identify and punish as soon as possible both the instigators and the perpetrators of the crime.
- 672.** Case No. 2508, concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran, dealt with the acts of repression, arrest, detention and condemnation of a large number of trade unionists, including foreigners, and the inadequate legislative framework for the protection of freedom of association. The Committee had noted that Ms Cécile Kohler and Mr Jacques Paris had been sentenced to very heavy prison terms and had been conditionally released after three years of detention. The Committee had firmly urged the Government to set aside the sentences of those two individuals, ensure their unconditional release and guarantee their swift and safe return to their country. The Committee had also once again urged the Government to ensure that the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company could function without hindrance through its de facto recognition pending legislative reform and to take steps to ensure that its officials and members were not arrested, detained or prosecuted for legitimate trade union activities.
- 673.** The Committee had also examined three cases in which governments had kept it informed of the measures taken to give effect to its recommendations and had concluded its examination with respect to – and had therefore closed – two of those cases, concerning Panama and Peru.
- 674.** The Committee had appreciated the efforts made by governments to provide their observations on time, which had enabled it to carry out the examination of those cases in full knowledge of the circumstances in question, and had made a special appeal to all Governments whose cases were pending before the Committee to ensure that any communication in relation to those cases was sent as soon as possible and before the deadline of 13 April 2026. As indicated in the introduction to the Committee's 413th Report, communications received after that deadline might not be taken into account when the cases were examined. He drew particular attention to the urgent appeals issued by the Committee with respect to Haiti and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, so that the respective replies

would be received in time for the cases to be examined in full knowledge at the Committee's next meeting.

675. Turning to the 414th Report, concerning the measures taken by the Government of Belarus to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, he observed that it was the 17th time that the Committee had examined the implementation of the recommendations since their adoption over 20 years previously. He recalled that the Governing Body had discussed the follow-up to the resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Belarus earlier at its current session. The report addressed comments made by the Government and contained new allegations by the complainants. The Committee had once again deplored the Government's protracted failure to take steps for the release of the detained trade unionists and worker activists. It had urged the Government to engage with the ILO Special Envoy to find the path towards constructive dialogue with the ILO supervisory bodies to fully implement all outstanding ILO recommendations.
676. He then drew attention to the ninth annual report of the Committee, which was intended to provide information on the work undertaken by the Committee throughout 2025. It also contained information, supported by statistical data presented visually, on developments over the years in the use of the Committee's special procedure, the progress made and serious and urgent cases examined.
677. He emphasized that the Committee's conclusions on specific cases were reached through robust tripartite discussions governed by shared values and a common commitment to promoting universal respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, both in law and in practice. The Committee's decisions were intended to support governments and national authorities in identifying and implementing appropriate follow-up actions. He was very proud to present the three reports, which attested once again to the strength of tripartite dialogue and consensus. He expressed his appreciation to the Committee members for their commitment and efforts to find solutions to the issues and challenges that were presented at each meeting. He also expressed his appreciation to the Office for its support.
678. **The Worker spokesperson of the Committee** said that it was important to restate clearly the mandate of the Committee to bring clarity to the scope of its work. He recalled that the Committee had been set up by the Governing Body in 1951 as a tripartite standing committee and derived its mandate from the ILO Constitution and the relevant ILO Conventions. In 1953, the Office had transferred the responsibility to express opinions regarding the interpretation of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 to the Committee "owing to the existence of a special procedure laid down by the Governing Body for dealing with complaints concerning alleged infringements of freedom of association".
679. For over 70 years, the Committee had ascertained the facts relating to alleged infringements of the right to freedom of association and to bargain collectively and had decided on the merits of the cases. If infringements had been found, it had made recommendations on the measures that the governments concerned should take to remediate those infringements. That was true whether the infringements were the result of decisions taken by the executive, legislative or judicial branches. The Committee's *Special procedures for the examination of complaints alleging violations of freedom of association* explained that the Committee's mandate consisted in determining whether any given legislation or practice complied with the principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining laid down in the relevant Conventions. Furthermore, the *Compilation of decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association* of 2018 also clearly stated that where national laws, including those interpreted by the high courts, violated the

principles of freedom of association, the Committee had always considered it within its mandate to examine those laws.

- 680.** At its March 2026 meeting, the Committee had been able to reach conclusions by consensus on 15 cases and had drawn attention to five cases that it had deemed serious and urgent: Cases Nos 2318 (Cambodia), 2508 (Islamic Republic of Iran), 2923 (El Salvador), 3263 (Bangladesh) and 3269 (Afghanistan). He recalled that serious and urgent cases were those involving human life or personal freedom, or new or changing conditions affecting the freedom of action of a trade union movement or employer association as a whole. All those cases had been deemed serious and urgent for multiple cycles, and some were now over two decades old, demonstrating a worrying lack of progress. His group noted once again the high number of cases – whether serious and urgent, or not – involving arbitrary arrests and detention and acts of violence, including murder related to workers' trade union activities. He emphasized that the situation had to change and expressed the fear that the cases that made it to the ILO were just the tip of the iceberg. Tripartism could not take place from a prison cell, hospital bed or grave.
- 681.** He highlighted a few additional cases discussed during the meeting. With regard to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, the Committee had once again urged the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to provide comprehensive and prompt information on the impact of the National Security Law and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance on freedom of association, including engagement with the social partners, and on the status of multiple cases involving trade unionists. Furthermore, it had called for concrete measures to prevent the prosecution or imprisonment of individuals, particularly Mr Lee Cheuk Yan, for legitimate trade union activities, and had requested detailed updates on several specific proceedings. More broadly, the Committee had pressed the Government to ensure both in law and in practice the full protection of trade union rights in an environment free from intimidation or interference. With regard to Panama, the Single National Federation of Construction and Allied Workers (SUNTRACS) had alleged a series of escalating and serious violations of its trade union freedoms, including the raid of its headquarters, the arrest of its leaders and the closure of its bank accounts, among other violations. The Committee had called on the Government to take concrete steps to safeguard freedom of association in relation to SUNTRACS, with emphasis on the protection of trade union activity. It had urged continuing investigations into those responsible for the fire at the union premises and had requested detailed and up-to-date information on the investigations and legal proceedings involving demonstrators and multiple union leaders. In addition, the Committee had sought clarification on financial restrictions, stressing that access to union funds must not be impeded, and had underscored that the dissolution of trade union entities should occur only in the most serious of circumstances. With regard to Serbia, the Committee had expressed concern over the Government's failure to respond to serious allegations of anti-union conduct at the state airline and had requested comprehensive information and action.
- 682.** With regard to the 414th Report, on Belarus, and noting that the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry had been discussed by the Governing Body earlier in the session, he only reiterated his group's concern that the Government of Belarus had made no meaningful progress towards respecting the right to freedom of association. He echoed the recommendation of the Committee which, once again had called for the immediate release of all trade union leaders and activists who, according to the recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies, had been prosecuted for exercising their legitimate trade union activities, and for all related charges to be dropped.

683. The Committee's annual report succinctly summarized the work of the Committee over the past year and contained useful data on longer-term trends. He noted that, as a result of the Committee's work, there had been progress in a number of countries, in law and in practice, consistent with the Committee's recommendations. He urged all governments for which missions or technical assistance had been recommended to take advantage of that offer so that the right to freedom of association could be fully guaranteed and respected. He expressed concern at the significant drop in the number of complaints submitted to the Committee from all regions, not believing that it was because of a suddenly greater respect for freedom of association. Lastly, he thanked the Committee's Chairperson, Professor Evance Kalula, his Committee colleagues and the staff of the Office for their expert and meticulous work.
684. **The Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Committee** expressed continuing gratitude to the Committee's Chairperson, Professor Evance Kalula, for his steady leadership, and to the Office team, his Worker and Government colleagues, and his fellow Employers, for their collective contributions to the work of the Committee. The Committee continued to set a good example of how social dialogue aiming for consensus could enable constructive resolutions to questions regarding freedom of association. He noted that the proper role of the Committee was both critically important and narrow in scope. On the one hand, the objective of its procedure was to engage in constructive tripartite dialogue to promote respect for the constitutional principle of freedom of association in law and in practice, while being cognizant of different national realities and legal systems. On the other, as set forth in its *Special procedures*, its task was limited to examining the allegations submitted to it.
685. The Committee's function was not to formulate general conclusions on freedom of association in individual countries on the basis of vague and general statements, but simply to evaluate specific allegations. Constructive dialogue based on specific facts required a sharp focus. The Committee should avoid language that suggested premature credibility determinations and should consider the facts alleged in the light of its charge. In the context of specific allegations and local circumstances, the Committee must resist the urge to make broad pronouncements, to thump the *Compilation* as if it were a bible of freedom of association doctrine, and to prescribe cookie-cutter resolutions. In formulating recommendations, the Committee must recognize progress even when more needed to be done, and must defer to and leverage local tripartite engagement and judicial processes where possible. He called for a more rigorous incorporation of that approach both in the Committee's discussions and in its final conclusions and recommendations.
686. In Case No. 3263 (Bangladesh), the complainants had alleged in October 2025 ongoing excessive violence against worker demonstrations. All of the alleged violence, however, had occurred before or in coincidence with the reaching in September 2024 of a tripartite 18-point agreement for improving labour relations at the country level, a point that had been made by the Government in connection with the allegations. Indeed, no violence had been alleged since that agreement had been reached. The conclusions recognized that subsidence while also noting the Government's failure to provide information regarding earlier instances of violence, one union's registration issues and other pending issues. The point was that the specific allegations mattered, not the complainants' general characterizations. The tripartite agreement appeared to have had a positive impact, even as the case remained serious and urgent.
687. In Case No. 3352 (Costa Rica), the complainants had raised issues pertaining to regulatory developments that had been subject to established national processes, including social dialogue, consultation with stakeholders and review by competent judicial authorities. Rather than allowing itself to be used as a third-instance tribunal, the Committee had properly

embraced the value of local tripartite consultation as the proper mechanism to calibrate balances of interest and encourage appropriate solutions. Case No. 2318 (Cambodia) was a long-standing serious and urgent case involving, among other things, the failure to execute a guilty judgment of murder almost 15 years previously. The Cambodian Government continued to whittle away at outstanding issues in the case, and he commended its engagement over the last few years. He called on the Government, however, to make every effort to follow through on enforcement so as to eliminate any sense of impunity for anti-union violence. At the same time, the Committee had declined to pursue further an issue relating to a wrongful confession of murder coerced through torture long ago. It did not condone torture and had said so. However, the record showed that the instance in question had not been related in any way to trade union activity or freedom of association, and however heinous, it was outside its mandate. The Committee had closed Cases Nos 3392 (a follow-up case) and 3481 (both concerning Peru), because the alleged facts demonstrated that no live dispute requiring the Committee's attention remained.

- 688. Turning to Belarus, and echoing the Committee's recommendations, he stressed that the document spoke for itself. He noted the complete lack of progress. Turning to the annual report, he emphasized that the work of the Committee remained robust, despite sharp drops in the overall number of cases filed from the unsustainable levels of filing in the first two decades of the century. The ILO should not draw immediate conclusions, but rather should carry out an evidence-based analysis of why the number of new cases had changed and why cases from Latin America predominated and how that might inform the ILO's work in Member States. He highlighted that 76 per cent of the cases filed in the past year involved claims of anti-union discrimination and 62 per cent concerned protection against acts of interference. Those matters were of concern to employers and workers alike, as robust and effective social dialogue depended on strong and independent parties coming to the table.
- 689. Lastly, he recommended that the Governing Body adopt the Committee's 413th Report and the report on Belarus, and that it take note of the Committee annual report.
- 690. **The Government Vice-Chairperson of the Committee** highlighted that the world of work was in a phase of profound sensitivity, marked by rapid transformation, widening disparities and intensifying pressures on fundamental rights. In that context, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were not merely abstract principles but constituted the foundational pillars upon which social justice and decent work rested, as enshrined in the ILO's Constitution and its core instruments.
- 691. Recalling that the Committee was entrusted with a distinct mandate to examine alleged infringements of those principles, he emphasized that the complaints procedure had never been conceived as a punitive mechanism. Nor did it seek to assign blame. Rather, its purpose was to cultivate a constructive tripartite dialogue that advanced respect for the rights of workers and employers both in law and in practice, while giving due regard to the diversity of national realities and legal systems. He nevertheless pointed out that a persistent challenge that impeded the effectiveness of the Committee's work: was that a notable number of governments continued to withhold timely and substantive responses to the requests transmitted by the Committee.
- 692. The persistent delays in or the absence of replies from governments undermined the integrity of the supervisory mechanism. Each delay prolonged the uncertainty faced by the complainants – workers and employers who had sought recourse through the procedure – and eroded the trust that was essential to tripartite cooperation. When governments remained silent or provided consistently late responses, the Committee's ability to deliver timely

conclusions and meaningful recommendations was severely compromised, leaving stakeholders in a state of uncertainty. Without singling out any region, he called for a collective reflection on whether underlying structural, institutional or capacity-related factors might be contributing to the imbalance.

693. His group stood ready to explore how enhanced technical assistance, targeted capacity-building and sustained dialogue could help address those disparities, ensuring that the Committee's work yielded tangible progress in all regions. He extended his appreciation to the Committee's Chairperson and to the social partners for their cordial engagement, and expressed his thanks to the Office.
694. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Peru recognized the independent technical work undertaken by the members of the Committee on Freedom of Association, particularly members from his region. GRULAC also welcomed the ongoing dialogue maintained by the group with Professor Evance Kalula, Chairperson of the Committee, and his team, which had been vital in exchanging points of view and expressing his group's concerns directly and constructively.
695. GRULAC followed with great interest developments in the cases in follow-up. In that regard, although he observed with satisfaction the closure of two cases involving Panama and Peru, he highlighted that the three cases in follow-up under examination by the Committee related to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since its creation, the greatest proportion of cases submitted to the Committee on Freedom of Association had related to his region, a result of, inter alia, the high number of Conventions ratified by Governments in the region and their commitment to the ILO's normative mandate. In the light of those considerations, GRULAC encouraged the ILO to continue promoting the ratification of international Conventions to increase the universality of the standards supervisory system and to provide an update on those efforts in future reports.
696. As indicated in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the 403rd Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association, 80 per cent of the cases in which partial information had been received from governments involved countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, while more than 70 per cent of the cases in which observations had been received from governments related to the region. In that context, GRULAC wished to highlight the high level of involvement of Latin American and Caribbean countries in the Committee's proceedings, which was reflected in the transmission of information, submission of observations and sustained interaction with the supervisory bodies. Although a significant proportion of the cases under examination continued to be concentrated in the region, GRULAC believed that situation must be analysed in the light of the high level of commitment, as well as the efforts being made by the Governments to strengthen their cooperation with the supervisory system and to respond within the deadlines set. Nevertheless, institutional challenges remained that required the ILO to continue to provide technical assistance to the constituents at their request as a key tool to prevent conflict, strengthen freedom of association and reduce legal action in labour relations. GRULAC reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening social dialogue in the region and would continue to promote initiatives to that end, in collaboration with the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. Lastly, he encouraged the Committee on Freedom of Association to continue to apply its working methods with rigour and to fulfil its mandate in an impartial and technically sound manner, which would contribute to the more effective management of the complaints procedure and the strengthening of the Organization's standards supervisory system.

- 697. A Government representative of China**, referring to Case No. 3406, said that the National Security Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China provided for the protection of human rights in safeguarding national security. The rights and freedoms of residents of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China continued to be protected. However, as in other countries and regions, the exercise of those rights must comply with the relevant laws and must not endanger national security, public order, public safety or the rights of others. In the case in question, the handling of the individuals concerned by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China was based on sufficient factual evidence and legal grounds and was in accordance with legal procedures. The central Government firmly supported the independent administration of justice by the judiciary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China and resolutely opposed any external interference in Hong Kong affairs. He requested the Committee to take an objective and impartial view of the implementation by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China of its obligations, based on the authoritative information provided, and to close the case at the earliest opportunity.
- 698. A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** took the floor concerning Case No. 2508. While expressing his respect for the efforts of the Committee and paying particular tribute to its distinguished Chairperson, he said that the Committee did not appear to have given adequate consideration to the responses submitted by the Iranian Government. The Government wished to state unequivocally that the individuals referred to in the Committee's reports had not been detained or convicted on account of any trade union activities. Their convictions had been handed down by competent courts of law on other lawful grounds. Furthermore, it was worth noting that the vast majority of individuals named in the Committee's reports had already been released from detention, a significant development that, regrettably, appeared to have gone unacknowledged by the Committee. He added that two foreign nationals had been convicted by the judiciary not for any trade union-related conduct, but solely on grounds of actions against national security. In that regard, his Government drew the Committee's attention to a matter of serious concern, namely the arbitrary arrest and lengthy imprisonment of Iranian citizen Ms Mahdieh Esfandiari in France, solely on account of her expressions of solidarity on social media with the oppressed people of the State of Palestine. His Government found it deeply troubling that the Committee had demonstrated no sensitivity whatsoever towards that flagrant violation.
- 699.** He then addressed the steps taken towards constructive engagement following the approval of the recommendations by the Committee of Application of Standards at the 111th Session (2023) of the International Labour Conference. The Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare had formally requested the Director-General to facilitate technical cooperation, particularly in the area of capacity-building for workers and employers' organizations through the dispatch of an official ILO mission to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Subsequently, the Ministry of International Affairs had held a virtual meeting with the Office. At the conclusion of that meeting, the Office had indicated that, following internal consultations, a decision on dispatching an official technical cooperation mission would be communicated at the follow-up meeting scheduled for late February 2026. Regrettably, the illegal and unprovoked military attack by the United States and Israel against the Islamic Republic of Iran on 28 February had disrupted the conditions necessary for initiating that cooperation. He concluded by expressing the Government's hope that, with the cessation of that blatant aggression against his country's territorial integrity and sovereignty, the ILO would be in a position to proceed with the provision of technical cooperation to the country, thereby contributing to the resolution of the concerns raised by the Committee in that regard.

- 700. A Government representative of the United States** indicated that her Government did not intend to engage in a politicized discussion or back-and-forth interventions on issues being discussed in other forums. She was, however, compelled to respond briefly to the remarks made by the Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The objective of the United States operations was to protect the American people, the United States forces and partners against threats posed by a regime that had, for decades, undermined United States and international security. The operations also created an opportunity for the Iranian people. She requested a return to the core technical work of the Governing Body.
- 701. A Government representative of Belarus**, authorized to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders on a matter concerning his Government, referred to the Committee's report on the measures taken by his Government to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. The Committee's assessments were far from a reflection of the real situation and that lack of objectivity was explained by the fact that the Belarusian case had initially been built on false and politically motivated accusations. While agreeing on the importance of dialogue, he indicated that the real state of affairs as reported by the Government had either been misinterpreted or ignored.
- 702.** The case of Belarus had already been considered by the Governing Body at the current session and a number of speakers had noted the politicization of the case, which went beyond the ILO's mandate, as had been stated repeatedly by the Government. Over a number of years, the Committee's conclusions and recommendations had been built around complaints received from an organization that called itself the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP). Representatives of that entity had made unfounded statements, distorted facts and passed off their illegal activities as trade union work. The BKDP did not exist either *de facto* or *de jure*. It had ceased its activities long before, had no members or primary associations and did not represent workers in Belarus. Its foreign-funded work focused on false narratives to justify illegal sanctions against Belarus. A few former leaders of the BKDP could not be considered a trade union association.
- 703.** He reiterated that the ILO bodies had no grounds for interacting with that structure and for considering information from it. While the Government had repeatedly provided the Committee with the necessary clarifications on all issues, that information had not been taken into account and the same recommendations based on false conclusions were still being issued. He stated that: Belarus respected the principle of freedom of association; its legislation and practices complied with international norms and accepted obligations; no one was persecuted for their trade union activities; and the work of real trade unions, which covered around 4 million workers, was encouraged. There was therefore no objective grounds for any other assessment. Pressure on Belarus through the ILO was unlawful and unconstructive and his Government called for an end to that pressure and a return to normal dialogue.

Decisions

413th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association

- 704. The Governing Body took note of the introduction to the Report of the Committee, contained in paragraphs 1–38, and adopted the recommendations made in paragraphs: 58 (Case No. 3269: Afghanistan); 91 (Case No. 3263: Bangladesh); 108 (Case No. 2318: Cambodia); 138 (Case No. 3406: China – Hong Kong Special Administrative Region); 158 (Case No. 3352: Costa Rica); 168 (Case No. 2923: El Salvador); 193 (Case No. 3488: Ecuador); 223 (Case No. 3505: Guatemala); 245 (Case No. 3403: Guinea); 261 (Case No. 2508: Islamic Republic of Iran); 293 (Case No. 3456: Panama); 367 (Case No. 3464: Peru);**

386 (Case No. 3481: Peru); 422 (Case No. 3465: Serbia); 443 (Case No. 3441: Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) and adopted the 413th Report of its Committee on Freedom of Association as a whole.

(GB.356/INS/18/1)

Presentation of the Committee on Freedom of Association annual report for the year 2025

705. The Governing Body took note of the ninth annual report of the Committee on Freedom of Association which covers the year 2025.

(GB.356/INS/18/1(Add.1), paragraph 4)

414th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association – Measures taken by the Government of Belarus to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry

706. The Governing Body approved the Committee's recommendations as set out in paragraph 33 of document GB.356/INS/18/2.

(GB.356/INS/18/2, paragraph 33)

19. Reports of the Director-General concerning institutional matters

19.1. First report: Documents submitted for information (GB.356/INS/19/1)

707. The Worker spokesperson said that her group took note of all the relevant information provided in the documents listed in the draft decision. Concerning the report on the status of pending representations submitted under article 24 of the ILO Constitution, she expressed deep concern regarding the persistent delays in the nomination of tripartite committees to examine the representations and reiterated the fundamental importance of that constitutional procedure within the ILO supervisory system. Her group had completed the designation of its representatives across all committees and urged the other groups to proceed as a matter of urgency with the nomination of their respective representatives: government representatives were missing in 14 committees and employer representatives in nine of them. The committees could not start examining representations until all their members were appointed and significant time had passed since certain representations had been declared receivable. The ongoing failure to establish those committees undermined the effectiveness of that special procedure and risked harming the credibility of the entire supervisory system. There had been no improvement since the Governing Body had amended the standing orders in March 2024 to require that committee members be appointed as soon as possible after a representation is declared receivable. The matter would need to be revisited if no progress was made.

708. The Workers' group noted that there had been two additional ratifications of the 1986 Instrument for the Amendment of the Constitution, though none from the members of chief industrial importance; three new ratifications of Convention No. 190; continued interest in the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), as shown by the recent ratification from the Dominican Republic, and increasing ratification rate of occupational safety and health instruments.

709. Finally, her group welcomed the senior appointments announced by the Director-General, extended best wishes to all appointees and expressed her group's willingness to have good cooperation.

710. The Employer spokesperson said that his group took note of the information presented in the documents listed in the draft decision.

711. A Government representative of the United States stated with regard to the implementation plan on the priorities defined in the Punta Cana Declaration, that as his country had not participated in the regional meeting nor in negotiations of the non-binding declaration, it could not endorse the declaration or any related implementation plan. He reaffirmed his Government's concerns regarding the use of certain language and emphasized the need to consider additional cost-saving measures related to international civil servant benefits. Nevertheless, he did not object to the Governing Body taking note of the documents submitted for information.

Decision

712. The Governing Body took note of the information contained in the following documents:

- Approved symposia, seminars, workshops and similar meetings ([GB.356/INS/INF/1](#));
- Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (Geneva, 1–13 December 2025) ([GB.356/INS/INF/2](#));
- Report on the status of pending representations submitted under article 24 of the ILO Constitution ([GB.356/INS/INF/3](#));
- The ILO's performance results under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ([GB.356/INS/INF/4](#));
- Update on the status of ratification of the 1986 Instrument for the Amendment of the Constitution of the ILO ([GB.356/INS/INF/5](#));
- Progress made in the elaboration of the implementation plan on the priorities defined in the Punta Cana Declaration ([GB.356/INS/INF/6](#));
- Developments in the United Nations system ([GB.356/INS/INF/7](#));
- Membership of the Organization and progress in international labour legislation ([GB.356/LILS/INF/1](#));
- Programme and Budget for 2026–27: Collection of contributions from 1 January 2026 to date ([GB.356/PFA/INF/1](#));
- Final report on the implementation of the Information Technology Strategy 2022–25 ([GB.356/PFA/INF/2](#));
- Update on the headquarters building renovation project ([GB.356/PFA/INF/3](#));
- Update on the premises for the ILO Regional Office for Africa and Country Office for Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Togo in Abidjan and for the ILO Country Office for Pakistan in Islamabad ([GB.356/PFA/INF/4](#));
- External audit plan ([GB.356/PFA/INF/5](#));
- Composition and structure of the staff at 31 December 2025 ([GB.356/PFA/INF/6](#));
- Report of the Board of Trustees of the Special Payments Fund ([GB.356/PFA/INF/7](#));
- Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2025 ([GB.356/PFA/INF/8](#));

- **Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the 81st session of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (2025)** (GB.356/PFA/INF/9);
 - **Report of the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Officer for the year ended 31 December 2025** (GB.356/PFA/INF/10);
 - **Senior appointments made by the Director-General** (GB.356/PFA/INF/11(Rev.1)).
- (GB.356/INS/19/1, paragraph 3)

19.2. Second report: Obituaries (GB.356/INS/19/2)

(The Governing Body paid tribute to the memory of Mr Michel Barde, former Employer member from Switzerland; Mr Firmin Ayessa, Minister of State for Civil Service, Labour and Social Security of the Congo, deputy Government member; and Mr George Kombo Ntonga Booke, former Worker member from the Congo.)

- 713. The Worker spokesperson** said that it was with deep respect and great sadness that the Workers' group paid tribute to their comrade George Kombo Ntonga Buke, who had been an important trade union leader and dedicated his life to promoting workers' rights, civic commitment and social progress throughout a remarkable career. He had embodied the values of solidarity and service to the world of work in his role as General Secretary of the National Union of Workers of Zaire (UNTZA), and played a central role in organizing and representing workers during a key period of the country's history. When serving as Worker member of the Governing Body between 1987 and 1993, he had represented workers with conviction and defended social justice and social dialogue. On behalf of the African and international trade union movements, the Workers' group expressed sincere condolences to his family and colleagues. His legacy of ongoing commitment to human dignity, respect, and collective emancipation would continue to inspire future generations.
- 714. The Employer spokesperson** stated his group's sadness for the death of Mr Michel Barde who had played a key role in representing enterprises in French-speaking Switzerland for 25 years as General Secretary of their federation. Mr Barde had been a dedicated member of the Governing Body from 1995 to 2011, representing Swiss employers, and served as Regional Vice-President for Europe in the IOE. He had contributed actively to tripartite dialogue and to shaping employers' positions on key international labour issues, particularly within ILO debates and as Employer spokesperson in the Programme, Financial and Administrative Section. His leadership and commitment had earned him broad respect within the international employers' community and his colleagues remembered him as a thoughtful and principled advocate for social dialogue who strongly believed in tripartite cooperation. The ILO and the IOE extended their sincere condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues.
- 715. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of the Niger highlighted Mr Ayessa's firm commitment to Africa and recalled his participation in a high-level panel at the Forum of the Global Coalition for Social Justice in 2025, where his contribution had enriched the debate, outlining his country's vision for accelerating social justice, especially for youth and women. The Africa group extended its sincere condolences to his family and to the people and Government of the Congo.
- 716. A Government representative of the Congo** thanked the Africa group for the message of condolence. He said that Minister Ayessa, a firm defender of ILO values, had marked his country's history serving as Director of the President's Cabinet, as Deputy Prime Minister and as a national member of Parliament. Under his leadership, the Congo had served as a deputy

member of the Governing Body, ratified international labour Conventions, concluded a decent work programme, been designated as a pilot country within the Global Coalition for Social Justice, and become a pioneer in Alliance 8.7. Endorsing the statement delivered by Niger on behalf of the Africa group, he expressed gratitude for the tribute paid to Mr Ayuso and for the messages of condolence received.

19.3. Third Report: Report of the Committee set up to examine the representation alleging non-observance by Serbia of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131) (GB.356/INS/19/3)

(The Governing Body considered this report in its private sitting.)

Decision

717. In the light of the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report of the Committee contained in document GB.356/INS/19/3, the Governing Body:

- (a) approved the report of the Committee;
- (b) requested the Government of Serbia to provide, no later than 1 September 2026, a report on the application of the Convention for examination by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations at its 2026 session, including information on the follow-up given to the Committee's conclusions and recommendations;
- (c) decided to make the report publicly available and to close the representation procedure.

(GB.356/INS/19/3, paragraph 9)

19.4. Fourth Report: Report of the Committee set up to examine the representation alleging non-observance by Uruguay of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 (GB.356/INS/19/4)

(The Governing Body considered this report in its private sitting.)

Decision

718. In the light of the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report of the Committee contained in document GB.356/INS/19/4, the Governing Body:

- (a) approved the report of the Committee;
- (b) requested the Government of Uruguay to take into account, in the context of the application of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the observations made in paragraph 25;
- (c) requested the Government to provide information in that regard for review by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations;
- (d) decided to make the report publicly available and to close the representation procedure.

(GB.356/INS/19/4, paragraph 9)

20. Reports of the Officers of the Governing Body

20.1. First report: Action to be taken regarding the election and appointment of the Director-General (GB.356/INS/20/1(Rev.1))

- 719. The Employer spokesperson** said that he appreciated the clear presentation of the two options, both of which were compatible with the applicable rules and past practice and would allow the election to be completed within the current Governing Body mandate and in a fair manner. The question was one of timing and sequencing. His group saw certain practical advantages of holding the election earlier in the cycle, meaning in November 2026. An early election would provide greater institutional clarity and predictability, supporting continuity in the work of the Organization, which was particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing discussions on the future direction of the Organization, particularly with regard to the ILO reform. The vision for the future of the ILO, which would be proposed by the candidates, was closely linked to the reform process, so it made sense to hold the elections in parallel to the discussion on the ILO reform. Holding the election in November would allow the Director-General elect to engage at an earlier stage in the preparation of the Programme and Budget for 2028–29. The sequencing would help to ensure alignment between the strategic direction proposed for the Organization and the leadership responsible for implementing it. The Employers' group saw merit in an early election, particularly in terms of governance sequencing, engagement with candidates and alignment with upcoming strategic discussions. It remained open to listening to the perspectives of other constituents and to working towards a solution that commanded broad support.
- 720. The Worker spokesperson** said that she welcomed the document containing the two options. It was important to consider the elections to be held during the coming year in the context of the current situation of considerable volatility worldwide and the need to ensure the stability of the Organization. It was necessary to find out if the current Director-General would be available for the following term, and he would clarify that when he considered it appropriate. A time-efficient process was needed. It would be useful to have clarity on the near future, who would be leading the reform and who would be preserving the ILO's core mandate in such difficult times. Following extensive debate, her group also saw merit in an early date, November 2026, and acknowledged the additional pressure that that placed on the Governing Body, which already had a full agenda. It would mean additional time and energy within a short time frame, including from the Director-General if he were to run again and from other candidates. A fair procedure must be ensured. It was of utmost importance to have consensus on the matter, to ensure that the election process began in a situation of moving forward together jointly and not in a situation of having to vote on one outcome or the other, which would be disastrous. Once it had heard other views, her group would finalize its position.
- 721. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Libya said that the Africa group had closely followed the reforms discussed by the Governing Body in its recent sessions and the establishment of the principle of public interactive events with candidates, thereby encouraging transparency and openness. The group recommended the adoption of option A, November 2026, in accordance with the dates and detailed procedures set out in the document. The fundamental considerations behind its position were that option A: reflected the reforms discussed by the Governing Body in recent sessions; achieved financial and administrative efficiency by integrating the elections into a regular session of the Governing Body, thereby reducing costs and sparing the Organization additional burdens; provided early clarity regarding the new leadership of the Organization, thereby ensuring institutional

stability; and granted a sufficient transitional period before the beginning of the new mandate in October 2027. Option A reflected the Organization's commitment to good governance, transparency and ethical standards with regard to the electoral rules, while strengthening the confidence of Member States in the integrity of the electoral process. The group's support for option A was based on solid, legal and institutional grounds, and reflected its keenness for the ILO to be a global model of good governance, transparency and adherence to the standards associated with the electoral rules. On a personal note, he expressed the hope that there would be no last-minute surprises when it came to voting.

- 722. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Paraguay expressed GRULAC's support for option B regarding the timetable for the election of the Director-General. It was fundamental to preserve a predictable process that provided constituents with the necessary time for a substantive, enriching discussion about the candidates, facilitating a more comprehensive assessment of their profiles, vision and proposals. Moreover, it was important to avoid any possible overlaps in the running of the Office. Given the complex circumstances facing the Organization, it was important to maintain clarity in leadership and institutional management.
- 723. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Germany welcomed the continued emphasis on upholding the highest standards of fairness, integrity and ethical conduct in line with the revised Rules governing the appointment of the Director-General. IMEC attached particular importance to the ethical safeguards in the revised Rules, including transparency around campaign activities, the neutrality and the impartiality of the Office, and the prohibition of the use of ILO resources in support of any candidature. IMEC appreciated the choice of two options for the timing of the elections, namely the 358th or 359th Sessions, and recognized that both had advantages and disadvantages. Both options sensibly sought to avoid the cost and logistical burden of an additional special meeting.
- 724.** The shorter timeline, with an election in November 2026, provided for an earlier conclusion of the process and earlier leadership certainty. Holding the elections in 2026 shortened the normal candidacy window, compressed preparation and vetting periods, and could create unnecessary pressure on constituents and candidates. The longer timeline, with an election in March 2027, allowed for candidates to come forward and be evaluated and for the selection to be made, following the successful practice of the 2022 election. IMEC's initial preference was for option B – holding the election in March 2027 was the more appropriate and coherent choice. The timetable ensured greater continuity and allowed the incoming Director-General to assume their responsibilities with minimal uncertainty; it helped to keep the campaign period within reasonable bounds; and it allowed the programme and budget discussion in November 2026 to proceed with a full focus on content, without the pressure of an imminent election. The election would then take place at the same session as the final decision on the budget level, creating a coherent and procedurally aligned sequence between budget finalization and leadership transition. That timetable provided a shorter transition period of only six months before the new Director-General took office on 1 October 2027.
- 725.** Option A, for the election to be held in November 2026, entailed a more compressed timetable than option B, which would reduce the time available for the greatest possible range of candidates to consider declaring their candidacy, to engage with constituents and to be assessed in depth by members as to their suitability and qualifications, and could place greater pressure on the practical organization of the election. It was important to maintain the transparent, inclusive and competitive process in which all ILO Member States and constituents had meaningful opportunities to interact with candidates, including through a public interactive event, consistent with the good practice developed at the previous election.

IMEC attached particular value to arrangements that ensured the equal treatment of all candidates, including balanced opportunities to present and be scrutinized on their vision and equitable questioning across the four regions. IMEC was confident that such public interactions would continue to enhance the transparency, inclusiveness and overall quality of the electoral process to the benefit of all constituents. It stood ready to engage constructively with all groups to finalize the arrangements for the interactive event, the private hearings and the in-person secret ballot, with a view to ensuring a credible process that commanded the confidence of the entire membership.

- 726. Speaking on behalf of the Arab group**, a Government representative of Tunisia said that the Arab group emphasized the importance of an electoral process characterized by credibility and transparency, ensuring equality of opportunity and giving Member States the opportunity to adequately assess the candidates. Regarding the timetable, the Arab group supported option A, namely for elections to be held in November 2026. That option offered a suitable and balanced time frame, which allowed the elections to be organized in a time-effective manner, and which was aligned with past practice. The group would welcome a public interactive event. Integrity, impartiality and transparency must be assured throughout the electoral process, particularly with regard to campaign conduct and the good use of resources.
- 727. Speaking on behalf of the GCC countries**, a Government representative of Oman thanked the Director-General and his team for their continued efforts in fulfilling the Organization's mandate, particularly in light of current challenges. Having reviewed the options proposed for the timetable for the election of the Director-General, the countries of the GCC considered that option A, providing for the election to be held in November 2026, was the most appropriate one. It would help to limit the length of the election campaign and ensure that the Organization's attention was not diverted from the implementation of its core tasks, particularly in light of the structural reform processes under way. It would also provide a balanced and smooth transition of leadership. Regarding the proposed arrangements for candidates and the mechanisms for their evaluation, he welcomed the approach combining public events and private hearings, striking a balance between transparency and the in-depth assessment of candidates. He confirmed his group's support for the draft decision and the time frame under option A and expressed the hope for a transparent and interactive election process worthy of the status of the ILO, which would contribute to strengthening its mandate and fulfilling its commitments towards the social partners.
- 728. A Government representative of Brazil** said that it was the responsibility of the Governing Body to ensure that electoral processes conducted under its authority were fundamentally democratic, inclusive and duly informed. Holding the election in March 2027 would better serve those objectives. That timeline would help ensure that such an important decision was taken with sufficient time for all procedural steps to be carried out in a careful and orderly manner. It was important to recall that the agenda for the remainder of the year already included several complex and demanding processes, including the follow-up to the ILO reform process and to contingency measures to be adopted in case of income shortfall, and the process for determining Members of chief industrial importance. He noted that the next term would only begin in October 2027 and that the programme and budget for the next biennium would be fully developed and approved during the current term. Also, he envisaged no risk to continuity in respect of the reform until at least that date.
- 729. A Government representative of Mozambique** expressed gratitude for the two options presented for the timeline for the election of the next Director-General. The availability of alternatives allowed for a more informed assessment of the most appropriate option for the Organization. He welcomed the fact that the process had been planned well in advance,

ensuring transparency, fairness and respect for the established electoral rules. It was positive that the possibility of holding public interactive events with the candidates had been included as that strengthened social dialogue and built trust among constituents. As the term of office of the current Director-General would end in September 2027, Mozambique considered that there was sufficient time to conduct a well-organized electoral process without haste while also avoiding unnecessary costs. Mozambique supported option A, namely to hold the election in November 2026, as it provided more time for candidates to present themselves, allowed for better preparation of the transition process and avoided additional costs associated with holding extraordinary elections. A well-planned, inclusive and transparent electoral process was essential for the credibility of the ILO and for strengthening the institution in the future.

- 730. A Government representative of Mexico** acknowledged the ongoing effort to strengthen the transparency, fairness and ethical integrity of the process, which were particularly relevant in the current context of reform. The election process should guarantee legitimacy, the effective participation of the tripartite constituents and an appropriate space for the exchange of visions, avoiding placing additional demands or strain on the agenda of the Governing Body. Mexico welcomed the options presented and considered that option B, to hold the election in March 2027, offered an appropriate balance between institutional predictability and consistency with recent ILO practice. That alternative kept the election within the mandate of the current Governing Body before the elections scheduled in June 2027. Option B, as well as reducing the campaign period, a concern expressed by several members, reduced the need for hasty decisions regarding formats and modalities, particularly in a complex international environment. Mexico considered that the election process should be an example of effective tripartism aligned with fundamental ILO values and the ILO's ability to respond to the challenges of the future of work. Mexico supported the approach of option B and remained open to constructive dialogue and consensus-building.
- 731. A Government representative of Uzbekistan** said that it was essential for the election process to be conducted in a way that ensured clarity, broad participation and confidence among all constituents, while remaining practical and manageable within the overall work of the Governing Body. Her preference was to hold the election in March 2027, option B. That approach provided a reasonable time frame for all stakeholders to adequately prepare and engage, including through internal consultations and constructive exchanges on the priorities of the Organization; it supported the orderly sequencing of decisions; it would help to avoid unnecessary procedural or scheduling constraints, particularly in light of the broader Governing Body calendar; and it would allow the process to unfold in a structured and predictable manner, contributing to institutional stability and continuity. The selection of the Director-General should reflect the Organization's capacity to operate through dialogue, mutual respect and balanced consideration of all perspectives. Uzbekistan remained open to working with all partners towards a shared understanding and a smooth and credible process.
- 732. A Government representative of Türkiye** said that Türkiye was inclined to support option A, which appeared to provide a timely and balanced basis for the Governing Body to take a decision on the matter, while also offering a stronger basis for continuity and institutional stability. A November election could provide a useful transition period, allowing the Director-General elect to prepare the next mandate in a structured and effective way. Compressing the timeline into early 2027 could limit that capacity. Previous reappointments of the Director-General had taken place in November, reflecting a more streamlined and proportional process when continuity was expected. Option A appeared to be in line with past practice. Extending the timeline into 2027 could unnecessarily lengthen the process and create overlap with other key institutional milestones. There did not appear to be a strong reason to defer the decision.

An early election may help to support good governance, reduce uncertainty and contribute to the credibility of the process.

- 733. A Government representative of the United States** underscored the importance of a transparent, fair and predictable process for electing the next Director-General. He appreciated the Office's clear presentation of the two proposed timelines, noting that both were consistent with the rules governing the process. He appreciated the discussion and the multiple views expressed. He understood the rationale presented for considering moving up the election to an earlier timeline. However, having considered the discussion and the various options on balance, the United States believed that March 2027 provided a well-established and balanced approach within a reasonable time frame. That timeline provided adequate time for candidates, aligned with past practice and supported a thorough and orderly consultation and vetting process. He supported the continued use of the public interactive event format, which had proven effective in promoting broad engagement and transparency. He underscored the importance of adhering to the ethical standards set out in the rules, including the prohibition of improper influence and the need to ensure equal treatment of all candidates throughout the process. The United States supported the adoption of the draft decision, option B.
- 734. A Government representative of Bangladesh** said that Bangladesh supported option A.
- 735. A Government representative of Colombia** endorsed the statements delivered by Brazil and Mexico. If the current Director-General were not to stand for re-election, something that was not yet known, he asked if there was a tradition of rotating the leadership on a regional basis. He supported the option of March 2027, because it would provide sufficient time for reflection and would not interfere with other pressing items on the Governing Body agenda. There were currently many important matters to deal with, a situation of budgetary stress, the reform and measures to be taken urgently in view of contributions yet to be received. He asked if regional rotation would be a consideration if an election were held with other candidates.
- 736. The Chairperson** noted that two questions were being asked. The first was whether the current Director-General would be standing for re-election. The second was whether, if the current Director-General did not stand for re-election, there was a geographical rotation in the appointment of a Director-General that would mean that the next Director-General would come from another continent.
- 737. A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, External and Corporate Relations Cluster) said that she was not in a position to say whether the Director-General would be running for re-election or whether regional rotation had taken place. She did not know whether there had been competitive processes with candidates from other regions when Juan Somavia and Guy Ryder had been re-elected.
- 738. The Chairperson** asked the Legal Adviser whether there was a geographical rotation of Directors-General.
- 739. A representative of the Director-General** (Legal Adviser) said that the Rules governing the appointment of the Director-General were contained in Annex III of the Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. There was no regional rotation stipulated in those Rules. The practice of the Directors-General who had been elected since 1919 confirmed that there was no such regional rotation.
- 740. A Government representative of Colombia** said that to date there had been no women Directors-General and, in the context of discussions on gender and women, he suggested that women should be encouraged to stand as candidates in any election for the role.

- 741. The Chairperson** provided an overview of the room. The Employers and Workers were in favour of November 2026 but remained open. The Africa group, the Arab group and the countries of the GCC were in favour of November, as were Mozambique, Türkiye and Bangladesh. GRULAC and IMEC were in favour of March 2027, as were Brazil, Uzbekistan, the United States, Colombia and Mexico, which also showed flexibility.
- 742.** Regarding the question asked by Colombia as to whether the current Director-General was standing for re-election, she said that the information could only be provided officially on the day that applications opened, even if the Director-General were to express his views prior to that.
- 743.** Given that the room was divided, and not wishing for a vote on the issue, she proposed postponing the discussion to allow the groups time for reflection and consultations.
- (The Governing Body resumed its discussion of the item at a later sitting.)*
- 744. The Worker spokesperson** said that the opportunity for further reflection had been helpful. She confirmed the position of her group, saying that its preference for November had been for reasons of historical logic, including the need for stability going forward in a very volatile and turbulent geopolitical situation.
- 745. The Employer spokesperson** said that his group's preference for November had been for numerous reasons, including to ensure that the ILO reform went hand in hand with the election. He understood that the room was quite divided and believed that it was important to seek consensus. His group remained flexible and was happy to seek common solutions. If there was any concern that the deadline in the November scenario was too short for candidates to find supporters and Governing Body members to develop their campaigns, then a compromise could be to extend the deadline for applications. The Office would need to manage the situation. He would welcome comments from other groups.
- 746. The Chairperson** invited the Office to comment on the proposal to extend the application deadline. She asked whether it was possible and until which date.
- 747. The Clerk of the Governing Body** said that for option A the deadline for the receipt of applications was 30 July. It could be extended until 31 August without prejudice to the provisions of the applicable rules, which required a minimum of two months' notice between the closing date for nominations and the elections. The date of the interactive event, originally scheduled for 16 September, would need to be reviewed, and perhaps postponed until the following week.
- 748. The Chairperson** noted that there would be the possibility of keeping the date of the Governing Body of November 2026 for the election, with the proposal made by the Employers to extend from 30 July and the Rules permitting an extension until 31 August. The candidates' hearings would be held on 23 September instead of 16 September. That proposal was on the table and should be taken into account in subsequent statements.
- 749. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Germany thanked all groups for the constructive exchange of views. Its initial preference had been for option B. It had been listening carefully and remained fully committed to engaging constructively in the discussion. It was important to reach consensus on the item. IMEC members might wish to take the floor in their national capacity.
- 750. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Paraguay said that GRULAC maintained its preference for option B and was very open to dialogue and seeking a path towards consensus.

- 751. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Libya noted that the essence of the document was to discuss the process of electing and appointing the Director-General of the ILO. The document presented two options for proposed schedules to choose from. It did not revolve around the specificities of candidature or invite discussion on the details of possible nomination. The Africa group affirmed its preference for option A, as it had been the precedent in the Organization and had so far proved efficient. There seemed to be no compelling reason to depart from it. The November session of the Governing Body was the better option because the March 2027 session would have a heavy agenda. He urged the room to discuss the matter at hand and decide on an efficient option that better served the Organization. Candidacy was not being dealt with at present.
- 752. A Government representative of Uzbekistan** said that Uzbekistan aligned itself with the emerging consensus and supported the majority view in favour of holding the election in November.
- 753. Speaking on behalf of the Arab group**, a Government representative of Tunisia reiterated that the preferred option was to hold the election in November.
- 754. Speaking on behalf of the GCC countries**, a Government representative of Oman reiterated its position in support of option A.
- 755. A Government representative of Libya** said that he aligned with the Government representative of Oman, speaking on behalf of the GCC countries, in support of option A.
- 756. A Government representative of the United States** said that he had appreciated the opportunity to further consider and return to the discussion. On balance, the United States continued to believe that March 2027 provided a well-established and practical approach within a reasonable time frame. It continued to support option B. The timeline provided adequate time for candidates, aligned with past practice and supported a thorough and orderly consultation and vetting process. He expressed the hope that a consensus path forward could be reached.
- 757. The Chairperson** invited IMEC to clarify what it meant by “consensus”.
- 758. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Germany said that at the current stage of the process the group had no official position. IMEC members might wish to take the floor in their national capacity.
- 759. The Chairperson** said that, following consultations with the secretariat, some more time could be allowed for a consensus to be built, as she wished at all costs to avoid holding a vote on the subject. One consensus solution had been put forward by the Employers. She said that consensus solutions should be practical rather than philosophical and invited all groups to meet and try to reconcile their points of view. In addition to meeting within groups, she invited groups to meet each other, to try to reconcile their views in order to decide together on November or March, and, if it were November, to decide on the practical arrangements.
- 760. The Employer spokesperson** suggested that the Office could share the compromise proposal of making the closure of the call for candidatures later so that all the groups could consult it and elaborate on it.
- 761. The Chairperson** recalled that the proposal involved the closure of the call for candidatures being extended from 30 July to 31 August and for the hearings of candidates being extended from 16 September to 23 September.

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

- 762. The Chairperson** expressed the hope that consensus would soon be reached.
- 763. The Worker spokesperson** said that her group considered the proposal made by the Employers' group to be amenable to possible ideas. The timetable had perhaps been extremely tight in terms of the preparations for a possible vote in November. The proposal could help find consensus regarding the timetable. Her group would consider supporting the Employers' proposal if that helped to find consensus and a way forward.
- 764. The Employer spokesperson** agreed on the need for consensus. He expressed the hope that the proposed compromise would be supported by Governments.
- 765. A Government representative of Canada** said that Canada preferred option B. A process that would allow both appropriate candidates to come forward and be evaluated, and selection to be made was crucial to the good governance of the Organization. However, Canada was open to consensus.
- 766. A Government representative of the United Kingdom** noted its sincere appreciation for the exchanges on the item. The United Kingdom wished to underline the importance of the decision on the process for electing the next Director-General being taken at the current session of the Governing Body and being taken by consensus. A vote on the issue, no matter the outcome, would be highly regrettable and could pose a risk to the confidence that members must have in the overall election process. The United Kingdom expressed its sincere hope that all members of the Governing Body would therefore demonstrate the maximum possible flexibility so that a consensus decision could be made. While its preferred outcome remained option B in order to better ensure a well-prepared, coherent and transparent election process, it had noted the range of views expressed on the issue and emphasized its own full flexibility to join consensus based on the emerging majority view, whether it was option A as originally proposed, option A as amended by the Employers' group or option B.
- 767.** Speaking on behalf of a group of countries, consisting of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a Government representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands said that her group had been listening carefully and was fully committed to engaging constructively in the discussion. It was essential to reach consensus on the issue and her group could support an emerging consensus around the compromise proposal.
- 768. A Government representative of the Congo** said that option A was the best option in light of the current context and the challenges facing the Organization. Given that the discussion of the Programme and Budget for 2028–29 would be held in March 2027, and taking into account the current turbulent and challenging international climate, the Congo confirmed its choice of option A.
- 769. A Government representative of Germany** said that it was especially important for the decision to be taken by consensus. As others had said, a vote would be the worst-case scenario, and Germany would like to be in a position to achieve consensus on the issue. Its position was leaning towards option A. However, it was open and would not stand in the way of consensus, which would be the ideal outcome. Germany was in favour of option A, November, with full flexibility in order to achieve consensus.
- 770. A Government representative of Mexico** welcomed the options presented and the efforts made to find a path to consensus. Mexico continued to think that option B, with an election in March 2027, offered an appropriate balance between institutional predictability and consistency with the most recent ILO practice. While Mexico remained open to considering objective arguments in favour of option A, for the time being, until it heard more convincing

arguments, it remained in favour of option B. Mexico's clear preference was for such an important decision for the ILO to be taken through the path of consensus only.

- 771. A Government representative of Colombia** said that Colombia would prefer option B for various reasons and because it believed that the process should not be accelerated, giving everyone sufficient time to reflect. He understood and agreed with the importance of consensus in such a decision, saying that consensus called for flexibility.
- 772. The Employer spokesperson** noted that the majority was in favour of option A. In order to achieve the compromise everyone sought, his group had proposed reviewing the timeline to ensure fair chances for candidates. A number of European countries had shown flexibility and were able to support the amended draft decision. It appeared that only three countries were still insisting on option B and all three had clearly indicated that they wished to compromise. He took it that they could support the draft decision as amended as a compromise. Alternatively, he invited them to propose another compromise.
- 773. The Worker spokesperson** said that her group fully respected the various views expressed in the room, the fact that everybody wanted an election process that was supported by the whole Organization, that no one wished for a vote on the procedure, and that there could be different views on what was the most appropriate time in terms of fairness and transparency. She recommended moving forward with the emerging convergence of positions and adopting the revised draft decision.
- 774. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh noted the emerging consensus and said that ASPAG would be flexible regarding the Employers' amendment.
- 775. The Chairperson** provided an overview of the room. There was a proposal by the Workers and the Employers in favour of an amended option A. Many Governments were in favour of option B – Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico and Colombia; consequently, there was not a vast majority in favour of option A. She had also heard that all those in favour of option B were flexible. She therefore proposed asking which members opposed the draft decision, as amended, and the emerging consensus. Two groups, the Workers and the Employers, were in favour of the amended option A, and some countries had also said they were in favour – the Congo, Germany and six countries represented by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. She asked which members were opposed to the draft decision, as amended.
- 776. A Government representative of the United States** reiterated that its preference was for option B, but it could be flexible.

Decision

- 777. The Governing Body decided to apply the following timetable for the appointment of the Director-General and approved the arrangements for the public interactive event with candidates, as well as for the private hearings and the election described in Appendix I to document GB.356/INS/20/1(Rev.1):**

15 April 2026	The Chairperson of the Governing Body calls for candidatures
31 August 2026	Deadline for the receipt of candidatures
23 September 2026	Public interactive event with all candidates (which could be extended by one more day depending on the number of candidates)

358th Session (November 2026)**Monday, 9 November****Candidate(s) hearings in private sitting****Monday, 16 November****Election by secret ballot in private sitting****1 October 2027****The term of office of the Director-General commences**

(GB.356/INS/20/1(Rev.1), paragraph 18, as amended by the Governing Body)

20.2. Second report: Arrangements for the 15th African Regional Meeting (GB.356/INS/20/2)

778. The Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, proposed by the Africa group, which had been circulated by the Office. It read:

16. Noting with appreciation the actions taken by the Office to prepare for the 15th African Regional Meeting, which will be held in Windhoek, Namibia, and considering that a tripartite Steering Committee has been set up with a view to finalizing the agenda and preparing the draft outcome document of the Meeting, ~~The Governing Body, on the recommendation of its Officers:~~

- (a) approved the proposed dates, venue, composition and overall ~~agenda and arrangements for the 15th African Regional Meeting, subject to the availability of financial resources proposed in document GB.356/INS/20/2;~~
- (b) ~~deferred the final decision on~~ decided that the detailed agenda and arrangements for the meeting ~~would be considered at~~ its 357th Session (June 2026).

779. The Worker spokesperson welcomed the generous offer of the Government of Namibia to host the 15th African Regional Meeting and requested an update on the technical discussions following the recent ILO mission to the country. Sufficient time should be allocated to meetings of the Workers' group when devising the programme of work. While her group welcomed the establishment and expansion of the tripartite Steering Committee, it would welcome clarification of how the Committee would ensure the effective participation of national social partners, particularly given the shortened timelines. Tripartite ownership must extend to the substantive content of discussions. Preparations for the Meeting should be anchored in the ILO's constitutional mandate and strategic framework, as well as developments at the Conference. The report on the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy should be presented and discussed at the Meeting.

780. The Report of the Director-General should be discussed through tripartite panels rather than in plenary sittings; that change would contribute significantly to time management, improve dialogue and ensure alignment with the new modalities of regional meetings. She requested clarity on the criteria used in relation to side events and partner engagements and the specific modalities for engaging UN partners, international financial institutions, regional economic communities and civil society within the high-level segment and thematic panels or round tables; such panels would be welcome provided that they related to labour challenges.

781. Her group supported the amendment proposed by the Africa group, which made clear that regional meetings, as statutory bodies established under the ILO Constitution, should not be subject to the availability of funds. The decision to organize the 15th African Regional Meeting should, therefore, have been taken at the November 2025 session of the Governing Body, and any further delays risked undermining its credibility and the Namibian Government's preparations. Although her group recognized the Organization's financial constraints, it believed that they must not undermine constitutional obligations or established tripartite

processes. She therefore supported the approval of the proposed arrangements at the present Governing Body session and requested that an update on progress be provided at its next session.

- 782. The Employer spokesperson** noted with appreciation the offer of the Government of Namibia to host the Meeting. Her group supported the agenda's focus on the profound transformations to the world of work in Africa, which built directly on the Abidjan Declaration of 2019 by offering an opportunity to assess what had been achieved and what remained to be done. Skills development merited particular attention since the skills gap remained one of the most significant structural constraints on enterprise growth and employment creation in Africa. Closing the gap required coordinated action by employers, workers and governments. Meaningful discussion of social justice in Africa must engage directly with the conditions under which enterprises could grow, formalize and create decent and productive employment.
- 783.** Her group expected to be meaningfully engaged in the tripartite Steering Committee from the outset and trusted that employers would be adequately represented in the Committee's work. Working sessions must be organized efficiently and with a clear structure to produce substantive outcomes. The lessons learned from the introduction of the tripartite Steering Committee model for regional meetings should be considered. The Employers' and Workers' groups would require adequate financial support to participate meaningfully in any physical meetings organized as part of preparations for the Regional Meeting. She supported the amendment to the draft decision proposed by the Africa group.
- 784. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of the Niger thanked the Government of Namibia for offering to host the 15th African Regional Meeting. Such meetings constituted regional conferences as provided for in article 38 of the ILO Constitution. As well as satisfying a legal requirement, they offered a unique forum to discuss and define the region's political and technical priorities from the point of view of the ILO's mandate, in a tripartite setting. His group hoped that the 15th African Regional Meeting would achieve outcomes similar to its previous iteration, which had resulted in the Abidjan Declaration, a vital frame of reference for the work of constituents and the Office. He welcomed the planned high-level segment and technical thematic panels.
- 785.** The Africa group had proposed an amendment to the draft decision because, given the regional meeting's statutory status and the Namibian Government's need for clarity and certainty, the Meeting could not be subject to the availability of financial resources. He invited the Director-General to prioritize the organization of the Meeting.
- 786. A Government representative of Namibia,** recalling that the 15th African Regional Meeting constituted a strategic commitment to advancing social justice, decent work and inclusive development across Africa, reaffirmed her Government's full commitment to hosting it on the proposed dates. She welcomed the continued implementation of the new modalities for regional meetings and strongly supported the proposed focus of the Report of the Director-General on the profound transformations shaping the world of work in Africa. She also welcomed the planned reflection on the progress made since the 14th African Regional Meeting.
- 787.** Her Government welcomed the establishment of a tripartite Steering Committee, which would ensure strong ownership by the African constituents. It would work closely with the Office, employer and worker representatives and Member States represented on the Committee to ensure that the Regional Meeting reflected the priorities and aspirations of the African region, through an inclusive, transparent and results-oriented process. The ILO technical mission to Namibia in February 2026 had been instrumental in reviewing logistical and technical aspects

and aligning expectations. Her Government would work with the Office to meet all requirements and was committed to providing a secure, efficient and hospitable environment for delegates.

788. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG, a Government representative of Bangladesh supported the amendment to the draft decision proposed by the Africa group.

789. A representative of the Director-General (Director, Official Relations, Meetings and Language Services Department) said that preparations for the Meeting were well under way. Due consideration would be given to ensuring tripartite participation and engagement in developing the agenda and discussion formats. The first meeting of the tripartite Steering Committee would take place in April 2026, and the agenda of the Meeting was therefore yet to be finalized; full details would be provided at the Governing Body's June 2026 session to allow participants sufficient time to prepare. As the Meeting was being organized in a context of reduced financial resources, effort was being made to cut travel costs and maximize the use of available funds. All preparatory meetings would be held remotely, which would both reduce costs and facilitate participation. Consideration would be given to the financial assistance that could be provided to assist constituents' participation. While participation in regional meetings was funded by governments, the Office would endeavour to reduce additional expenses and respond to calls for inclusiveness.

Decision

790. Noting with appreciation the actions taken by the Office to prepare for the 15th African Regional Meeting, which will be held in Windhoek, Namibia, and considering that a tripartite Steering Committee has been set up with a view to finalizing the agenda and preparing the draft outcome document of the meeting, the Governing Body, on the recommendation of its Officers:

- (a) **approved the proposed dates, venue, composition and overall arrangements for the 15th African Regional Meeting proposed in document GB.356/INS/20/2;**
- (b) **decided that the detailed agenda and arrangements for the meeting would be considered at its 357th Session (June 2026).**

(GB.356/INS/20/2, paragraph 16, as amended by the Governing Body)

20.3. Third report: Intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations to be invited as observers to ILO official meetings

Decision

791. The Governing Body, on the recommendation of its Officers, authorized the Director-General to invite the intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations listed in the appendix to document GB.356/INS/20/3, as observers, to the 114th Session (2026) of the International Labour Conference and to other ILO official meetings.

(GB.356/INS/20/3, paragraph 9)

20.4. Fourth report: Representation alleging non-observance by Mexico of the Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95) (GB.356/INS/20/4)

(The Governing Body considered this report in its private sitting.)

Decision

- 792. In the light of the information contained in document GB.356/INS/20/4, and taking into consideration the recommendation of its Officers, the Governing Body decided that the representation was receivable and that it would be examined by the tripartite committee set up to examine the representation alleging non-observance by Mexico of Convention No. 95 declared receivable in March 2025.**

(GB.356/INS/20/4, paragraph 6)

Closing remarks

- 793. The Worker Vice-Chairperson** said that the Governing Body, as the house of social dialogue, normally sought consensus through good-faith negotiations. It was, however, striking to see that decisions were increasingly being made via votes, even when there was a clear majority. In such cases, it was good practice for delegations of the minority view to note their disagreement for the record, rather than request a vote. She thanked the Chairperson for her efficiency, her group for its support and the Office for its work in preparation for the session. Difficult times lay ahead, and she hoped that the spirit of consensus would continue.
- 794. The Employer Vice-Chairperson** agreed that the number of votes during the session had been excessive; compromise must instead be sought and had indeed been found on important matters. He thanked the Chairperson for her leadership; the excellent timekeeping displayed during the session demonstrated that it was possible for the Governing Body's meetings to be rendered more efficient. He also thanked the Office for its guidance, Governing Body members for their participation and the Bureau for Employers' Activities for its support.
- 795. A Government representative of the Niger** paid homage to Mr Fazle Lohani Babu, member of the delegation of Bangladesh and ASPAG coordinator, who was leaving his post. He thanked the Governing Body members for their excellent collaboration, the Chairperson and the Office for their support and all persons who had contributed to the session.

► Policy Development Section

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)

- 796.** 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;

- 797. 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.
- 798.** 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)¹⁵ 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.
- 799.** 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.
- 800.** 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.
- 801.** 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.

¹⁵ ILO, *Gap analysis of ILO normative and non-normative measures to ensure decent work in supply chains*, WGDWS/2021, 2021.

802. 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.
803. **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.
804. 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,¹⁶ as well as the Office mapping and options paper,¹⁷ 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.
805. 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.
806. 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.
807. 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

¹⁶ GB.355/INS/16/1.

¹⁷ 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.

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.

- 808.** 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.
- 809. 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.
- 810.** 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 DWCPs. He expressed support for the Employers’ group amendment.
- 811. Speaking on behalf of 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.
- 812.** 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.

- 813. Speaking on behalf of the 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.
- 814.** 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.
- 815.** 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.
- 816.** 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.
- 817. Speaking on behalf of the GCC countries**, 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.
- 818.** 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.

- 819. Speaking on behalf of a group of countries,**¹⁸ 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.
- 820.** 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.
- 821. 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 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.
- 822. 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

¹⁸ Japan, Switzerland and the United States.

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.

- 823. 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.
- 824. 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.
- 825. 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.

- 826. 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.
- 827. 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.
- 828. A Government representative of the United Kingdom** 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.
- 829. 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.
- 830. 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.

- 831. 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.
- 832. 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.
- 833. 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.
- 834. 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.

- 835. 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.
- 836. 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.
- 837. 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.
- 838. 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.
- 839. 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, 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.

- 840. 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.
- 841. 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.
- 842. 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.
- 843. 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.
- 844. 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”.
- 845. 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.
- 846. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh expressed interest in examining a progress report on the strategy in 2027.
- 847. Government representatives of Japan and India** expressed that they would not be in a position to revisit the issue in 2027.
- 848. 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.)

- 849. 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.~~

- 850. 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.
- 851.** A number of countries expressed support for the Workers' group subamendment,¹⁹ while others expressed support for the Employers' group amendment and subamendment, but not for the Workers' group subamendment.²⁰
- 852. 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.
- 853. 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.
- 854. 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.
- 855. 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.
- 856. The Worker spokesperson** stated that his group could support the subamendment by the EU Member States.
- 857. A Government representative of Canada** indicated that based on the explanation from the Employer spokesperson, she could support the text as subamended.
- 858. 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.

Decision

- 859. 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:**

¹⁹ EU and its Member States, Australia, Brazil, Barbados, Canada, Colombia, United Kingdom.

²⁰ Africa group, Bangladesh, China, Honduras, Japan, United States.

- (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)

- 860. 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.
- 861.** 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.
- 862.** 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.
- 863.** 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.

864. 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.
865. **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.
866. 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.
867. 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.
868. 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.
869. **Speaking on behalf of 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.
870. 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.

- 871.** 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.
- 872. 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.
- 873.** 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.
- 874. 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.
- 875. 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.
- 876.** 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.

- 877. 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.
- 878. 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.
- 879. 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

880. 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)

- 881. 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.

- 882.** 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.
- 883.** 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.
- 884. The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for its understanding and flexibility in rescheduling meetings to ensure adequate intervals between them and major ILO events.
- 885. 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.
- 886. 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.
- 887. The Worker spokesperson** recalled that "climate change" was a scientific matter that sometimes affected the world of work.

Decision

- 888. 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)

- 889. 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.
- 890.** 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.
- 891.** 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.
- 892.** 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.
- 893.** 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.

894. 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 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.
895. 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.
896. 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.
897. **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.
898. 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.
899. 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.

900. 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.
901. 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 AI could improve learning and planning but must be human-centred and not substitute for tripartite consultation. Projects must be based on DWCPs.
902. **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.
903. 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.

904. 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.
905. **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.
906. 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.
907. 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.
908. 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.
909. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**,²¹ 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

²¹ Argentina dissociates itself from the part of this statement concerning the concept of “gender”.

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.

910. 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.
911. 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.
912. **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.
913. 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.
914. IMEC supported the strategic approach to strengthen long-standing 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.

915. **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.
916. **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.
917. **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.
918. **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.
919. **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.

- 920. 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.
- 921. 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.
- 922. 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.

- 923. 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.
- 924. A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** wished to speak on behalf of the workers and employers of the Islamic Republic 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; SMEs 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.
- 925. 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 SMEs.

- 926. 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.
- 927. 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.
- 928. 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.
- 929. 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.

- 930.** 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.
- 931. 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

- 932. 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)

- 933. 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.

934. 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.
935. 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.
936. 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.
937. 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.
938. **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.
939. 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.

- 940.** 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 chains²² 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.
- 941. 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.
- 942.** 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.
- 943.** 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.
- 944. 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

²² GB.356/POL/1.

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.

945. He encouraged the Office to continue its engagement with other international organizations such as the 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.
946. 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.
947. **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.
948. 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.
949. 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.
950. **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.

- 951. 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.
- 952. 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.
- 953. 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.
- 954. 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.
- 955. 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.

- 956. 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.
- 957. 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.
- 958. 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.
- 959. 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.
- 960. 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.
- 961.** 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.

- 962.** 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.
- 963.** 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.
- 964.** 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

965. 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)

► Legal Issues and International Labour Standards Section

Legal Issues Segment

1. Ensuring legal clarity on the delegation of authority to the Officers of the Governing Body, including proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of the Governing Body and its Introductory note (GB.356/LILS/1)

- 966. The Chairperson** explained that the Governing Body had before it two options to bring the required legal clarity and transparency to the delegation of authority to the Officers of the Governing Body. The first was to adopt a decision formalizing the delegation of authority in application of paragraph 2.3.1 of the Standing Orders, to be reviewed following the next Governing Body elections in 2027. The second was to amend paragraph 2.3.1.
- 967. The Employer spokesperson** said that although the practices concerning the delegation of authority to the Officers were relatively well established, the proposed options would allow the Governing Body to function in a more orderly, efficient and predictable manner. Despite the lack of clarity surrounding paragraph 2.3.1, the delegated functions exercised by the Officers reduced the Governing Body's workload significantly, particularly in relation to technical, administrative and urgent matters. It was therefore appropriate to clarify the legal basis for the mechanism in order to promote transparency and a common understanding among constituents.
- 968.** Of the two options, her group would accept the second; the proposed amendments to paragraph 2.3.1 would reflect existing practices more systematically, clarify the scope of the delegated powers and strengthen transparency in their exercise, without modifying the Governing Body's role or making substantive changes to the existing institutional balance. The first option, which would entail adopting a decision to validate the delegation of authority for a fixed period, was unnecessary since the Governing Body could call for a review of that delegation at any point; there was no need for the matter to become yet another item on the Governing Body's agenda each June, requiring time and financial resources. The second option would not prevent the Governing Body from making further amendments to the Standing Orders in the future. The matter at hand should be considered in tandem with the ongoing reflections on the functioning of the Governing Body.
- 969. The Worker spokesperson** said that the discussion should be limited to the delegation of authority to the Officers. Most of the provisions of paragraph 2.3.1 were inconsistently applied, as illustrated, for example, by the practice of delegating decisions on the dates of meetings to the Officers without an express, formal delegation of authority. Although the Officers had always acted in good faith, it was important to ensure legal certainty and clarity, both from a legal standpoint and to ensure good governance.
- 970.** Her group believed that such certainty could be provided easily by a Governing Body decision to delegate express authority in relation to all matters listed in paragraph 2.3.1(a) to (d) of the Standing Orders. Such a decision would remain valid for the duration of the Governing Body's term of office and require express renewal following each Governing Body election. She therefore supported the first option, which, as well as offering a simple solution, preserved the Governing Body's ultimate decision-making power and ensured that the Officers exercised an

expressly delegated authority, thereby upholding the principles of good governance. She did not support an amendment to the Standing Orders.

- 971. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Malawi expressed her group's belief that delegations of authority were not intended to be open-ended, but should be subject to time limits and periodic review. While the delegation of authority in question constituted a useful a legal mechanism to ensure the Governing Body's effective functioning, there was a lack of clarity regarding its continued validity. Clear delegated authority was required to approve the programme of meetings and to invite States not members of the ILO to attend sessions of the International Labour Conference, as well as Member States not members of a region to attend the relevant regional meeting, as observers in cases where the request for an invitation had been received too late for submission to the Governing Body.
- 972.** The *Guide to the reforms in the procedure and functioning of the Governing Body* should be revived and shared with Governing Body members following every election, and consistency was required in the delegation of authority to invite official international organizations and non-governmental international organizations to meetings. Like the other delegations, the delegation of authority to the Officers under article 17 of the Conference Standing Orders could be reviewed following the Governing Body elections. Her group believed that the Governing Body must make the final decision on matters relating to its work, following recommendations by the Officers.
- 973.** Expressing her group's support for the first option, she noted that the draft decision did not address the lack of legal clarity in the delegation of authority to the Officers since 2008. To ensure legal certainty in all matters relating to the functioning of the Governing Body, her group requested the Office to examine the legality of all practices pertaining to delegations of authority and provide updates in that regard. While her group supported subparagraph (a) of the first option as set out in the draft decision, it proposed amending subparagraph (b) by replacing "in June 2027" with ", starting from June 2027" to reflect the fact that the delegation of authority to the Officers should be time-bound and reviewed periodically. Since the Governing Body had the right to determine its functioning and the functions it delegates, it should not bind its future members by amending the Standing Orders.
- 974. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom highlighted the importance of adapting the existing framework to increase coherence, uniformity and legal clarity and expressed her group's support for the first option since it combined legal clarity and procedural simplicity while preserving the Governing Body's discretion to review the delegation of authority periodically. IMEC would, however, welcome clarification as to whether that option would maintain the Governing Body's ability to revoke the delegation of authority before or after June 2027.
- 975.** Clarification was also required as to whether the reference to the "holding" of meetings rather than their "dates" in subparagraph (i) of the first option in the draft decision and the words "to be represented at official meetings" in subparagraphs (ii) to (iv) were intended to broaden the scope of the authority delegated to the Officers and, if so, what was the reasoning. Specifically, her group wished to know whether the proposed changes would expand the Officers' authority to make decisions on the financing of meetings and the participation rights of Member States and organizations invited under subparagraphs (ii) to (iv). Furthermore, she asked what Governing Body items would be affected by the first option if it were to be adopted, and what would change with regard to the Governing Body in the future. IMEC supported the first option as set out in the draft decision, subject to the answers to the questions that she had raised.

- 976. A Government representative of Brazil** voiced support for the first option, which offered a balanced approach to achieving legal clarity and transparency while maintaining the necessary procedural flexibility. She supported the amendment proposed by the Africa group.
- 977. A representative of the Director-General** (Clerk of the Governing Body) explained that the use of the word “holding” was not intended to grant the Officers additional authority. The delegation of authority had originally been designed to ensure that the Governing Body’s discussions were not overwhelmed with details linked to preparations for, and participation in, official meetings. The Officers’ role had always been to assess information provided by the secretariat, prior to endorsement by the Governing Body where required. The proposed wording was in line with the authority exercised in practice and the proposed changes would not allow the Officers to, for example, approve additional funding for meetings; that would remain a prerogative of the Governing Body. The proposals would help consolidate information on the programme of meetings and adopt a programmatic, planned approach to organizing official meetings and events mandated by the Governing Body. Regarding the effect of the first option, it constituted a normal Governing Body decision that the Governing Body could revoke by placing an item to that effect on its agenda and adopting a further decision.
- 978. The Worker spokesperson** said that there appeared to be substantial support for the first option among the governments. Her group could support the amendment to the draft decision proposed by the Africa group which, in her understanding, did not change its meaning but was intended to clarify that the delegation of authority would be reviewed every three years. The Governing Body should refrain from embarking on discussions of any other kind of delegation of authority.
- 979. The Employer spokesperson** said that the discussion represented an opportunity to render the work of the Governing Body more efficient and predictable, and her group had been in favour of amending paragraph 2.3.1 of the Standing Orders to avoid having to revisit the matter every three years. Nevertheless, it would not stand in the way of the apparent consensus.
- 980. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, the Government representative of the United Kingdom asked why the draft decision referred to the “holding” of meetings, rather than the “dates”, which was the language used in paragraph 2.3.1.
- 981. The representative of the Director-General** (Clerk of the Governing Body) said that the language used in the draft decision was intended to reflect the fact that, in addition to the dates of meetings, for certain types of meetings, the Officers were asked to endorse the holding of the meeting based on applicable guidelines. This is why the more comprehensive term “holding” was considered preferable. The holding of official meetings would, however, always be subject to the ultimate authority of the Governing Body and all meetings are subject to the availability of financial resources.

Decision

- 982. Pursuant to paragraph 2.3.1 of the Standing Orders, the Governing Body:**
- (a) delegated to its Officers the authority to:**
 - (i) approve the programme of official meetings and the holding of symposia, seminars and similar meetings;**
 - (ii) invite Member States or States which are not Members of the Organization to be represented at official meetings;**

- (iii) invite official international organizations to be represented at official meetings;
- (iv) invite non-governmental international organizations to be represented at official meetings;
- (b) decided to review the delegation made under subparagraph (a) upon the election of a new Governing Body, starting from June 2027.

(GB.356/LILS/1, paragraph 23, as amended by the Governing Body)

International Labour Standards and Human Rights Segment

2. Fifth evaluation of the functioning of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group and outcome of the meeting on the follow-up to outdated Conventions (GB.356/LILS/2)

- 983. The Chairperson of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (SRM TWG)** presented the report of the Officers of the SRM TWG on the fifth evaluation of the functioning of the SRM TWG, covering the ninth meeting held in September 2024. He indicated that the report highlighted the implications of the group's multifaceted results for the ILO, recalling its relevance at a time of reprioritization. The Governing Body had requested the Office to adopt measures in follow-up to the SRM TWG's recommendations as a matter of institutional priority. The report provided an overview of the work undertaken since the establishment of the SRM TWG, including significant developments since the last evaluation in March 2024.
- 984.** The report detailed the complexity of the SRM TWG's discussions due to diverse perspectives, recalling that the SRM TWG was unable to agree on the follow-up to be taken for some outdated Conventions. In order to resolve the divergences, the Governing Body had postponed the tenth meeting to 2026, and a meeting of the Officers of the SRM TWG had been organized in February 2026. At the meeting, an "Agreed framework for selected outdated Conventions" had been adopted, which would form the basis for future SRM TWG recommendations on outdated instruments that met specific criteria. He acknowledged the constructive collaboration of the social partners, the Government Group Coordinator and the Government group members, and also noted the support provided by the Office. The SRM TWG remained committed to its mandate. The SRM TWG had sought consensus through good faith negotiations, trust, clarity, transparency and consistency. Noting the complex nature of the subjects under examination, he further highlighted the efforts made by the SRM TWG to preserve the quality, exhaustive nature, and authority of its reviews, as evidenced by the consensus-based recommendations submitted to the Governing Body.
- 985. The Worker spokesperson** expressed appreciation for the substantial work undertaken in the previous ten years, noting the commitment and professionalism demonstrated in supporting the SRM TWG. She also expressed appreciation to the other members of the SRM TWG for their dedication and commitment to finding solutions contributing to the Organization's standards policy. The decision to postpone the 2025 meeting of the SRM TWG had allowed for a smaller group to reflect on issues that had been blocking progress. The positive outcome of the February 2026 meeting on follow-up to outdated Conventions was welcomed, as it confirmed the value of that pause for reflection.

- 986.** The success of the SRM TWG should be measured by whether it fulfilled its core mandate, namely ensuring that the ILO's body of international labour standards remained up to date, robust and capable of protecting workers. The Governing Body had consistently affirmed the importance of the SRM TWG as an institutional priority and had stressed the need for timely follow-up by Member States, social partners and the Office. Until the February 2026 meeting, there had been uncertainty as to whether the SRM TWG was delivering on its mandate, and there had been concern that it had become an exercise in standards abrogation. In particular, instruments that remained relevant and provided protection for workers, but for which more up-to-date standards existed, had been pushed towards abrogation without corresponding efforts to secure ratification of those more modern instruments. This had not been acceptable, and the agreed approach on outdated instruments would enable the SRM TWG to better fulfil its mandate.
- 987.** Follow-up to the outcomes of SRM TWG meetings was a key indicator of whether the mechanism was being treated as an institutional priority, and three positive developments were highlighted. First, the adoption of the first binding instrument arising from SRM TWG recommendations, namely the Biological Hazards in the Working Environment Convention, 2025 (No. 192), following the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), and with others in the pipeline. Given that SRM outcomes were an institutional priority, standard-setting action on those outcomes should be prioritized. Second, the promotion of ratification of more up-to-date Conventions had always been a challenge. In that regard, the Governing Body had adopted at its 355th Session (November 2025) a set of General Surveys focusing on selected up-to-date instruments linked to outdated Conventions. If implemented effectively, that could lead to a coherent institutional promotional effort to secure ratification of ILO Conventions. The Office should include the social partners and ACTRAV and ACT/EMP in such promotional activities, particularly those relating to Conventions to be abrogated. Thirdly, the constructive approach taken by all constituents at the February 2026 meeting on follow-up to outdated Conventions had resulted in a formula to be tested at the next meeting.
- 988.** Further action was still needed. First, promotional activities, including the General Survey and the dissemination of the promotional pyramids, should be complemented by a commitment by Governing Body members to review Conventions they had ratified that were proposed for abrogation and to initiate national social dialogue on the ratification of more modern instruments. At the next evaluation in 2028, members should be able to report on steps taken in that regard. Second, resources should be prioritized for the provision of technical assistance to constituents in support of ratification of more modern Conventions. The impact of the ILO at the national level should be strengthened through a coherent institutional approach, which links the promotion of follow-up to SRM TWG outcomes with the reinforced capacity of national and regional offices and the effectiveness of DWCPs. The role of all three constituent groups in ensuring ratification and effective implementation of standards at national level was indispensable and required sustained Office support, technical assistance and capacity-building. In reprioritizing ILO activities, attention should be given to the role of social partners, including ACTRAV, ACT/EMP and the Workers' and Employers' secretariats.
- 989.** As regards the programme of work of the SRM TWG, pragmatism should be combined with ambition, with a view to achieving the targeted end date of 2028, subject to the workload implications arising from the absence of a meeting in 2025. This might require an extension of the end date until 2029. She noted that the Employers' group had suggested establishing a permanent mechanism and expressed reservations in that regard. The Office still had significant work to undertake in following up SRM TWG outcomes. Maintaining the SRM as an ongoing mechanism would place a heavy burden on the Office, and such exercises had

historically been undertaken periodically, approximately every 20 years. The importance of the SRM TWG was reflected in the Programme and Budget for 2026–27 and it would continue to be prioritized, with due regard for follow-up activities. She emphasized the importance of follow-up, noting that the outcomes of the SRM TWG were central to delivering on the ILO's mandate and should remain an institutional priority.

- 990.** In conclusion, the success of the SRM TWG would continue to be measured by the Organization's capacity to support its work as it approached completion, to adopt new standards recommended by the SRM TWG and to secure ratification of more up-to-date standards, thereby maintaining a clear, responsive and robust body of standards protecting workers. She expressed the hope that the constructive approach seen in February would continue in future meetings, and indicated support for the draft decision.
- 991. The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for preparing the document, which reflected the Officers' report and the outcome of the recent meeting on follow-up to outdated Conventions. The fifth evaluation of the SRM TWG provided an important opportunity to review its functioning and ensure that it could continue to carry out its tasks in accordance with its mandate and in the best interests of the Organization. This was particularly important in view of the approaching conclusion of its work, currently scheduled for 2029, and the considerable number of instruments still to be examined. The evaluation also provided an opportunity to reflect on how the work of the SRM TWG could continue beyond 2029.
- 992.** The SRM mandate was critical for the ILO body of standards and its effectiveness. The SRM was not a mere classification exercise but played a central role in maintaining a coherent, credible and relevant system of standards. Its recommendations shaped the overall framework and influenced the functioning of the supervisory system. By classifying instruments as up to date, outdated or requiring further action, the SRM TWG provided guidance on which standards constituted reference points for governments in their national policies and informed the Office's promotional activities by indicating which Conventions should be promoted for ratification.
- 993.** The evaluation was timely in light of ongoing developments in the Organization and the meeting held in February 2026 on follow-up to outdated Conventions. Progress towards a common understanding was welcomed.
- 994.** Turning to the agreed framework for selected outdated Conventions: the framework applied only in limited and specific circumstances. It concerned selected outdated Conventions, namely instruments classified as outdated for which there was a relevant and related up-to-date Convention, where the subject matter of the older instrument remained relevant and the number of ratifications remained significant. According to the framework, the package of follow-up actions would include a fixed date for consideration of abrogation by the International Labour Conference and a date for mid-term evaluation. Those mid-term evaluations could assist the Office in promoting ratification of up-to-date instruments by Member States that remained parties to outdated Conventions and in evaluating progress in that regard. The possibility of postponing the abrogation date could provide additional time for Member States to transition to newer Conventions and for the Office to scale up its efforts. At the same time, the practical implications of the procedure would need to be assessed in light of its future implementation. It would be important to ensure that it did not create uncertainty or prolonged assessment cycles. The option to defer the abrogation date should therefore remain exceptional.
- 995.** The criteria set out in the framework needed to be applied in a consistent and objective manner to ensure that it was not extended beyond the limited circumstances for which it had been

agreed or to instruments that did not meet those conditions. Conventions classified as outdated that did not fall within the scope of the framework should continue to follow the usual procedure and remain subject to a fixed date for abrogation without additional review mechanisms. Such dates should be set as early as practicable to ensure that the body of standards remained up to date.

- 996.** The practical and time-bound package of follow-up actions should remain realistic and implementable, particularly with regard to assessing progress in ratification of relevant up-to-date instruments. Ratification of ILO Conventions constituted an international commitment voluntarily undertaken by Member States and required prior assessment of their capacity to implement the provisions of the Convention, including social and economic implications, as well as close consultation with social partners. Ratification without such an assessment could have detrimental effects and hinder effective compliance with ILO standards. Ratification should not be the objective in itself; implementation remained the key objective.
- 997.** In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the agreement would enable the SRM TWG to complete its mandate efficiently and classify the remaining instruments in a manner that preserved the coherence and credibility of the ILO body of standards. He expressed appreciation to governments that had actively participated in the meeting on outdated Conventions. He reaffirmed the Employers' group's commitment to completing the SRM TWG programme of work and providing the Governing Body with meaningful recommendations in line with its mandate to ensure that the ILO body of standards is clear, robust and up to date.
- 998. Speaking on behalf of the Government group,** a Government representative of Australia welcomed the fifth evaluation, reiterating the Government group's firm support for the SRM TWG's mandate to ensure a clear, robust, and up-to-date body of international labour standards. She recalled the significant achievements of the SRM TWG since its inception, including its review, classification, and determination of follow-up actions for 196 of 235 instruments in its initial programme of work. She noted positively the adoption of new standards on apprenticeships and biological hazards; the abrogation or withdrawal of outdated instruments; and the ratification of relevant up-to-date standards, based on SRM TWG recommendations.
- 999.** The Government group welcomed the outcome of the meeting on the follow-up to outdated Conventions held in February 2026. She expressed appreciation to both the Employers' group and Workers' group for their constructive engagement in adopting the "Agreed framework for selected outdated Conventions", and noted the Government group's commitment to working within the agreed framework to achieve consensus recommendations for complex but critical subjects going forward.
- 1000.** She noted the importance of the SRM TWG completing its programme of work on time without compromising quality; the need for the Office and tripartite constituents to act on SRM TWG recommendations as a matter of institutional priority to ensure real-world impact; and the need for broad tripartite engagement, particularly in the transition to up-to-date standards. Noting the present financial challenges, she detailed the need for the strategic use of resources and internal policy coherence to support the functioning of the SRM TWG and the comprehensive implementation of its recommendations. She acknowledged the commitment of the SRM TWG members to ensuring successful outcomes despite complex challenges, and the support provided by the Office. She indicated her group's openness to further discussions on standards policy and innovation, and to collaboration in the upcoming tenth meeting. She expressed support for the draft decision and noted, with flexibility, that the next evaluation should be discussed in March 2029.

- 1001. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of South Africa noted the indispensable role of the SRM in maintaining the relevance and authority of the ILO's normative framework. The credibility of the process was based on the collective ability to translate the SRM TWG's outcomes into tangible progress on the ground. The Africa group needed practical support from the Office, including capacity-building, peer learning, and technical assistance, to assess national capacities and effectively implement, ratify and report on Conventions. The participation of the Africa group was central to the legitimacy of the process, and he noted that the group was keen to play a proactive and constructive role.
- 1002.** He recalled a comment made by the Employers' group in a previous session of the Governing Body that the SRM TWG's recommendations, particularly on the promotion of up-to-date Conventions, should be realistic. In this respect, he noted that an informed decision by a Government not to ratify a Convention should be respected equally with a decision to ratify, provided that it was made in consultation with social partners. He noted that considering the 2028 deadline, efficiency should not be at the expense of quality and expressed his group's commitment to completing the SRM TWG's ambitious mandate. He highlighted that the Office should continue to provide insight on how to streamline SRM TWG processes, to ensure that meetings were productive and that the integrity of the review was preserved. He welcomed the February 2026 meeting, noting that this demonstrated a shared commitment to inclusive and transparent leadership. Future work needed to be grounded in the realities of Member States, and the SRM TWG could only achieve its goals of an authoritative and universally applicable body of standards. He expressed support for the draft decision through actionable Office.
- 1003. A Government representative of the United States** expressed support for measures enabling the SRM TWG to complete its programme of work effectively and efficiently, ensuring the ILO's standards remained up to date and relevant. He indicated interest in continued discussions on standards policy and in exploring innovative ways to maintain a modern, agile system responsive to evolving needs of constituents in changing work realities without compromising quality. He reiterated the importance of precise terminology when referring to the equality of men and women and encouraged the ILO to use terminology in accordance with biological sex.
- 1004. A Government representative of Colombia** expressed his commitment to strengthening the ILO's standards system as essential for promoting decent work and social justice, and ensuring that international labour standards were relevant, effective and adapted to the needs of Member States. The SRM TWG had a key role in ensuring a clear, robust and up-to-date body of standards that reflected changes in the world of work. He welcomed the progress detailed in the fifth evaluation, particularly in relation to the SRM TWG's ability to adopt consensus-based recommendations on a wide range of instruments. The adoption of follow-up measures combining normative and non-normative actions with specific deadlines strengthened consistency and effectively guided the work of the ILO. In relation to outdated instruments, there was a need for clarity and consistency in the body of standards and follow-up, including abrogation or withdrawal, should be undertaken. Acknowledging the technical complexity of discussions and the value of tripartism as a basis for consensus, he indicated the importance of continued constructive dialogue in the classification of standards, the identification of gaps in coverage, and the adoption of appropriate follow-up measures. Timely follow-up to the SRM TWG recommendations adopted by the Governing Body remained important, including those on the promotion of ratification of up-to-date instruments, research activities and provision of technical assistance to Member States. The work of the SRM TWG should continue to be a priority for the ILO, supported by strategic planning and adequate resources.

- 1005. A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** noted the essential role of the SRM TWG in the ILO's normative system, indicating that it ensured that international labour standards remained coherent, relevant, and responsive to the realities of the modern world of work. She expressed appreciation for the SRM TWG's continued commitment to rigorous, evidence-based review processes, despite the increasingly complex subject matters. Implementation challenges in developing countries stemmed not from a lack of commitment, but from the need for sustained technical assistance to help Member States make informed decisions on ratification based on national circumstances and in consultation with social partners, and to ensure that ratification would result in meaningful implementation. The Office needed to continue to prioritize support, including capacity-building, peer learning and targeted technical support, especially for countries in Africa, so that the SRM TWG's recommendations could translate into real improvements in workplaces and labour markets.
- 1006.** She welcomed the recent meeting held by the Officers of the SRM TWG, noting that it demonstrated commitment to transparency and inclusiveness, particularly in relation to the sensitive issue of follow-up to outdated Conventions. Such dialogue strengthened trust in the process and reinforced the SRM TWG's legitimacy. In relation to the 2028 target for completing the initial programme of work, efficiency without compromising quality, integrity, and credibility of the review was essential. She expressed support for the draft decision and reaffirmed commitment to a strong and relevant body of ILO standards.
- 1007. The Worker spokesperson** expressed her support for the draft decision. In light of the postponement of the meeting in 2025, she requested information from the Office on the timing of the next evaluation in relation to the meetings remaining in the SRM TWG's provisional workplan.
- 1008. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) expressed appreciation for the acknowledgement of the work of the Office in supporting the work of the SRM TWG, and that follow-up on the Governing Body recommendations on the SRM TWG's outcomes was a cross-office and cross-departmental effort. Due note had been taken of the importance of that follow-up, and of ensuring that technical assistance and capacity-building remained at the disposal of constituents upon request to ensure that the SRM TWG's work had an effective impact. This would be reflected in the prioritization of work moving forward and in the preparation of the next programme and budget. The evaluation date of March 2029 would enable that evaluation to include a reflection on the work accomplished by the September 2028 meeting. An evaluation in November 2028 would then cover only the 2026 and 2027 meetings.
- 1009. The Worker spokesperson** noted the clarification provided and expressed support for the evaluation being held in March 2029.
- 1010. The Employer spokesperson** acknowledged all the comments and expressed support for the March 2029 evaluation date.

Decision

1011. The Governing Body:

- (a) **thanked the Officers and Members of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (SRM TWG) for the information allowing it to undertake a fifth evaluation of the functioning of the SRM TWG;**
- (b) **took note of the information provided by the Office related to the outcome of the meeting on the follow-up to outdated Conventions;**

- (c) reiterated the importance of the SRM TWG in contributing to ensuring a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards and stressed the need for timely follow-up action by Member States, social partners as well as by the Office to its recommendations as adopted by the Governing Body;
- (d) requested the SRM TWG to take its guidance into account in continuing its work in line with its work plan and that it continues to be kept informed of the functioning of the SRM TWG so as to allow it to undertake a further evaluation in March 2029.

(GB.356/LILS/2, paragraph 4)

3. Proposed forms for reports to be submitted under article 19 of the ILO Constitution in 2027, 2028 and 2029 – Selected up-to-date instruments (GB.356/LILS/3)

- 1012. The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for the proposed report forms for the General Surveys to be prepared by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in 2027, 2028 and 2029. The General Surveys, conducted under article 19 of the ILO Constitution, would focus on the prospects for ratifying selected up-to-date instruments related to outdated Conventions identified by the SRM TWG.
- 1013.** Ratification was an act of national sovereignty, which did not automatically follow the adoption of new up-to-date instruments by the International Labour Conference. Ratification should take place only after governments had conducted a comprehensive pre-ratification review of national laws and practices, including assessments of their capacity to meet substantive and reporting obligations and the potential socio-economic impact. While implementing ratification campaigns, the Office was requested to support governments in conducting objective and open-ended pre-ratification assessments, in full consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers, in line with the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) and the Tripartite Consultation (Activities of the International Labour Organisation) Recommendation, 1976 (No. 152).
- 1014.** Commenting on the proposed report forms, in the current transitional period, she noted that questions should remain simple, focused, and aligned with the aim of assessing ratification prospects and obstacles. Regarding the questions on technical assistance, the Office should clarify their purpose with regard to the aim of the General Surveys, and the intended use of the information collected, particularly whether they were intended to assess obstacles to ratification or to support technical cooperation activities. Further, the Office should also clarify whether the questions aimed to capture support for comprehensive pre-ratification assessments, including legislative and institutional capacity. Those assessments remained essential in ensuring that ratification decisions were well informed. She indicated that the Employers' group would welcome the views of other groups and a response from the Office on the issues raised.
- 1015. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the Office for the proposed report forms, prepared in line with the previous decision of the Governing Body. The focus of the three General Surveys in 2027, 2028 and 2029 would be on the selected up-to-date Conventions related to outdated instruments reviewed by the SRM TWG. The surveys in this three-year period would address important topics including fishing, indigenous and tribal peoples, maternity protection, occupational safety and health, sectoral instruments, employment services, labour statistics, social security and labour inspection.

- 1016.** The Governing Body had endorsed the SRM TWG's call for increased efforts on ratification and targeted promotion of these up-to-date instruments in those Member States still bound by outdated instruments. The General Surveys would provide information on prospects for, and obstacles to, ratification, as well as on technical assistance, including promotional activities.
- 1017.** The report forms included a summary for each of the instruments, as requested by the Workers' group at the 355th Session of the Governing Body. With respect to the draft report form on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the article 22 report form, approved by the Governing Body, included a question on consultation with national organizations of indigenous or tribal peoples, on the measures taken to give effect to that Convention, and when preparing reports on its application. Noting the useful information that could be collected through such consultation, the Office was requested to highlight the importance of consulting organizations of indigenous and tribal peoples in the explanatory note to be sent to governments along with the relevant report form. She also expressed support for the draft decision.
- 1018. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG,** a Government representative of the Republic of Korea acknowledged the Office's preparation of the proposed report forms and its consultation with Governments in advance of the Governing Body session, including the clarification included in the report form that responded to questions raised concerning the length of potential responses. He noted the efforts undertaken to design report forms that would help identify ratification prospects, while reflecting diverse national circumstances. The proposed report forms requested governments to provide information, for each of the Conventions concerned, on obstacles that might prevent or delay ratification, plans for implementation, and the need for technical assistance. That structured approach would support a more comprehensive assessment of the challenges faced by Member States.
- 1019.** Recalling the objective to facilitate the ratification and effective implementation of selected up-to-date international labour standards, he noted that the information collected would support the work of the Committee of Experts and contribute to promoting a more effective and efficient application of international labour standards. In relation to the questions on technical assistance, information on the types of support required by Member States would help the Office provide meaningful support, particularly in light of existing resource constraints. The content of the report should be linked to the ILO's technical cooperation programmes, with a view to taking into account the diverse challenges faced by Member States. He indicated an interest in continued constructive discussions and cooperation with the Office.
- 1020. A Government representative of Colombia** reaffirmed the importance of fostering a common understanding of the national circumstances surrounding the implementation of up-to-date instruments, including ratification prospects and obstacles, and technical assistance needs, particularly for countries still bound by outdated instruments. The General Surveys should provide comprehensive information on progress in implementing SRM TWG recommendations, which were both an institutional priority and a national priority. Ratification of up-to-date Conventions adapted to modern realities of the world of work was key to protecting workers' rights and achieving social justice. He expressed support for the proposed draft decision.
- 1021. A Government representative of Mexico** acknowledged the efforts undertaken to strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of reporting mechanisms for governments. With respect to the report forms and the General Survey of 2028, the information from the reports submitted under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998 (as amended in 2022) could also be useful in the Committee of Experts'

consideration of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).

- 1022. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) noted the support for the three unique General Surveys that the Governing Body had decided the Committee of Experts would undertake. The requested responses were brief, focused on the specific questions in the report forms. The questions aimed to give a clear understanding to the Committee of Experts, to the Governing Body and to the Office regarding the prospects of ratification of up-to-date instruments, the possible obstacles to ratification and what type of technical assistance would be useful.
- 1023.** Regarding the technical assistance questions, she indicated that responses would normally comprise an indication of what specific subject-matter assistance would be helpful. In general, technical assistance requests normally involved a request for support from Member States to begin a process to consider ratification, and to undertake a gap analysis examining the provisions of the Convention with national law and practice. There were several recent requests to the Office for that type of assistance. Requests for technical assistance also included requests for legal advice, and in particular comparative examples of how other countries implemented a given Convention, and policy advice regarding the type of measures, programmes and policies that have been put in place to give effect to specific Conventions. Such requests required drawing on the widespread expertise across technical and the policy departments of the Office.
- 1024.** Turning to the question from the Workers' group regarding inviting governments to consider consulting indigenous or tribal peoples, where appropriate, in responding to the questions on Convention No. 169, she indicated that consideration could be given to inserting a sentence to that effect in the letter transmitting the report forms. Such a sentence would make it clear that this was not an obligation, but something governments could consider in preparing their responses.
- 1025. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the Office for its clarifications and confirmation, and recalled the importance of follow-up as an institutional priority, in light of the SRM TWG discussions.
- 1026. The Employer spokesperson** acknowledged the Office's clarification and reiterated that it was important to clearly indicate that governments were legally obliged to consult only the most representative employers' and workers' organizations, while they retained the discretion to decide whether to consult any other group deemed relevant based on national circumstances. She welcomed the Office's intention to include that clarification in the explanatory note and requested that the Office share the proposed language with the social partners. She expressed support for the draft decision.

Decision

1027. The Governing Body:

- (a) **requested governments to submit reports under article 19 of the ILO Constitution:**
 - (i) **for 2027 on the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), the Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979 (No. 152), the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183);**

- (ii) for 2028 on the Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176), the Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981, the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138);
 - (iii) for 2029 on the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88), the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160), the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) (Part IV), the Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118), the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168), the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129);
- (b) approved the report forms concerning these instruments, as set out in the appendices to document GB.356/LILS/3.

(GB.356/LILS/3, paragraph 5)

4. Proposed form for reports on the application of ratified Conventions (article 22 of the Constitution): Biological Hazards in the Working Environment Convention, 2025 (No. 192) (GB.356/LILS/4)

1028. The Worker spokesperson said that her group agreed overall with the report form for first reports, which would be critical for gathering comprehensive information on the law and practice of ratifying Member States. Concerning the questions relating to Article 2 of the Biological Hazards in the Working Environment Convention, 2025 (No. 192), her group would have liked to see an express reference to the evaluation of biological risks by the competent authorities, which would form the basis of any exclusions contemplated by ratifying Member States. She trusted that the key role of this evaluation would be addressed by constituents when they completed the form. In the context of subsequent reports under article 22 of the ILO Constitution, her group wanted to see a question under Article 2, regarding efforts made to end any exclusions as soon as possible. In the spirit of making progress, her group supported the draft decision.

1029. The Employer spokesperson noted that this report form would fall within the scope of the thematic implementation report on occupational safety and health, one of the most extensive thematic groups. The thematic group covered 18 instruments, before adding Convention No. 192. He therefore trusted that the Office would provide technical assistance, to support governments with a high ratification rate in the management of their reporting obligations. His group supported the draft decision.

1030. A Government representative of Colombia recognized the efforts of the Office in presenting this instrument to serve as guidance in the preparation of first reports and noted the importance of having a clear and well-structured report form. The report form was in line with the system of thematic implementation reports adopted by the Governing Body in November 2025. Pursuant to that decision, first reports would continue to be requested according to the current practice and would be based on the detailed report forms adopted by the Governing Body for the relevant instrument. Convention No. 192 was the most recently adopted ILO

Convention and covered a highly topical issue related to occupational safety and health. His country considered it essential to engage in further internal analysis with a view to potential ratification and he encouraged other countries to undertake similar work to contribute to the swift entry into force of the Convention. He supported the draft decision.

- 1031. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) confirmed the understanding that the report form would be used for first reports upon ratification, and that subsequently, information from the first reports would be incorporated into thematic implementation reports. In this context, the Office was in the process of designing a toolkit to support Member States in fulfilling their reporting obligations. The Office was considering different ways of providing support to governments and social partners to enable a smooth transition towards the use of thematic implementation reports.

Decision

- 1032. The Governing Body approved the report form for the Biological Hazards in the Working Environment Convention, 2025 (No. 192), set out in the appendix to document GB.356/LILS/4.**

(GB.356/LILS/4, paragraph 2)

► Programme, Financial and Administrative Section

Programme, Financial and Administrative Segment

1. ILO programme implementation 2024–25 (GB.356/PFA/1)

- 1033. The Worker spokesperson** said that the programme implementation report for 2024–25 should be assessed in the context of a turbulent global environment marked by pressures on multilateralism and increasing inequalities. He welcomed the overall level of programme delivery and the breadth of ILO support to constituents, but cautioned that the scope of activities risked extending beyond the Organization's constitutional mandate. He stressed that the ongoing reform and reprioritization process should reinforce that mandate.
- 1034.** He highlighted a number of structural vulnerabilities that needed to be addressed, including over-reliance on a narrow donor base, which had already affected work on fundamental principles and rights at work, high levels of arrears compromising financial resilience, and persistent fragmentation and insufficient linkages between technical work and development cooperation. While voluntary contributions had enabled programme delivery, he stressed the need to maintain or increase the regular budget and assessed contributions. In that context, he supported strengthening unearmarked funding through the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) and proposed exploring the establishment of a dedicated "Philadelphia Fund" to ensure sustainable financing of the ILO's core functions, including its normative mandate and the promotion of social dialogue and tripartism.
- 1035.** Turning to the reform pillars and specific outcomes, he expressed concern that normative work was increasingly constrained by financial pressures and uneven results across regions, including no new ratifications of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), in 2024–25. He also noted that outcome 2 results remained below target, reflecting shrinking democratic space and external constraints, and stressed that

strong tripartite institutions and collective bargaining remained central to achieving results. He underlined the need to address fragmentation and overlaps in implementation and to ensure that efficiency considerations did not undermine the role of social dialogue and tripartism. He stressed the fundamental role of collective bargaining for social dialogue and highlighted the importance of distinguishing it from workplace cooperation in results reporting.

- 1036.** He welcomed the progress made in employment policies but requested further clarification regarding the beneficiaries of skills development and lifelong learning programmes and their impact on employment outcomes. He expressed concern that under outcome 4 the contribution to decent work was not always clear and suggested rebalancing resources in line with the ILO's mandate, including through strengthened collaboration with other UN agencies. He welcomed results under outcomes 5, 6 and 7, particularly in the areas of gender equality, occupational safety and health, and social protection, while emphasizing the need for continued efforts to protect vulnerable groups and ensure sustainable systems. He reiterated that priorities such as just transition, supply chains and crisis response should remain central and that workers in crisis situations should not be left without support.
- 1037.** He further stressed that global initiatives such as the Global Coalition for Social Justice should translate into concrete action and should not detract from country-level work and institutional capacity-building. He emphasized the importance of strengthening field capacity while preserving critical expertise at headquarters, ensuring that decentralization was accompanied by adequate systems, safeguards and analysis. He also underlined the need for competency-based staffing decisions and for protecting expertise related to standards, social dialogue and crisis response.
- 1038.** Finally, he noted the need to strengthen results-based management, including improved data and impact assessment, and cautioned against across-the-board cuts that could undermine long-term reforms and the ILO's constitutional mandate. He reiterated that the current context required a stronger, not smaller, ILO, capable of addressing inequalities and delivering decent work and social justice for all.
- 1039. The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for the programme implementation report for 2024–25 and acknowledged the achievements reported, particularly in a context of significant global uncertainty. However, he reiterated that the report would benefit from stronger analytical depth, especially in relation to results and reprioritization towards the ILO's core mandate. While improvements had been made, the analysis remained insufficient to inform future directions, notably due to the absence of a clear link between results and expenditure, insufficient financial information at the output level and a lack of evidence on the tangible impact of activities on the ground. He stressed the need to move beyond activity reporting towards a more robust assessment of outcomes and impact.
- 1040.** Turning to the policy outcomes, he expressed concern regarding the continued emphasis on ratifications as a success indicator under outcome 1, without sufficient assessment of Member States' capacity to implement international labour standards. On outcome 2, he acknowledged progress in strengthening employers' and business membership organizations, including through dedicated resources, but noted that results remained below target due to insufficient human resources. He reiterated the importance of institutional capacity-building for employers' organizations as a core priority and renewed the call for clearer recognition of their role, including through a dedicated outcome. He noted with interest the results achieved on workplace cooperation. He also welcomed the progress made under outcome 3 but stressed

that greater attention should be given to the implementation and financing of employment policies, which remained insufficiently addressed.

1041. On outcome 4, he underlined the importance of productivity, sustainable enterprise development and enabling business environments, welcoming the progress made in initiatives such as productivity ecosystems while calling for stronger attention to macro-level constraints affecting productivity and enterprise development, as well as increased efforts to address informality, where results remained below target. Regarding outcomes 5, 6 and 7, he acknowledged achievements in areas such as gender equality, occupational safety and health and social protection, but called for a clearer shift from dispersed micro-level interventions towards institutional strengthening, greater transparency on the role of economic factors in wage-setting, and stronger emphasis on the sustainability of social protection systems.
1042. With respect to outcome 8 and the enablers, he noted that coordination under the priority action programmes had not fully delivered as intended and that overlaps persisted. He stressed the need to clarify the ILO's comparative advantage, particularly in crisis contexts, and to strengthen coherence in research through an Office-wide strategy. He further emphasized that global initiatives such as the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Global Accelerator should not detract from country-level work and capacity development. Finally, he underlined the importance of flexibility in future programme and budget processes, stronger alignment with development cooperation resources and a more central role for DWCPs as the primary vehicle for national programming, ensuring greater ownership, accountability and coherence at country level.
1043. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania commended the Office for advancing social justice and decent work despite global uncertainties and financial constraints. She welcomed the results achieved in the Africa region and noted the continued progress in the ratification of international labour standards, reflecting Member States' commitment. She also highlighted the strengthening of labour market information systems and the increasing use of evidence-based policies as important developments for advancing decent work and industrialization in Africa.
1044. She further welcomed the ILO's leadership in global processes, including the Summit of the Future, the Financing for Development Conference and the Second World Summit for Social Development, as well as the Doha Political Declaration which reaffirmed the commitments to decent work, social dialogue and universal social protection. However, she expressed concern that, despite global progress, child labour remained widespread, with Africa bearing a disproportionate burden due to poverty, conflict and weak enforcement. She therefore called for strengthened international cooperation and increased resources to accelerate the elimination of child labour, particularly in the regions most affected.
1045. She noted that, while global labour markets had stabilized, significant decent work deficits persisted in Africa, including high levels of informality, limited social protection coverage and elevated youth unemployment. She emphasized that climate shocks, debt distress and geopolitical tensions continued to constrain inclusive growth and called on the ILO to strengthen its support for sustainable enterprises, skills development and expanded social protection, particularly for women and young people. She also highlighted the importance of continued global solidarity and ensuring that Africa's voice was reflected in international discussions on the future of work.
1046. She welcomed the progress made in integrated policy programmes in the region, including the adoption of the African Union–ILO Youth Employment Strategy, the Dakar Compact and employment-intensive investment programmes, and reaffirmed the Africa group's

commitment to working with the Office in implementing the 2026–27 programme and preparing the Programme and Budget for 2028–29. She expressed support for the draft decision and called for strengthened social dialogue, gender equality and international cooperation to advance decent work as a cornerstone of sustainable development.

- 1047. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of China said that the 2024–25 biennium had been marked by global uncertainty, but also by the resilience of labour markets, with unemployment stabilizing, employment levels recovering modestly and working poverty declining, while social security coverage had expanded. She commended the Office for advancing its mandate of promoting social justice through decent work and took note of key achievements, including progress in the normative mandate, the establishment of the Global Coalition for Social Justice and efforts to strengthen knowledge, innovation and organizational effectiveness.
- 1048.** She welcomed the achievement of 1,196 country results, exceeding the Programme and Budget target, and noted that targets had been met or exceeded in most policy outcomes. However, she expressed concern regarding regional disparities, particularly in the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific and encouraged the Office to analyse the underlying causes of these shortfalls and address possible weaknesses in target-setting and implementation. She also noted the increase in the number of ratifications and encouraged strengthened efforts to promote international labour standards through tailored technical assistance.
- 1049.** She commended the Office's results in promoting employment for just transitions, including support to employment policies, youth employment strategies and skills development, and highlighted the importance of coordinated approaches, effective public employment services and support for vulnerable groups. She further noted the progress made in supporting productivity and decent work in MSMEs and welcomed the resolution on the care economy. She requested the Office to strengthen results-based management and ensure effective and efficient use of resources in the next biennium to enhance impact.
- 1050. The Government representative of Bangladesh** welcomed the report's recognition of achievements in her country, including the ratification of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), as well as progress in labour law reforms and the formulation of a national childcare road map. At the same time, she expressed concerns regarding the liquidity constraints faced by the ILO in late 2025, the sharp decline in development cooperation, and the abrupt suspension of projects, particularly in least developed countries, which risked undermining the delivery of expected results.
- 1051.** She further called for improved resource rationalization across field offices and stronger guidance from headquarters, stressing that contributions should be aligned with tripartite priorities. Increased engagement with global brands could support resource mobilization. The Better Work programme was very important for productivity, market access and labour rights in beneficiary countries and so should not be discontinued. There was a need to strengthen efforts to promote youth employment, skills development and entrepreneurship and support MSMEs, including through accelerated implementation of the Youth Employment Action Plan 2020–30.
- 1052. The Government representative of Mexico** thanked the Office for the report and acknowledged the challenging financial context that the Organization faced during the biennium. He took note of the implementation rate of activities funded from the regular budget and the mobilization of additional resources, while expressing concern over the

increasing reliance on extrabudgetary funding and its decline in 2025. He underscored the need to analyse the structural causes of these trends, diversify the funding base and enhance the predictability and sustainability of resources.

- 1053.** It would be essential to review resource allocations, including through possible programmatic reprioritization, with particular attention being paid to technical assistance to constituents. There were imbalances in funding across outcomes, requiring greater equity in resource distribution in line with organizational priorities, notably with regard to Latin America and the Caribbean. He requested greater clarity on proposed changes related to non-discrimination under outcome 5 and stressed the importance of ensuring predictable financing to support effective implementation on the ground.
- 1054. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Strategic Programming and Management Department) thanked the constituents for their support in the implementation of the programme for 2024–25. He indicated that the Office was aware of the importance of diversifying the resource base and enhancing the RBSA as a strategic tool to achieve results around the ILO's core mandate. He took note of constituents' requests to use the programme implementation report to inform the ILO reform process, as well as the development of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2028–29.
- 1055.** The different views of workers and employers in relation to reporting results on collective bargaining and workplace cooperation were acknowledged and it was expected that consensus could be agreed upon by the two parties in the preparation of future reports. The Office would also undertake further analysis of the reasons why results under some indicators related to formalization were not met, while the target under the priority action programme on formalization was exceeded. On the priority action programmes, he said that an internal review was ongoing and that the Office would use its findings and recommendations to inform the development of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2028–29. He mentioned that the underperforming of the Office in certain outcomes in the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific was due to long-standing issues that should be tackled more effectively in the future, and he called on Member States to consider providing more funding for outcome 5 on gender equality and non-discrimination.
- 1056. The Worker spokesperson** insisted that the Office should not treat collective bargaining and workplace cooperation as being on an equal footing, as the former was a fundamental principle while the latter was not. He requested a reallocation of regular budget resources from policy outcome 4 to outcomes 5 and 6. He also requested the Office's response to his proposal to create a sustainable financing mechanism to fund the ILO's constitutional mandate and core activities. He thanked the donors to the RBSA and reiterated his suggestion to create a mechanism to ensure sustainable funding for the ILO's constitutional mandate.
- 1057. A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) confirmed that the Office would continue analysing the possibility of establishing a specific fund aimed at providing resources to the Office's core activities.
- 1058. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Strategic Programming and Management Department) confirmed that the Office would continue exploring ways to reconcile the different views of workers and employers on workplace cooperation. He pointed out that there was an independent evaluation of the dedicated programme on capacity-building for employers' and workers' organizations funded by the RBSA, and that its findings would inform the development of similar projects in the future.

Decision

1059. The Governing Body took note of the report and requested the Office to take into account the observations made during the discussion.

(GB.356/PFA/1, paragraph 277)

2. Delegation of authority under article 17 of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference (GB.356/PFA/2)

Decision

1060. The Governing Body decided to delegate to its Officers, for the period of the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference (2026), the authority to carry out its responsibilities under article 17 of the Standing Orders of the Conference in relation to proposals involving expenditure in the 80th financial period ending 31 December 2027.

(GB.356/PFA/2, paragraph 3)

3. Programme and Budget for 2024–25: Regular budget account and Working Capital Fund as at 31 December 2025 (GB.356/PFA/3)

1061. The Employer spokesperson noted the total expenditure and the budgetary surplus presented. He indicated that the budgetary surplus reflected prudent expenditure management and timely measures taken by the Office to address financial pressures. However, he expressed concern regarding significant delays in the payment of Member States' contributions, which had resulted in a net deficit of approximately US\$52.6 million. He noted that the Working Capital Fund had been fully exhausted and that the Office had relied on internal borrowing to finance operations.

1062. He emphasized that this situation posed risks to the Organization's long-term financial stability and that shortfalls could persist across biennia, as arrears should first be used to repay debts and replenish the Working Capital Fund. His group supported the proposal for an exceptional transfer of remaining funds to the Working Capital Fund and encouraged continued engagement with Member States to address arrears.

1063. The Worker spokesperson took note of the financial information and recalled that the issue of contributions had been discussed in detail in previous meetings. He thanked Member States that had fulfilled their obligations and expressed hope that outstanding contributions would be settled promptly. He highlighted that the level of debt had remained high in recent biennia and that repayment had not occurred as expected in the latest period, creating financial tensions, additional deficits and the depletion of the Working Capital Fund.

1064. He indicated that his group supported the proposed transfers between budget lines and endorsed the relevant decision points. He also supported the proposal to increase the Working Capital Fund through an exceptional transfer of the net premium. Noting that the fund had remained at 35 million Swiss francs (CHF) since 1993, he supported the temporary derogation from the financial regulations and requested clarification from the Treasurer on the appropriate level of the fund.

1065. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, a Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania expressed concern that the biennium had closed with a net deficit, financed through the exhaustion of the Working Capital Fund and internal borrowing. She stated that

this highlighted the fragility of the Organization's financial base and the risks associated with delayed contributions.

- 1066.** She acknowledged the proposal to transfer the net premium to the Working Capital Fund but cautioned that this diversion of resources could affect Member States' support to programmes and potentially undermine confidence in the incentive system. She stressed that such measures could have implications for technical cooperation activities, particularly in countries facing economic challenges. While supporting the decision point, she called for safeguards to protect programme delivery and for continued dialogue with affected regions.
- 1067. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Paraguay voiced concern over the increase in outstanding contributions and its impact on liquidity, which had led to the depletion of the Working Capital Fund and reliance on internal borrowing. She stressed the importance of reviewing the adequacy of the Working Capital Fund, noting that its level had not been adjusted since 1993.
- 1068.** She indicated that the proposal to transfer the net premium required careful consideration and should remain exceptional, so as not to undermine incentives for timely payment from Member States. GRULAC supported the draft decision.
- 1069. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of France noted with concern the high level of outstanding contributions and resulting deficit. She emphasized that the depletion of the Working Capital Fund underscored the need for ambitious structural reforms to strengthen the financial resilience of the Organization.
- 1070.** She acknowledged that the depletion of the Working Capital Fund created greater uncertainty for the Organization. However, the net premium was used as an incentive for Member States to pay their contributions in full and on time. Repurposing the net premium might reduce the urgency for Member States in making payment, without having an impact on Member States that were in arrears. Furthermore, the situation might entail an additional burden for Member States that systematically complied with their constitutional obligation. She encouraged the Office to explore alternative solutions to increase the ILO's resilience, including learning from best practices across the UN system. IMEC supported subparagraph (a) of the decision.
- 1071. A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) indicated that there was no standard methodology across UN agencies regarding the level of working capital funds. He stated that, in his view, an appropriate level would correspond to approximately three months of operating expenditure, estimated at around CHF100 million. Clarifications were provided regarding the immediate impact of the proposed transfer, which would result in the net premium amount of some CHF19 million being made available to the Office for immediate use as soon as an International Labour Conference decision would be taken in June 2026.
- 1072.** Upon resumption of the discussions on 30 March 2026, the Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, which had been proposed by IMEC and circulated by the Office in advance:

The Governing Body decided:

- (a) in accordance with article 16 of the Financial Regulations, to approve the transfers between the budget items listed in table 3 of Appendix I;
- (b) to recommend to the International Labour Conference at its 114th Session (June 2026) that it:
 - (i) decide, in derogation of article 11(5) of the Financial Regulations, that 50 per cent of the 2024–25 net premium as per article 11(7), of CHF19,032,213 be retained by the

Office and transferred to the Working Capital Fund, thus bringing its level to CHF~~44,516,106.554,032,213~~;

(ii) adopt the following resolution:

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,

Noting that the operation of the Swiss franc assessment system resulted in a net premium of CHF19,032,213 in the 2024–25 biennium,

Decides, in derogation of article 11(5) of the Financial Regulations, to transfer 50 per cent ~~the full amount~~ of the net premium as per article 11(7), earned of CHF19,032,213 to the Working Capital Fund, thus bringing its level to CHF~~44,516,106.554,032,213~~.

1073. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, a Government representative of France explained that the amendment sought to allocate half of the net premium to the Working Capital Fund – the portion corresponding to the amount that would in any event be reimbursed to Member States based on exchange rate gains – while retaining the remaining half as an incentive for Member States who pay their contributions in full and in a timely manner. She emphasized that such a measure should be exceptional and urged the Office to continue exploring additional options to enhance the Organization's financial resilience, to be presented to the Governing Body in the context of broader reform discussions.

1074. The Employer spokesperson indicated openness to the amendment and to any proposals aimed at supporting the Office in fulfilling its mandate, and sought the views of other constituents.

1075. The Worker spokesperson also expressed openness to various options for increasing the Working Capital Fund and deferred to Governments, noting that the issue primarily concerned them.

1076. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, a Government representative of Paraguay expressed support for the amendment.

1077. A Government representative of Niger sought clarification regarding the objectives and implications of the amendment, in particular its impact on the Organization, on Member States that pay their contributions on time, and on those in arrears.

1078. The representative of the Director-General (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) recalled that, under the original proposal, the full amount of the net premium would be transferred to the Working Capital Fund as an exceptional derogation. Under normal circumstances, half of the net premium would be used as an incentive fund to provide credits to Member States that had fully paid their contributions for the relevant biennium, while the other half would be distributed to all Member States proportionally, contingent upon their settlement of any arrears.

1079. He further clarified that the proposed amendment would preserve the incentive mechanism for Member States that had paid in full, allowing them to retain credits in accordance with existing provisions, while redirecting the portion otherwise distributed more broadly to the Working Capital Fund. The immediate impact of the amendment would be that only the latter portion would be transferred, thereby allowing the fund to be increased by approximately CHF9.5 million.

1080. A Government representative of South Africa voiced support for the amendment.

1081. The Worker spokesperson expressed hope that Member States would pay contributions in a timely manner, and supported the amendment.

1082. The Employer spokesperson stated his support of the amendment and emphasized that incentives for timely payment were welcome. He suggested setting deadlines for the settlement of arrears, which could further enhance the effectiveness of the incentive measure, considering the financial challenges arising from delayed contributions. His group supported the amendment.

Decision

1083. The Governing Body decided:

- (c) in accordance with article 16 of the Financial Regulations, to approve the transfers between the budget items listed in table 3 of Appendix I;
- (d) to recommend to the International Labour Conference at its 114th Session (June 2026) that it:
 - (i) decide, in derogation of article 11(5) of the Financial Regulations, that 50 per cent of the 2024–25 net premium as per article 11(7), of CHF19,032,213 be retained by the Office and transferred to the Working Capital Fund, thus bringing its level to CHF44,516,106.5;
 - (ii) adopt the following resolution:
 - (iii) The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,
 - (iv) *Noting* that the operation of the Swiss franc assessment system resulted in a net premium of CHF19,032,213 in the 2024–25 biennium,
 - (v) *Decides*, in derogation of article 11(5) of the Financial Regulations, to transfer 50 per cent of the net premium as per article 11(7), earned of CHF19,032,213 to the Working Capital Fund, thus bringing its level to CHF44,516,106.5.

(GB.356/PFA/3, paragraph 20, as amended by the Governing Body)

4. Other financial matters: The financial position of the ILO's regular budget in 2026–27 and potential contingency measures in case of an income shortfall (GB.356/PFA/4)

1084. The Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, which had been proposed by the European Union Member States and circulated by the Office in advance:

The Governing Body:

- (a) took note of the financial implications of the reform measures for the approved Programme and Budget for 2026–27, as presented in document GB.356/PFA/4;
- (b) took note of the potential contingency measures and associated budgetary implications described in the document, and requested the Office to keep the Governing Body informed of cash-flow projections and present a contingency framework for the 2026–27 biennium with guiding principles, methodology and an outline of measures for approval at its 357th Session (June 2026), which should be in line with the strategic guidance provided by the Governing Body under item INS/7 at its 355th and 356th Sessions to report back as necessary;
- (c) requested the Office to report back to the Governing Body for decisions on any contingency measures that may require its approval;

(ed) requested the Office to present updated financial information on assessed contributions and the implementation of any activated contingency measures at its 358th Session (November 2026).

- 1085. The Employer spokesperson** acknowledged that the Office was making every effort to engage in dialogue to avoid activating the contingency measures. Clarity was needed as to which activities would be prioritized in the context of the ILO reform and would therefore continue to be funded if the contingency measures needed to be applied. Without information on which thematic or priority action programmes might be reduced, suspended or eliminated if more drastic financial measures became necessary, it was difficult for constituents to assess the potential implications for their own respective areas of work, for ongoing commitments, and for partnerships that had been already established. He therefore requested greater visibility on which programmes were most at risk and how the decisions would be aligned with the Organization's strategic priorities.
- 1086.** He sought clarity on the triggers that would lead to the implementation of the contingency measures, the timelines for such a process, and how and when constituents would be consulted. Those were essential elements that would ensure predictability, transparency and meaningful engagement by the Governing Body and ILO constituents, at a time when significant programme decisions might need to be taken. If the anticipated funding was not received in the coming months, the Organization could not wait until November to take decisions, as operational adjustments affecting programme activities across the ILO might already be necessary. The Employers' group therefore requested a full update in June 2026 to allow the Governing Body to assess the situation in a timely manner and, if necessary, provide guidance before decisions became unavoidable. If the expected funding had not materialized by April or May, the Organization might need to move quickly to ensure financial stability by safeguarding its most critical priorities. At the June session, the Office should provide much more detailed information addressing the concerns raised by constituents, including clearer possible implications for thematic programmes and the process and timelines for activating any contingency measures. The Employers' group would consider proposing amendments to draft decision based on the replies from the Office.
- 1087. The Worker spokesperson** emphasized that it was imperative to refine the approach to the current financial uncertainty. It was unclear from the purpose of the document whether it was the financial constraints or the ILO reform that had come first. The question remained as to whether the ILO could embark on a reform that implied financial investments when it was in an austerity situation of delayed, deferred or suspended spending and cost-efficiency measures deriving from a lack of liquidity and significant arrears. He sought clarification on his group's understanding of the situation: that implementing the contingency measures would directly impact ongoing reform proposals, jeopardizing the establishment of the Global Service Centre and the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for example, and that the measures explored in document GB.356/PFA/4 were merely a set of possible measures. With regard to the impact on staff, priority should be given to the proposals made by the Staff Union.
- 1088.** Without all of the relevant figures, the Governing Body could not make alternative proposals; however, it should mandate the Office to explore alternative contingency measures, including reversible measures, that would safeguard the ILO's constitutional mandate and protect staff. Financial crises should never be used as a reason to weaken accountability or oversight, especially in areas protecting workers' rights and upholding international obligations. Across the UN system, funding problems had disrupted human rights bodies and reduced civil society participation, which showed the real risks of letting budget pressure erode oversight and, ultimately, the multilateral system.

- 1089.** Contingency measures must be strictly constrained to the current biennium and must not set a precedent for the next biennium. Temporary cuts must not be allowed to permanently degrade the ILO's structural capacity, and the budget for the next biennium must reflect its full mandate.
- 1090.** Regarding the liquidity gap, he asked the Office whether it would be possible to borrow from other institutions to bridge the shortfall or to request additional contributions from Member States. As other organizations were facing the same situation, he asked whether the ILO could follow the model of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which was maintaining the approved budget level and treating the missing contributions as receivable debt rather than cutting programmatic ambitions. That would be fair to those Member States that had paid their contributions and also to the ILO and its constituents. It would include: protecting constitutional mandates, especially normative, supervisory and rights-related work; making targeted small, smart cuts instead of broad reductions; reinforcing partnerships in the field while keeping tripartism at the centre; diversifying funding sources while maintaining independence; and maintaining strong oversight.
- 1091.** The Workers' group considered that the current draft decision merely requesting the Governing Body to take note of the situation was insufficient, and would examine the amended version proposed by the EU Member States. The group agreed that the Governing Body must discuss the situation again in June.
- 1092.** He asked the Office what the minimum requirements were that would prevent a 20 per cent reduction, including the minimum amount of the Working Capital Fund and the minimum proportion of Member States' assessed contributions paid for the year. For example, if 75 or 80 per cent of contributions were received before the June session, the Governing Body might be able to consider a 12.5 per cent reduction instead and avoid having to cut a quarter of staff positions by the end of 2027.
- 1093. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States,** a Government representative of Cyprus said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom aligned themselves with his statement. He recognized the need to define contingency measures and requested additional information on the financial impact, including the costs of each measure. The contingency measures would significantly impact the ILO's ability to deliver on its mandate and must be in line with the strategic vision of the reform. He urged all Member States to pay their arrears and assessed contributions in full and on time to avoid the implementation of contingency measures.
- 1094.** Concerning the potential staffing reductions, he requested clarification on the safeguards that would be applied to protect normative and technical expertise, the consultations and statutory requirements involved, the timelines for fulfilling the obligations, and how geographical and gender balance would be ensured while preserving the Organization's long-term capacity.
- 1095.** To ensure the involvement of the Governing Body in shaping a contingency plan, the EU Member States had proposed an amendment requesting the Office to present a contingency framework for the 2026–27 biennium with guiding principles, methodology and an outline of measures for approval at the June session, which should be in line with the strategic guidance provided by the Governing Body under item INS/7 at the current and previous sessions. Such a framework would enhance transparency and clarity regarding the rationale for and modalities of any contingency measures. In view of the separation of powers between the Director-General and the Governing Body, the proposed amendment also requested the Office

to report back to the Governing Body for decisions on any contingency measures that might require its approval. The amendment also reflected the fact that document GB.356/PFA/4 described the measures as merely “potential” contingency measures. The EU and its Member States requested the Office to share all information on the financial situation, including the status of internal borrowings and Working Capital Fund replenishment, before the June session.

- 1096. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of South Africa acknowledged that the contingency plans were necessary; however, the proposed measures carried profound implications for the ILO’s mandate and constituents. Before it could fully consider their merits, the Africa group requested clarification on the income projections and cash flow assumptions that would trigger the measures in the third quarter of 2026, the underlying financial scenarios, and the scale, likelihood and specific timing of the anticipated shortfall.
- 1097.** The proposed 50 per cent reduction of the regular budget technical cooperation (RBTC) account and the significant cuts to non-staff resources for travel, seminars and operational activities were deeply concerning. Those were not administrative extras but the very means by which the ILO delivered support and engaged with tripartite constituents on the ground. He requested details on the Office’s strategy to insulate priority programmes and field operations from the cuts and, more specifically, which thematic priorities or technical programmes were most at risk. He sought assurance that the Organization’s ability to deliver on its core mandate to those who needed it most would not be irreparably damaged. In relation to the contingency measures, the group remained concerned about the proposed reduction of 15.1 per cent for field operations, which appeared disproportionate compared to other areas and would hinder the Office’s commitment to strengthening field operations.
- 1098.** The Africa group requested details of the number of staff members who had departed in the last year through attrition, early retirement and other means, the areas affected and the resultant savings. The potential elimination of up to 350 positions in a single biennium would be a drastic reduction in workforce capacity, particularly considering those who had already left the Organization. It would risk catastrophic outcomes for delivery and would fundamentally undermine the very efficiency and effectiveness the exercise sought to achieve. The group strongly urged the Office to reconsider the scale of the approach. If workforce adjustments were unavoidable, they must be a last resort. The group called on the Office to prioritize the use of vacant posts and natural attrition to minimize the impact on staff; establish ironclad criteria to safeguard critical technical expertise and protect institutional memory; and clearly articulate how the Governing Body would determine which positions were deemed non-critical and which regions, programmes and departments would be affected. It was essential for the ILO to practise genuine good-faith social dialogue with staff representatives throughout the process. Overall, the Office should intensify its exploration of alternative measures that could mitigate or obviate the need for such severe contingency measures.
- 1099. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC,** a Government representative of Paraguay, noting that uncertainties remained regarding the timely payment of assessed contributions and arrears and that countries currently had limited fiscal space, reaffirmed the need for all Member States to redouble their efforts to meet their financial obligations to the ILO. The group noted the non-exhaustive list of contingency measures proposed by the Office in paragraph 11 of the document, particularly those that might directly affect jobs, and requested greater clarity on the process for planning, approving and implementing them. In relation to the consultation and approval referred to in paragraph 10 of the document, she requested further information on the role of the Governing Body in relation to the application of the Financial Regulations

and the Staff Regulations in the determination of contingency measures. Furthermore, as subparagraph (c) of the draft decision stated that the Governing Body requested the Office to present updated financial information on the implementation of any activated contingency measures at its 358th Session (November 2026), she asked whether, if approved, that would mean that the Office could implement any contingency measures it considered necessary without prior authorization from the Governing Body. It was essential that all Governing Body members and Office staff shared the same understanding of how contingency measures would be planned and applied in the event that they were required.

- 1100. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Spain commended the Office for the reductions of around 8.9 per cent of the approved regular budget for 2026–27 for the first phase of the reform, and noted that the additional reductions indicated in document GB.356/INS/7 for the 2028–29 biennium would represent a cumulated reduction of 12.5 per cent over both biennia. However, as there were inconsistencies between that document and document GB.356/PFA/4, he sought clarity on: which figure accurately reflected the deficit; what the estimated impact was of cumulative staffing reductions and whether the Office could ensure that the ILO's ability to deliver its core mandate was protected; which specific posts or units would be affected under the different scenarios; and whether the Office had considered general measures, such as a time-bound reduction of working hours, as an alternative to involuntary separations.
- 1101.** He asked whether the 350 positions identified in document GB.356/PFA/4 for potential reduction as a contingency measure included the 120 positions identified in document GB.356/INS/7 for reduction over the two biennia, and requested a timeline detailing the anticipated savings from the elimination of positions and the specific one-off costs of complying with statutory requirements and consultations.
- 1102.** He requested clearer information on the extent to which the reductions in the first phase of the reform were structural and sustainable rather than deferrals or temporary measures. He sought clarification on the distinction between “reductions in the operational budget” and “reductions in the regular budget allocations” in tables 1 and 2, respectively; in addition, IMEC would welcome a third table showing the reductions by organizational cluster in relation to the contingency measures only. The group would also welcome a clearer presentation of the implementation milestones and accountabilities for the main levers of the reform, and of how progress would be demonstrated ahead of the key decisions in 2026. In addition, he asked how the Office would ensure that any contingency measures remained consistent with the priorities in the context of the reform.
- 1103.** IMEC sought clarity on the thresholds and indicators that would trigger the contingency measures and whether there was a mechanism for deactivating them, and on which measures could be taken under the existing delegated authority and which would require the Governing Body's approval. While the Director-General had the discretion to implement the contingency measures, given their scope and their impact on human resources, the Governing Body should play an active role in determining them.
- 1104.** He requested a clear assessment of the impact of the contingency measures on the ILO's ability to deliver its core functions and which criteria would be applied to safeguard specific areas of its mandate, including retention of critical skills and institutional memory. He also requested the Office to confirm its capacity to adequately monitor and evaluate the reform and downsizing measures, as risks could increase during the restructuring. He also asked how the Office planned to restore the health of its finances, including the Working Capital Fund. IMEC could support the EU Member States' proposed amendment to the draft decision.

- 1105. Speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries,**²³ a Government representative of Denmark also supported for the amendment proposed by the EU Member States. He expressed concern about the plan to take a decision on the proposed contingency measure regarding the termination of up to 350 staff members at a late stage, and the potential impact on institutional memory and the Organization's ability to deliver continuously on its mandate and respond to constituents' needs. Involuntary separations were never desirable but were sometimes unavoidable, including in national contexts; if an early decision could minimize the number of posts that would ultimately need to be eliminated, that should be taken into consideration. It was of paramount importance that the ILO could continue delivering on its core mandate. If, for example, the supervisory mechanism or programmes had to be paused or scaled down, increased efficiencies in the staff portfolios based on the reprioritization exercise would be preferable. A recruitment freeze was a simple and efficient way to adapt to a new situation in the short term; he had understood from the previous discussion that the Office had already been implementing it since June 2025, yet it was now being presented as a contingency measure.
- 1106.** Deferring difficult decisions until it was too late to act was not the most efficient course of action, and the Office should take more ambitious steps now in order to avoid lengthy and highly demanding processes in the future and to ensure a sustainable way forward. It was important to have a realistic long-term plan with concrete reform and contingency measures, and a coherent approach for both types of measures.
- 1107. A Government representative of France** aligned herself with the statements of the EU and its Member States and IMEC. She noted that the financial situation remained fragile, despite the contributions received since the beginning of the year. The reserves had been largely depleted and uncertainty remained regarding the payment of arrears. She called on all Member States urgently to comply with their obligations and to pay their contributions in full and on time.
- 1108.** The Governing Body must swiftly take bold and responsible measures, as any delay could necessitate even more painful measures. For almost a year, ILO staff had been continuing their work without always having the required resources or any certainty about their own future within the Organization. She therefore urged the Office to further clarify the proposed measures in consultation with the Staff Union. Furthermore, the Governing Body must be in a position to play its part fully. If implemented, the contingency measures would have a major and lasting impact on the ILO's ability to fulfil its mandate and could bring the structural reform currently under way to an abrupt halt. She encouraged Governing Body members to support the amendment proposed by the EU Member States.
- 1109. A Government representative of China** lamented the fact that the Organization was facing serious financial difficulties due to the substantial arrears in contributions by certain countries. China had always conscientiously fulfilled its obligations as a Member State and had supported the ILO in exercising its functions with a positive and responsible attitude.
- 1110.** He expressed concern about the 50 per cent cut in the RBTC account. Technical cooperation was the key means by which the Organization fulfilled its core mandate and responded to the needs of developing countries; it was a key pillar in advancing the four pillars of decent work. A substantial reduction in the corresponding expenditure would significantly impact the Organization's capacity and effectiveness in providing assistance to its Members, particularly

²³ Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

developing countries. The Office should make every effort to maintain the level of technical support it provided, through innovative working methods, optimized resource allocation and making full use of technology, and avoid passing on financial pressures to Member States who needed assistance.

- 1111.** The reduction of 350 staff positions by the end of 2027 under the proposed contingency measures was deeply regrettable. The Office should continue exploring further measures to reduce non-staff costs and make every effort to avoid large-scale lay-offs. If involuntary separations were ultimately unavoidable, it would be essential to adhere strictly to the principles of fairness, transparency and consultation, while maintaining diversity and representativeness among staff and giving full consideration to the concerns and circumstances of under-represented countries. He encouraged the Office to explore further measures, such as suspending home leave, and to apply the resultant savings to ensure the delivery of core operations. He requested an update on the cash flow and assessed contributions at the June session.
- 1112. A Government representative of Brazil** observed that the financial difficulties resulting from the non-payment of assessed contributions would be a recurrent issue, with no sustainable solution in sight. Even if the reform measures provided for in document GB.356/INS/7 to generate savings of 12.5 per cent over four years were fully implemented, the Governing Body would apparently be informed annually of emergency measures to reduce expenditure. Further clarification was therefore needed on how the Office would assess the situation and what measures it envisaged to avoid the need for a new set of contingency measures in 2027 and subsequent years.
- 1113.** The loss of more than 300 staff members was likely to have extremely detrimental effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization's work. He noted that although the Office's assessment indicated that savings equivalent to 175 positions would suffice for future years, the figure would need to be doubled in 2027 to offset the resources not saved in 2026. However, as the elimination of 350 positions as a contingency measure would be perpetuated for the subsequent fiscal years, he sought clarification on whether a further 175 jobs would actually need to be cut if an initial reduction of 175 was sufficient.
- 1114.** It was regrettable that the contingency measures would negatively affect the implementation of the strengthening of the ILO's presence in the field, an issue of particular importance for GRULAC countries. He renewed his Government's call to Member States, particularly major contributors, to ensure the timely payment of contributions and the settlement of arrears, noting that uncertainty regarding those resources undermined the Organization's ability to act effectively and to deliver on its mandate.
- 1115.** Brazil saw great merit in the amendment proposed by the EU Member States, but would listen to other Governing Body members' views and the clarifications provided by the Office before expressing a final position.
- 1116. A Government representative of Barbados** stated the need for balance between ensuring the Organization could deliver on its mandate and implementing reforms that aligned with the funding realities. Everything possible should be done to limit the number of separations of staff, many of whom had dependants and many of whom had invested their lives in the ILO and the cause of social justice and decent work. There was no pain-free way of adjusting to a 20 per cent reduction in funding. The Organization must act quickly, because delaying would result in a larger number of separations. Losing 350 of the ILO staff complement would also have a significant negative impact on the work of the Organization and its ability to deliver on its core mandate. The matter was of such scale and gravity and was so consequential to the

future of the Organization that the Governing Body should receive an update at its June session.

- 1117. A Government representative of Bangladesh** expressed concern at the 9.6 per cent reduction in resources for the priority action programmes, compared with the 8.9 per cent overall reduction foreseen for the first phase of implementation of the reform, and at the proposed 50 per cent reduction of an already small RBTC allocation. She urged the Office to reduce the amount by which RBTC funds were cut, as they were the only resources available to bridge a shortfall in donor levels for ILO programmes.
- 1118.** She welcomed the assurances that appropriate consultations would be held and approval procedures followed in the event the contingency measures had to be adopted, and expressed confidence that the Office would not make any workforce adjustments that disproportionately affected women staff members and those from under-represented countries.
- 1119.** She requested updates on the payment of assessed contributions, including arrears, as without a proper understanding of the cash flow, the Governing Body could not pre-empt any contingency measures. If no significant payments had been received before the final deadline, the Office should undertake timely consultations and follow the necessary approval procedure before implementing contingency measures.
- 1120. A Government representative of Mexico** said that timely and transparent information on cash flow developments was needed so that the Governing Body's decisions were based on up-to-date analyses. It was essential for the Governing Body to have clarity on the criteria and timing for activating any contingency measures, which would enable constituents to fully understand the implications. For Mexico, preserving the ILO's tripartite mandate and technical capacity was a priority; in the event of adjustments, those core functions must be protected above operational activities such as the organization of events, travel or seminars, the reduction of which would not have the same structural impact.
- 1121.** Any decisions affecting staff should be taken with full respect for social dialogue, prioritizing the elimination of vacant posts and reassignments, and fairness in the application of criteria. It was essential to maintain the Organization's institutional capacity and the geographical diversity of its staff so that it retained the expertise and balanced representation characteristic of the multilateral system.
- 1122. A Government representative of Namibia** expressed concern about the ongoing cash flow challenges facing the ILO, and strongly urged Member States to fully and promptly fulfil their financial obligations to enable the ILO to effectively fulfil its mandate. He also requested the ILO to engage with Member States to improve payment performance, particularly for those countries in arrears.
- 1123.** The potential loss of up to 350 positions, compounded by the uncertainty on which ILO departments would be affected, would result in low staff morale and a significant reduction in the Organization's capacity to deliver in the short, medium and long term. It was imperative that any staffing decisions must prioritize fairness, transparency and social dialogue, taking account of the importance of protecting critical technical expertise and avoiding unintended consequences and impacts.
- 1124.** The proposed reductions would have adverse consequences in various contexts, including non-staff aspects such as travel and seminars. For the ILO to deliver effectively, mission travel was not optional; missions were the only truly effective mechanism for the ILO to support national constituents, advance decent work priorities and ensure that the Organization's mandate was implemented on the ground. He therefore requested the Office to ensure that

the proposed cuts to travel and technical missions did not disproportionately affect Member States without an ILO presence, such as Namibia, and did not create unintended inequities.

1125. A Government representative of Zimbabwe underscored that the proposed 50 per cent reduction of the RBTC account represented a significant setback for the ILO's missions and jeopardized its ability to carry out critical activities effectively in the field and at headquarters. Any cutbacks of such magnitude would reverberate across all major areas of the ILO's work. The implications of the reductions must be considered in detail before any decisions were made. The impact might not be easily reversible and progress to date might be delayed or even reversed. The ILO's strategic vision should include proposals to encourage Member States to make timely payment of their assessed contributions. The ILO had contributed to the stability and prosperity of nations and regional integration, and any barriers to delivering those outcomes would be a setback for the very ideals the ILO championed. She urged the Office to inform the Governing Body of developments at the next session.

1126. A representative of the Director-General (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) confirmed that a 20 per cent reduction would mean that the ILO would lose a huge amount of resources to deal with its programme of work. A decision on the contingency measures would have to be made in the third quarter of 2026 at the latest, because if there was insufficient cash in September, salaries could not be paid and other payments could not be made from October onwards. The fact that Member States could pay their assessed contributions at any point in the year represented another element of uncertainty. The Office would examine how the contingency measures would be implemented. It was hoped that some would be easily reversible, but others might not be. The situation was a zero-sum game: maintaining the non-staff RBTC resources or reducing them by less than 50 per cent would potentially require further reductions in staff positions. The Office had taken on board all comments on prioritization, the need for clarity and transparency, and the call for regular reporting and an update at the June session.

1127. Responding to a question from the Government representative of Brazil, he explained that if the timing of the decision had been before the start of the biennium, a reduction of 175 positions would have balanced the books. As the decision had to be made halfway through the biennium where expenses had already been made, only one year's worth of budget would remain to pay staff, so the number of positions to be reduced would need to be doubled as an interim arrangement in the second year of the biennium.

1128. In response to the Worker spokesperson's questions, he said that it would indeed be prudent to carry on with certain reform measures despite a lack of liquidity because they could help the Organization to actively manage a lack of liquidity in the future. Moreover, there was no reason to stop reform measures that had no financial cost. The minimum proportion of contributions received that would prevent the contingency measures would likely be between 85 and 90 per cent, depending on when and how the contributions were received. In the past, the ILO had had one of the highest rates of collection of assessed contributions from its Member States, at 98 per cent collected over a four-year rolling average. With regard to borrowing, article 21(1)(b) of the Financial Regulations allowed the Director-General to request the Governing Body's authorization to borrow funds; however, that would mean repaying it with interest. In addition, article 21(3) allowed the Director-General, in cases of emergencies or contingencies, to request the Governing Body and the Conference to approve an additional assessment upon Member States, in which case an additional assessment would be levied for the second year of the biennium. However, he was unaware of either of those provisions having been used in the history of the ILO. He confirmed that the Working Capital Fund was currently exhausted. The

Financial Regulations required that the Working Capital Fund be replenished from arrears paid back for prior years, but only CHF3.8 million had been received in arrears as of 23 March 2026.

- 1129.** The provisional deficit for the 2024–25 biennium currently stood at US\$52.6 million; however, the final level would be confirmed once the external auditors had agreed the final expenditure for the year 2025.
- 1130.** While there was a degree of overlap between documents GB.356/PFA/4 and GB.356/INS/7, the former addressed contingency measures that would need to be taken at a certain point to address a shortfall of income whereas the latter was a managed response to a reform process, so there was not always a direct link. In terms of what measures would be taken and when, document GB.356/PFA/4 provided an example of what could happen in the scenario of a 20 per cent reduction in income, but other options were available. The reduction in staff would only be as a last resort.
- 1131.** The status of the assessed contributions received from all Member States was updated as contributions were received, once weekly at a minimum. The information was available on the ILO website, and the Office was working to ensure that it could be found more easily.
- 1132. The Worker spokesperson** sought clarification on whether the receivable debt would be carried over to the budget for 2028–29. His understanding was that all contingency measures had been discussed in relation to the 2026–27 biennium only and that the Governing Body would begin to discuss measures for 2028–29 at its November session. He also understood that the option to use borrowing to bridge any shortfall as of September had not been ruled out. Finally, he asked whether, if half of the CHF232 million in arrears was received that year, the arrears would return to their normal level of CHF150–160 million, thus making the financial situation more viable.
- 1133. The Employer spokesperson** noted that his group and some Governments had raised key questions about which departments and workstreams would be impacted, whether they were in the field or at headquarters, how they would be determined, when constituents would be consulted, and how the Office would plan and implement the measures. He requested the Office to provide the Governing Body with a written reply.
- 1134. The representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) responded to the Worker spokesperson that the receivable debt for the ILO was never written off. The 2028–29 budget discussion would indeed begin at the November session and any factors would be subject to discussion and approval by the Governing Body. Options for borrowing, whatever the source, would have to be put to the Governing Body and approved formally by the Member States. The Working Capital Fund was CHF35 million. The answer to the question about the arrears was that that would maybe regulate the situation, but it would also depend on future payments.
- (The discussion of the item resumed at a later sitting.)*
- 1135. The Chairperson** drew the Governing Body's attention to the written response of the Office to the issues raised.²⁴
- 1136. The Employer spokesperson** said that meaningful consultation with Governing Body members was essential before any contingency measures were triggered to ensure confidence in the process. Such measures needed to be based on proper prioritization and reprioritization to reflect a clear and ambitious strategic vision in line with the ILO Centenary Declaration for

²⁴ GB.356/PFA/4/Office response.

the Future of Work (2019). Prioritization should reflect core priorities beyond standards, including employment, skills and productivity. Sustainable enterprises must be recognized as an essential part of the Decent Work Agenda. Any relocation strategy should preserve the decision taken at the 355th Session of the Governing Body, so that policy expertise remained at the ILO headquarters. Those efforts should be guided by a clear and robust methodology with timelines, to be discussed at the 357th Session of the Governing Body in June 2026.

1137. The Worker spokesperson said that it was more important to reflect on whether 80 per cent of the assessed contributions were going to be paid by June 2026 rather than question the other 20 per cent. It was crucially important to have at least 80–85 per cent by the summer, so as to know whether to trigger the 20 per cent contingency measure by September. All Member States should pay their contributions in a timely manner. Those States which had not paid were present and were conscious of the Organization's financial constraints. If the 80 per cent were not paid, it would be necessary to think of a step-by-step plan with alternative options. The Workers' group would appreciate more information on the establishment of a revolving fund, as mentioned by the Director-General. While those who had paid could not bail out those who had not contributed, certain States from the global South might have the possibility to contribute differently, which had led to the proposal to create the so-called Philadelphia Fund so that the ILO could fulfil its constitutional mandate. Similarly, the Government of Switzerland had reiterated its offer to support the ILO provided that the necessary normative, technical and policy expertise were retained at the ILO headquarters in Geneva. Third, the Organization should be prepared, if necessary, to borrow funds, as referred to by South Africa, and should present the necessary documentation to the following Governing Body session. The Office had stated that the Financial Regulations allowed for that, although it had not been done in the past 50 years. The final worst case scenario was that the Office would reconsider the breakdown of contingency reductions by organizational clusters, as indicated in document GB.356/PFA/4. The table provided showed cuts of between 10 and 80 per cent. For example, 15 per cent cuts were planned for field operations, with US\$45 million less in the "disaster case" scenario. One of the biggest proposed cuts was not therefore in line with the political statements made and the Office proposal to have a further 90 posts across field offices. The Workers' group accepted the amendments made to the draft decisions.

1138. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States, a Government representative of Cyprus said that, following consultations, the EU Member States proposed a subamendment to their own amendment to add, in subparagraph (b), the words "with a timeline". The proposed amendment to subparagraph (b) was motivated by the need to ensure the involvement of the Governing Body in the important process of shaping a contingency plan should that prove necessary in the event of an income shortfall of up to 20 per cent in assessed contributions during the current year. It underlined that the contingency measures provided in the document were potential ones and requested the Office to present a contingency framework for the 2026–27 biennium, which would include guiding principles, methodology and an outline of measures, with a timeline for approval at the Governing Body's June session. The framework should be in line with the strategic guidance provided by the Governing Body in the context of the reform process at its 355th and 356th Sessions. Such a framework would enhance transparency and clarity regarding the rationale for and modalities of any contingency measures that would eventually form part of the contingency plan. Mindful of the separation of powers between the Director-General and the Governing Body, he recalled that the proposed amendment in the new subparagraph (c) requested the Office to report back to the Governing Body for decisions on any contingency measures that might require its approval.

- 1139. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of South Africa said that his group supported the amendment as subamended.
- 1140. The Government representative of South Africa** asked if one day would be long enough for the June session of the Governing Body, given that there were so many critical issues to be discussed, and, consequently, if a decision could be taken to extend the session to two days.
- 1141. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Spain said that the Governing Body should be kept informed, and, where appropriate, should be invited to provide further guidance and approval, before any contingency measure with broad implications was decided upon. IMEC wished for a clear distinction to be made between measures that fell under delegated authority and those that required Governing Body approval.
- 1142.** Owing to uncertainty over the timing of incoming funds, he requested the Office to provide greater clarity on the specific timelines, thresholds and indicators that would trigger contingency measures, and on the sequence in which they would be introduced. He asked if there would be a mechanism to deactivate contingency measures should the liquidity situation improve.
- 1143.** IMEC requested the Office to produce a methodology that included criteria to be applied before deciding on cuts in specific areas or critical functions. It should include an analysis of the anticipated savings from the abolition of positions and the identification of critical areas of work to be protected. The Office should prioritize reversible measures that did not constrain the Organization's future capacity to deliver its core mandate. That should be achieved through disciplined reprioritization and improved efficiency. The Office should minimize the loss of technical expertise, institutional knowledge and experienced staff, and mitigate impacts through the reassignment of staff to balance disproportionate reductions in units or locations.
- 1144.** IMEC noted with concern that the cumulative staffing impact could extend to approximately 410 positions when combined with reductions already envisaged under the reform process. It stressed the importance of full transparency on staffing implications as part of the methodology to be presented to the Governing Body at its 357th Session. He looked forward to the outcome of negotiations with the Staff Union to apply temporary measures, such as a time-bound reduction of working hours, across all posts as an alternative to involuntary separations. The Office should develop measures aimed at strengthening financial sustainability and managing potential income shortfalls over the medium term.
- 1145.** IMEC commended the Office for making available a dedicated website that provided regular updates on the financial situation, progress with the reform and related financial implications. The website should provide a clear overview of the implementation milestones and the responsibilities relating to the main pillars of the reform, and should demonstrate progress ahead of key decisions regarding contingency measures. The website should help the Governing Body to monitor and assess the reform and staff reductions. IMEC accepted the amendment submitted by the EU, as subamended.
- 1146. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Paraguay said, in respect of the proposed amendments, that GRULAC could be in agreement with subparagraph (b). Regarding subparagraph (c), GRULAC had some concerns and would like there to be a clear division of the respective responsibilities regarding the contingency measures. She asked which measures would require Governing Body approval and which would not.
- 1147. The representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) thanked members for their comments, which were very aligned. As far as possible the contingency measures would be aligned with the reform. Plans had already been made for a contingency

plan to be prepared for the June session, including triggers of when it should come into play and the associated actions and methodology, and he undertook to consult the Governing Body in the preparation of the document.

- 1148.** Regarding the revolving fund and borrowing, the Office would take steps to prepare those documents for the June session. The revolving fund was intricate to set up, and a separation must be maintained with what was already done with other funds. Regarding borrowing, the Office had not done it previously and would look into it. Collateral would have to be provided for a loan. The matter would be discussed in the document to indicate what would happen if the loan was not repaid. Prudence was required in that regard. Discussions with the Swiss Government would continue in order to reach an understanding regarding arrangements.
- 1149.** The timelines and sequence of events were to a large extent beyond the control of the Office. He noted that if the Office were to receive no more contributions from the current time, contingency measures would have to be put in place by the end of May. The timelines to be proposed would be based on triggers of when Member States paid their assessed contributions; there would be no definitive date.
- 1150.** The Office would ensure that all cuts taken in the first instance were reversible. The ultimate step of reducing staff positions would be taken as late as possible. The deactivation of measures was also part of the contingency plan. Liquidity was the issue. The more money that came in, the faster the measures could be lifted. A mechanism was in place that controlled all expenditure throughout the Office and it would be relatively easy to lift the measures if funding became available.
- 1151.** The Legal Adviser had provided advice regarding the mandate of the Director-General and the responsibility of the Governing Body. The Director-General's responsibility was the day-to-day management of the programme and budget and its delivery through the authority given by the International Labour Conference. The Governing Body's responsibilities were clear in respect of its instructions to the Director-General regarding the programme and budget as a whole. He suggested that maximum flexibility should be given to the Office at the present juncture on the basis that the Director-General could report to the Officers on a regular basis if necessary. It was difficult to manage the Organization on a day-to-day basis while having to report to the Governing Body on every activity. He was committed to reporting back to the Governing Body in June.
- 1152. The Director-General** said, with regard to the contingency plan, that, by default, any decision that could wait until June would be presented then. Flexibility referred to making time-bound decisions that could not be delayed. The guiding principle was that important urgent decisions would have to be made in the very short term.
- 1153.** Regarding the concern voiced by the Government representative of South Africa about having sufficient time to cover all items at the June session of the Governing Body, he suggested discussing it under item GB.356/INS/2/2. It might be possible for the Governing Body session to start on the last Friday afternoon of the International Labour Conference, thereby adding half a day.
- 1154.** On the subject of borrowing, he said that the caution voiced by the Treasurer and Financial Comptroller was to be taken seriously. The Director-General noted that a loan would have to be a bridging loan, which would correspond to a temporary situation. Yet he was unsure if the situation would be a temporary one. There were many uncertainties to be faced and thought must be given to how best to proceed.

- 1155.** With regard to the ongoing discussion with the host country, he said that he was determined to move ahead with the reform. Everything had been done to ensure that the memorandum of understanding was signed with the Staff Union. In the same spirit, he suggested putting on hold, in order to move forward peacefully, the potential relocation of 20 to 25 per cent of headquarters departments, which had been intended to save between US\$15 and US\$20 million per biennium, as the Workers, the Employers, the host country and other Member States were against it.
- 1156.** The Swiss delegation had offered a two-year suspension of the ILO's loan payment. That was not a cancellation of payment. A two-year suspension would result in a one-time saving of approximately US\$3 million and in the current circumstances every dollar counted. The condition attached to the offer was that the ILO must commit to not move its essential services out of Switzerland for ten years. Of course, any decision must take non-financial dimensions into account, but from a purely financial perspective, any move would help to save money in every budget. He would consider a one-year, two-year or three-year commitment, but in the current circumstances of uncertainty he would be failing in his responsibility as Director-General if he were to sign a ten-year commitment. If the Governing Body believed that politically a decision should be made to go ahead, in order to relieve tension, he would concur, but in such a volatile situation, where difficult decisions in the coming years could not be excluded, he believed that ten years was too long. There were some other dimensions where the ILO was already benefiting from the help of the Swiss authorities, such as regarding the renting out of free space and an initiative by the host country for the whole UN system in Geneva. It was important to ensure that the relationship with the host country was mutually beneficial.
- 1157. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC,** a Government representative of Peru thanked the Office for the explanations given and sought clarification on two points. On the basis of the explanations provided by the Treasurer and Financial Comptroller, he asked if adding the request for a timeline at the June session as proposed in subparagraph (b) of the subamendment was viable. Secondly, he had understood that subparagraph (c) was not feasible either, because there were no contingency measures that required the approval of the Governing Body.
- 1158. The representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) said, in response to the question regarding feasibility, that it was feasible with a lot of work.
- 1159. A Government representative of Switzerland,** authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, said that she was grateful to the Director-General for being so frank. She reiterated that the Swiss offer relating to 2025 had expired in view of the lack of response from the ILO. Consequently, a three-year suspension of loans was no longer under discussion. As explained the previous week, the host country was ready to implement emergency measures to support the ILO for 2026. The main measure related to the suspension of building loan repayments and, correcting the Director-General's statement, she said that it was not a temporary suspension, but a suspension for the year 2026. The other point that she wished to correct concerned the condition. Switzerland's condition was not for all services to remain in Geneva for a period of ten years. What was important for the host country was for the standard-setting, policy and technical departments of the Organization to remain in Geneva. It was essentially what the Governing Body had decided in November 2025. If that decision were implemented, it would be sufficient to meet the conditions.

Decision

1160. The Governing Body:

- (a) took note of the financial implications of the reform measures for the approved Programme and Budget for 2026–27, as presented in document GB.356/PFA/4;
- (b) took note of the potential contingency measures and associated budgetary implications described in the document, and requested the Office to keep the Governing Body informed of cash-flow projections and present a contingency framework for the 2026–27 biennium with guiding principles, methodology and an outline of measures with a timeline for approval at its 357th Session (June 2026), which should be in line with the strategic guidance provided by the Governing Body under item INS/7 at its 355th and 356th Sessions (November 2025 and March 2026);
- (c) requested the Office to report back to the Governing Body for decisions on any contingency measures that may require its approval;
- (d) requested the Office to present updated financial information on assessed contributions and the implementation of any activated contingency measures at its 358th Session (November 2026).

(GB.356/PFA/4, paragraph 20, as amended by the Governing Body)

Audit and Oversight Segment

5. Report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (GB.356/PFA/5)

- 1161. The Chairperson of the Independent Advisory Oversight Committee (IOAC)** presented the 18th annual report of the Committee covering the period from February 2025 to January 2026. He recalled that the Committee's role was to support the Governing Body in ensuring that the ILO maintained strong governance, sound financial management, effective oversight and robust internal control systems. During the reporting period, the Committee continued to engage closely with the Director-General, senior management and the key operational and oversight functions in reviewing the Organization's risk environment and oversight framework. He went on to highlight the key issues emphasized in the Committee's report for the consideration of the Governing Body.
- 1162.** He emphasized that the ILO's financial outlook remained a matter of serious concern, in particular the risk of an impending liquidity crisis, which could significantly constrain the delivery of its mandate. He stressed that this constituted a strategic challenge rather than a short-term operational issue and required forward planning and timely action.
- 1163.** With regard to human resources, he noted that the Committee had reviewed the progress on the skills-mapping exercise and the preparation of a new human resources strategy. While the skills-mapping exercise had yielded useful insights, it had experienced delays and was originally designed for a different organizational context. In view of the evolving financial situation, it was essential that workforce planning be aligned with potential future scenarios. The Committee therefore encouraged management to complete the remaining phases of the exercise and to ensure that the forthcoming strategy reflected the competencies required under different financial and operational conditions.

- 1164.** Referring to the broader institutional review under way, he underlined the importance of preserving the independence and effectiveness of key oversight and accountability functions, including internal audit, evaluation, ethics and mechanisms to deal with sexual exploitation and abuse. The Committee recommended that these functions remain located at headquarters in order to ensure proximity to senior management, consistency in oversight practices and the preservation of their independence.
- 1165.** With regard to the status of the ILO's internal control systems, while noting progress made, the Committee encouraged management to complete the actions identified in the statement of internal control to address issues raised in the staff survey and to strengthen oversight of development cooperation projects.
- 1166.** With regard to internal audit, he stated that the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight continued to deliver valuable work and maintained a constructive relationship with management. However, given the evolving risk profile of the Organization, including financial pressures, operational complexity and technological change, the Committee considered that current audit capacity might not be sufficient to address all priority risks and therefore encouraged management to ensure that adequate human resources were made available to enable the audit function to implement a work programme aligned with the Organization's risk environment.
- 1167.** With regard to the progress made in the implementation of previous oversight recommendations, the Committee noted that a significant proportion had been implemented or were in the final stages of implementation. Improvements had also been observed in governance processes and in mechanisms for tracking and following up on oversight recommendations. The Committee welcomed its interaction with the External Auditor to strengthen coordination between internal and external oversight mechanisms. Constructive engagement was critical to effective oversight.
- 1168.** In conclusion, he emphasized that while the ILO continued to maintain a solid framework of oversight and accountability, careful attention was required from both management and the Governing Body in light of the challenges ahead.
- 1169.** **The Employer spokesperson** welcomed the report and expressed appreciation for the work of the Committee, emphasizing that oversight constituted an essential element of transparency, accountability and good governance and served as a safeguard for the Organization's sustainability in the current financial context.
- 1170.** He noted that the IOAC report highlighted that arrears in regular contributions had reached US\$128 million, the highest level recorded in the last decade, largely due to unpaid contributions from a major contributor, and that, should these arrears persist, the ILO might be required to implement austerity measures of up to 20 per cent of its regular budget, which would significantly affect its capacity to operate in its current form. In this regard, he expressed strong support for the Committee's recommendation to anticipate mitigation measures and to take timely and proactive decisions.
- 1171.** Turning to human resources, he supported the recommendation concerning workforce planning and emphasized the importance of completing the skills-mapping exercise. While noting that restructuring measures were under consideration, he indicated that insufficient information was currently available regarding their scale and implementation.
- 1172.** With regard to oversight functions, he reiterated his group's firm support for maintaining such functions at headquarters, noting that their relocation could weaken independence, reduce efficiency and undermine transparency. He also supported the recommendation to strengthen

internal control systems and to ensure the full implementation of action plans arising from staff surveys and from findings related to development cooperation projects.

- 1173.** With regard to internal audit capacity, he highlighted the imbalance between the scope of work and available resources, noting that the number of internal auditors remained limited and that several planned audit reports had been postponed. He stressed the need to address this structural weakness in a timely and sustainable manner. The Employers supported the draft decision.
- 1174. The Worker spokesperson** thanked the Committee for its report and expressed general support for its recommendations. With regard to the risk of a liquidity crisis, he requested clarification on how the Committee assessed the mitigation scenarios already presented to the Governing Body in the relevant documents and whether those measures were considered sufficient in light of the Committee's observations.
- 1175.** With regard to human resources, he recalled that the completion of the skills-mapping exercise had been recommended in previous reports and remained outstanding. While acknowledging its importance, he cautioned against finalizing the human resources strategy without taking into account the current financial context and evolving organizational needs.
- 1176.** He supported the recommendation to maintain oversight functions at headquarters and highlighted the importance of ensuring effective access to senior management. He also drew attention to issues related to development cooperation, highlighting that a new development cooperation strategy was being discussed at the current session of the Governing Body and cautioned against the over-reliance on development cooperation projects for funding the core mandate of the ILO.
- 1177.** He raised concerns regarding cybersecurity risks, particularly in the context of proposals for a global service centre which could be cyber-located outside Switzerland. He requested clarification on the location of the ILO's cloud infrastructure.
- 1178.** With regard to the importance of strengthening internal audit capacity, he noted that staffing constraints had partly been due to vacancies and suggested that this factor should be taken into account. The Workers supported the draft decision.
- 1179. A Government representative of Mexico** expressed appreciation for the report and indicated that it would have been useful to receive the Committee's views on the human resources strategy. He requested further information from the Office on the reasons for the delay in completing the skills-mapping exercise and supported the recommendation to maintain key oversight functions at headquarters.
- 1180.** He also sought clarification on the relationship between the proposed strengthening of the internal audit function and the reduction in the evaluation budget, as well as on the availability of resources in the evaluation fund. Mexico supported the draft decision.
- 1181. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** expressed appreciation for the quality of the report and for the Committee's engagement with the Governing Body. He supported the recommendations and requested the Committee's views on the contingency measures proposed by the Office in response to the financial shortfall.
- 1182.** He encouraged continued consultation on reform initiatives and requested information on the potential establishment of a global service centre, including possible collaboration with other organizations within the United Nations system. He also requested clarification on the development of a new internal audit strategy and emphasized the importance of addressing issues related to ethics, abuse and corruption. He further requested information on initiatives

concerning the ILO's environmental and social sustainability framework and its potential financial implications. The Russian Federation supported the draft decision.

1183. The Chairperson of the IOAC, in response to the discussion, indicated that the Committee had not yet examined the contingency measures referred to in document GB.356/PFA/4, as they fell outside the reporting period. He was therefore not in a position to provide comments on them at that stage.

1184. A representative of the Director-General (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) confirmed that the Office was continuing its work on the skills-mapping exercise, which had taken longer than anticipated but was intended to inform the broader reform process. With regard to the cloud infrastructure, he indicated that it would depend on the applications used but was currently located in Switzerland or Europe. He further clarified that the reduction in evaluation resources concerned non-staff costs, including travel and consultancy, and did not affect the staffing levels. Finally, he suggested that the question on environmental and social sustainability be addressed bilaterally as required.

Decision

1185. The Governing Body took note of the 18th annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee appended to document GB.356/PFA/5 and requested the Office to take into account the guidance provided therein.

(GB.356/PFA/5, paragraph 7)

6. Report of the Director of Internal Audit and Oversight for the year ended 31 December 2025 (GB.356/PFA/6)

1186. The Worker spokesperson thanked the Director of Internal Audit and Oversight for the report. He noted that the work of the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight (IAO) in 2025 found no material weaknesses in the ILO's system of governance, risk management and internal control.

1187. He observed that the number of investigation cases closed had increased. He welcomed the opening of the Integrity Hotline, and considered it a positive sign that the resulting increase in allegations received was almost 50 per cent. He noted that the increased workload due to the hotline was managed in part by two short-term investigators and trusted that the Office would make sure that staff levels were adequate to continue carrying out this work. He requested that, in future, the term "sexual exploitation and abuse" be used rather than the acronym "SEA".

1188. In the area of audit, he asked whether the report's observations on the need for unified systems on travel planning, project management, document control and external collaborator oversight as well as for global solutions, implied that the IAO supported the creation of a global service centre. He noted that the Director of the IAO sat as an adviser to the Governance Committee for the ILO reform, and asked where more information could be found on the replacement of the ILO Review Team by the Governance Committee. Lastly, he made a remark that this agenda item did not have a clearly indicated decision point.

1189. The Employer spokesperson thanked the Director of the IAO for the report, which confirmed the confidence of the Employers' group in the new Director. He noted that the IAO's work in 2025 identified no material weaknesses in the ILO's system of governance, risk management and internal control, commenting that this showed sustained effort in challenging circumstances.

- 1190.** He noted that the number of investigation cases received had increased by 47 per cent, in part due to the launch of the Integrity Hotline. He congratulated the IAO for closing 52 per cent of new cases in addition to managing the 96 cases carried over from previous years. He observed that the two main categories of substantiated cases comprised professional misconduct and harassment. He highlighted the need for a response involving appropriate sanctions, strengthening of compliance culture and management vigilance. He suggested that the ILO should monitor the impact of the recently released trainings on ethics and prevention of harassment.
- 1191.** He accepted that 9 of the 24 audits planned for the biennium had been cancelled or postponed because of the need to update processes to meet new professional standards. He noted with satisfaction that 2025 was the first year in which all recommendations had been accepted, and suggested that the Governing Body also monitor the implementation rate.
- 1192.** He noted that the Assurance and Advisory Unit has only three internal auditors, and called for the next programme and budget to contain a response to the IAO's staffing challenges.
- 1193. Speaking on behalf of IMEC,** a Government representative of Canada, thanked the Director of the IAO for the report. She noted that the IAO's work carried out in 2025 found no material weaknesses in the ILO's system of governance, risk management and internal control.
- 1194.** She welcomed the opening of the Integrity Hotline, and noted that it was necessary to have sufficient staff to handle the resulting increase in the number of allegations received. She expressed concern that two posts remain unfilled and asked specifically about the progress on the recruitment of the Digital Forensics and Data Analytics Officer. She enquired about the level of funding and staffing that would be needed to reduce the case carryover by the end of 2026.
- 1195.** She also welcomed the collaboration between the IAO, the Human Resources Development (HRD) Department and the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Officer on matters related to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment but was concerned at the bifurcated reporting mechanisms for allegations of harassment. She requested clarification on how harassment cases were triaged between the IAO and HRD, including whether HRD dealt with any harassment cases as grievances. She drew the Governing Body's attention to the absence of streamlining of reporting arrangements between the Disciplinary Committee and the Committee on Accountability, and asked how assurance could be provided that all such cases were appropriately progressed. She looked forward to the upcoming discussion on handling allegations of misconduct against a Director-General and stated that IMEC expected that all credible allegations of misconduct at Director-General, CABINET or staff level be appropriately and fully investigated.
- 1196.** She asked how the ILO would improve compliance in the field, given that 14 of the 16 substantiated investigations in 2025 concerned misconduct in the field and in light of the reform proposal envisioning moving more staff to the field.
- 1197.** She encouraged the ILO to accelerate the implementation of outstanding audit recommendations, and endorsed the recommendation in the IOAC report to prioritize the allocation of necessary resources to the IAO.
- 1198. A Government representative of the Russian Federation** thanked the IAO for its report. He noted that the performance indicators for 2025 were not fully met, and asked that the new IAO strategy be presented to the Governing Body for consideration and review, and that it involved consultation with the IOAC. He urged the IAO to support the reform through timely risk

assessment, review of the system of internal control, prevention of misconduct and assessment of the effective use of resources.

- 1199. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Sudan welcomed the Annual Report, noting that the IAO's mandate now included retaliation as well as sexual exploitation and abuse, and that the audit and investigation charters had been consolidated into a single document. He underlined the importance of regularly reviewing and updating oversight tools, investigative methodologies and the governance framework.
- 1200.** He was encouraged by the increase in investigation cases closed in 2025 and urged the ILO to strengthen awareness and preventive measures with external partners to reduce exposure to external fraud. He welcomed the launch of the Integrity Hotline.
- 1201. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Internal Audit and Oversight) thanked the members for their support and positive comments. Addressing first the questions of the Africa group, she confirmed the IAO's commitment to continually reviewing and updating its audit and investigation processes so that they remain aligned with good practice in their respective communities.
- 1202.** She acknowledged that the 2025 performance indicators had not been met in full. However, the IAO would review its key performance indicators in 2026 to reflect its new ways of working and the new strategy, on which IOAC would be consulted. She added that the audit plan took into account the current risks facing the Organization, including the reform.
- 1203.** Regarding staffing, she reported that the recruitment of the Digital Forensics and Data Analytics Officer had just been confirmed. She noted that filling this post would make a significant impact on process-related work as well as on the support provided to investigations from a forensic perspective, and to bolster the audit function through data analytics.
- 1204.** She observed that reducing the number of carryover investigation cases would be a challenge, given the rising number and complexity of cases. In 2025, the IAO closed the highest number of cases ever, while also receiving the highest number of cases to date. For example, whereas at this point last year, the IAO had opened 20 new investigation cases, this year there were already 30. To meet this challenge, she aimed, at a minimum, to retain current staffing levels, including those on short-term contracts. The IAO had in the past engaged external consultants, where appropriate, and would continue to rely on its triage processes to allocate resources where they were most needed.
- 1205.** She confirmed that the IAO does not normally investigate cases of harassment involving staff. Of 16 harassment allegations received in 2025, 11 were referred to HRD while 5 were dealt with by the IAO under special circumstances. Until a decision was made on the renegotiation of the Collective Agreement on Harassment, the IAO would liaise closely with HRD to make sure that all cases were dealt with.
- 1206.** She acknowledged that the high number of misconduct cases in 2025 occurred in the field and informed the Governing Body that such information was used by the IAO to inform the audit plan so that it could focus on high-risk areas.
- 1207.** She also confirmed that her office's submission for the 2028–29 Programme and Budget would be a reasonable assessment of the level of staffing required, based on possible benchmarking with other organizations.
- 1208.** Finally, she confirmed that the reference to "global" in the Annual Report referred to ensuring consistency in procedures and did not imply an IAO position on the global service centre. She further noted the request to spell out in full the acronym "SEA" in future.

1209. The Director-General stated that during the ongoing reform, staffing levels in the independent supervisory functions, the IAO and the Evaluation Office (EVAL), had not been reduced.

1210. The Worker spokesperson asked for clarification on the linkage between the Governance Committee and the ILO Review Team.

1211. A representative of the Director-General (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) explained that the ILO Review Team was formed in March 2025 and its work culminated in the Office paper discussed in November 2025 (GB.355/INS/7). The work of the review team then ended and the ILO moved into the reform stage. He reminded the Governing Body that the Office would create a public webpage to allow the public to track the progress of the reform.

(The Governing Body took note of the report of the Director of Internal Audit and Oversight for the year ended 31 December 2025.)

Personnel Segment

7. Statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee

(The statement by the staff representative is reproduced in Appendix II.)

8. Amendments to the Staff Regulations

(There was no document for discussion under this item.)

9. The ILO's Human Resources Strategy for 2026–29 (GB.356/PFA/9)

1212. The Governing Body considered the proposed Human Resources Strategy for 2026–29 ("the Strategy") in the context of the ongoing ILO reform and broader United Nations (UN) system developments. In introducing the item, the Chairperson of the Governing Body recalled that the Strategy aimed to align workforce planning, skills development, leadership expectations and organizational culture with the new operating model.

1213. The Governing Body had before it an amended version of the draft decision, which had been proposed by the Workers' group and circulated by the Office in advance:

The Governing Body ~~endorsed~~ took note of the ILO's Human Resources Strategy for 2026–29 and, due to the uncertain financial circumstances, requested the Office to extend for one year the current strategy with updated indicators and submit an updated ~~take into account the guidance provided when implementing the Strategy in March 2027.~~

1214. The Worker spokesperson expressed concern that the Strategy was being presented in a context of significant uncertainty linked to the reform process. His group's amendment proposed a one-year extension of the current Strategy to allow greater clarity on reform outcomes and to ensure a more targeted and coherent future strategy. He expressed concern that the Strategy relied on staff development funding that was being reduced or cancelled, which could undermine its implementation. He called for clearer mitigation measures, more cost-effective capacity-building approaches, and better planning for reform scenarios. He stressed the importance of human-centred reform, strategic workforce planning and safeguarding institutional capacity. He also raised specific questions and recommendations across the three pillars of the Strategy, including reducing job precarity, strengthening onboarding and knowledge retention, addressing burnout risks, improving diversity indicators, and ensuring alignment with the ILO's core mandate.

- 1215. The Employer spokesperson** expressed support for the proposed Strategy, underlining that the ILO required a forward-looking human resources (HR) framework capable of anticipating future challenges. He emphasized that efficiency, effectiveness and tangible results on the ground – especially in the field – must be central. He advocated for strengthening technical capacity and decentralizing expertise to regions, alongside careful management of workforce adjustments. He highlighted the need for clearer performance indicators, stronger HR processes and effective change management. He underlined that the Strategy lacked a business perspective. He called for better balance in recruitment, including more professionals from employers' organizations, and greater awareness among staff of business realities and tripartism. He also welcomed focus on staff well-being, digitalization and reskilling, but stressed that technical, operational and interpersonal skills remain essential. Finally, he called for robust monitoring, adequate resources and adaptive management to ensure the Strategy delivers real impact.
- 1216. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Tunisia cautioned that adopting a new strategy amid financial uncertainty posed risks. While supporting the general pillars, her group found the Strategy insufficiently aligned with reform priorities, especially in strengthening field presence and capacity. Her group also highlighted gaps in data and clarity on staff relocation. The Africa group stressed the importance of geographical diversity, noting a lack of concrete measures to improve representation of under-represented regions, as well as unclear pathways for attracting and integrating young talent. She further emphasized the need for transparent career development, equal promotion opportunities and alignment of resources with operational priorities, and requested clarification on the practical consequences of adopting the Strategy.
- 1217. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Japan stressed the Strategy should be closely aligned with the broader ILO reform. She emphasized the need for strengthening field capacity through better deployment of staff and noted the plan to deploy national coordinators to improve responsiveness, and underlined the importance of duty of care, including mental health support, during the reform process. A key concern was geographical under-representation, with many ASPAG countries still insufficiently represented; she called for stronger, more proactive measures and the effective application of existing flexibility in recruitment requirements, including language criteria. ASPAG also highlighted the importance of diversity, gender equality, disability inclusion and a zero-tolerance approach to harassment. Finally, her group supported the use of AI and digital tools to improve efficiency, while stressing that resources should be focused on areas that deliver tangible results aligned with reform priorities.
- 1218. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Paraguay welcomed the Strategy and its alignment with reform and financial constraints, emphasizing the need for a competent and adaptable workforce. She stressed that implementation must be balanced, inclusive and transparent, with stronger geographical representation, particularly for developing regions, and reinforced field presence aligned with Member States' needs. GRULAC highlighted the importance of fair and motivating working conditions, safeguarding operational capacity despite budget constraints, and preserving institutional memory. They also called for more detailed action plans, improved recruitment practices (including use of UN tools) and further clarity on diversity efforts. Finally, GRULAC requested more information on the implications of extending the current HR Strategy, as proposed in the Workers' amendment.
- 1219. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom acknowledged the potential of the Strategy to support alignment with the ILO's mandate

during the reform process, while noting that many outcomes depended on decisions still under discussion. They called for stronger, impact-focused indicators and greater clarity once reform discussions are finalized. They emphasized the importance of protecting institutional knowledge, staff well-being and future workforce capabilities. He invited the Office to finalize the important skills-mapping exercise in due time. Concerns were raised about the late implementation of digital and AI-related measures, with calls for clearer timelines, more detailed plans and safeguards to ensure their responsible use – particularly in recruitment processes. IMEC supported the continued focus on staff health and well-being and emphasized the importance of meaningful social dialogue with the Staff Union on measures affecting staff, and commended the updating of the ILO's anti-harassment policy. Overall, IMEC supported the Strategy and the decision point, while seeking greater clarity, transparency and accountability in implementation.

- 1220. A Government representative of China** supported the Strategy and its three pillars, as well as alignment with the ILO reform, including efforts to retain talent, strengthen inclusiveness and enhance digital and AI capacities. She noted the planned staff reductions and relocations, stressing the need to balance efficiency with preserving expertise, ensure adequate resources for relocation and maintain geographical balance. She called for concrete measures to improve geographical representation and diversity, to prioritize under-represented countries and to protect key positions. She also highlighted the need to support development cooperation staff, enhance HR flexibility and workforce planning, and carefully assess hiring freezes. Finally, she emphasized the importance of staff morale, duty of care and engagement with the Staff Union during the transition.
- 1221. A Government representative of Brazil** expressed strong reservations about adopting the Strategy under current financial uncertainty. She argued that the Strategy risked being driven by financial constraints rather than a clear vision grounded in social justice and supported the Workers' amendment.
- 1222. A Government representative of the United States** supported aligning the Strategy with ILO reform and strengthening efficiency, adaptability and field capacity, including relocating positions and streamlining management structures. He raised concerns about the use of terms such as diversity, inclusion and gender, calling them unclear and potentially inconsistent with merit-based principles. He emphasized equality of opportunity (not outcomes), rejected quotas or targets based on sex, and requested clearer definitions – specifically that gender be understood as men and women.
- 1223. A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** supported the Africa group's statement and welcomed the Strategy's objectives, particularly its focus on strengthening field capacity and fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. She emphasized the importance of allocating adequate staff resources to regions with high levels of informality.
- 1224. A Government representative of Mexico** supported GRULAC's position and emphasized the need for updated mobility policies to support field strengthening, as well as the skills-mapping exercise to facilitate internal mobility and updated job descriptions. He also called for greater transparency and highlighted the importance of leadership and management development at all levels, and requested more detailed data on recruitment, diversity and geographical representation. Finally, he asked for clear resource estimates, annual monitoring data and a road map for implementation, including alignment with broader UN practices and mitigation of financial risks.

- 1225. A Government representative of the United Kingdom**, aligning with IMEC, expressed support for the Strategy, emphasizing its importance in enabling reform. He emphasized the need for modernization, efficiency and financial sustainability and considered the Strategy essential for managing organizational change, restructuring and workforce alignment.
- 1226. A Government representative of Bangladesh** supported ASPAG's statement and welcomed efforts to improve accessibility in recruitment, particularly regarding language requirements. He stressed the importance of placing the right expertise in the right locations, rather than broad decentralization, and called for further analysis of skills-mapping data. He also stressed the importance of ensuring geographical diversity at all levels.
- 1227. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Human Resources Development Department) provided clarifications on both the proposed amendment and the substance of the Strategy. She recalled that the previous HR Strategy was developed in a different context and did not reflect the current reform process. She indicated that maintaining it for an additional period could limit the ILO's ability to adequately prepare for evolving priorities and skills requirements. She confirmed progress on key elements, including near completion of the skills-mapping exercise, and explained that some digital/AI initiatives would be phased in later once the new operating model is finalized. She emphasized that AI will be used with strong ethical safeguards. She further provided clarifications on indicators (including more impact-based measures), diversity (geographical, disability, constituent background, and gender, defined as men and women) and merit-based recruitment, alongside commitments to improve geographical representation and outreach. She also highlighted measures to strengthen tripartism, onboarding, anti-harassment policies, social dialogue and staff support, including simplifying reporting mechanisms and ongoing engagement with staff unions.
- 1228. The Worker spokesperson** observed that a number of Government members and groups had indicated their wish to hear the Office's clarifications before taking a position on the proposed amendment and suggested that they be invited to express their views in light of those explanations.
- 1229. The Employer spokesperson** reiterated its support for immediate adoption of the Strategy, emphasizing the need for clarity and continuity.
- 1230. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Tunisia indicated flexibility and support for the Workers' amendment with a proposed subamendment by adding "for adoption" at the end, which reads as follows:
- The Governing Body ~~endorsed~~ took note of the ILO's Human Resources Strategy for 2026–29 and, due to the uncertain financial circumstances, requested the Office to extend for one year the current strategy with updated indicators and submit an updated ~~take into account the guidance provided when implementing the Strategy in March 2027, for adoption.~~
- 1231. The Worker spokesperson** noted that, while acknowledging the Office's explanation that gender data was collected for statistical purposes, diversity should be understood more broadly.
- 1232.** The Governing Body decided to defer the final consideration of the item, including the amendment and subamendment, to the second week of the session.
- 1233.** When the discussion resumed on 30 March 2026, **the Worker spokesperson** announced that his group would withdraw their amendment as no consensus had emerged.
- 1234. The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Workers' group for withdrawing the amendment and expressed support for adopting the Strategy.

- 1235. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus expressed support for the decision point.
- 1236. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Tunisia also supported the original decision point, emphasizing the importance of regular follow-up and requesting that the Office keep the Governing Body informed on implementation.
- 1237. A Government representative of the United States** noted that the Office clarified definitions of diversity and gender during earlier discussions. With these clarifications, he supported the decision point.
- 1238. The representative of the Director-General** (Director, Human Resources Development Department) confirmed that the Office would provide regular updates on the Strategy implementation. She further clarified the distinction between gender parity (a numerical comparison between men and women) and gender equality (equal rights and opportunities for all genders).

Decision

- 1239. The Governing Body endorsed the ILO's Human Resources Strategy for 2026–29 and requested the Office to take into account the guidance provided when implementing the Strategy.**

(GB.356/PFA/9, paragraph 91)

10. Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO

10.1. Composition of the Tribunal (GB.356/PFA/10/1)

- 1240. The Worker spokesperson** expressed support for the Director-General's proposal to renew the appointment of four judges for a non-renewable five-year term in line with article III of the Statute of the Administrative Tribunal.
- 1241. The Employer spokesperson** expressed appreciation for the judges' service and ongoing commitment and highlighted the Tribunal's important role in ensuring proper administration of justice within the international civil service system. Noting the absence of judges from Africa and South America and the persistent male predominance in the composition of the Tribunal, he encouraged continued efforts to achieve geographical and gender balance, while emphasizing that expertise and independence must remain the primary criteria for the selection of the judges. He asked the Office to clarify if the Tribunal was prepared for a potential increased caseload, given the projected budget cuts across the UN system agencies and whether that would have resource implications. His group supported the draft decision.
- 1242. A representative of the Director-General** (Legal Adviser), recalling that more than 60 organizations had recognized the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, explained that the Tribunal's workload was managed by its Registry, not by the Office. She also indicated that a document on administrative arrangements to improve case management concerning the Tribunal would be submitted to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026).

Decision

1243. The Governing Body decided to propose to the International Labour Conference to adopt the following draft resolution:

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,
Decides, in accordance with article III of the Statute of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization, to renew the appointments of Ms Rosanna De Nictolis (Italy), Mr Clément Gascon (Canada), Mr Jacques Jaumotte (Belgium) and Ms Hongyu Shen (China) as judges of the Tribunal for one further non-renewable term of five years.

(GB.356/PFA/10/1, paragraph 3)

10.2. Recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by other international organizations (GB.356/PFA/10/2)

1244. The Employer spokesperson stated that, taking note of the request by the Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) to recognize the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and having reviewed the documents submitted by it, the Employers' group supported the draft decision.

1245. The Worker spokesperson expressed his groups' satisfaction that an additional organization had submitted a declaration recognizing the Tribunal's jurisdiction, which confirmed the attractiveness of the Tribunal's independence and impartiality. Given that the request fulfilled the conditions in the Annex to the Tribunal's Statute, the Workers' group supported the draft decision.

Decision

1246. The Governing Body approved the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) with effect from 27 March 2026.

(GB.356/PFA/10/2, paragraph 7)

11. Report of the Ethics Officer for the year ended 31 December 2025 (GB.356/PFA/11)

1247. The Employer spokesperson noted that the Ethics Officer had performed well, meeting performance indicators, taking a proactive approach through awareness-raising, communication efforts and the introduction of mandatory online ethics training. She observed that the increase in requests for ethics advice reflected both the challenging context and growing awareness of, and confidence in the function. The Employers supported the IOAC recommendation that key accountability functions of the ILO, such as the Ethics Officer, remain based at headquarters. The spokesperson noted that the Ethics Officer took into account the implications of the ongoing ILO reform process and reiterated the importance of maintaining a strong focus on prevention, particularly in a period of organizational change, and welcomed the increased emphasis in that regard. She supported the draft decision.

1248. The Worker spokesperson expressed its appreciation for the report, which provided a thorough update of the activities carried out by the Ethics Officer in fulfilment of his mandate. These activities were numerous and included training and outreach, work on whistle-blower protection against retaliation, and engagement with the IOAC and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. The Worker spokesperson observed that the number of requests for ethics advice had risen significantly, which could be interpreted as a positive indication of increased staff awareness. At the same time, he noted the Ethics Officer's assessment that the

current context presented challenges for staff and increased exposure to ethical risks. The Workers' group supported the conclusion that responses by the Office and staff to this context should be grounded in ILO values and addressed through social dialogue. It also supported the establishment of an Office-wide community of practice to promote the appropriate and productive use of AI tools in line with ILO values, while prioritizing the continued development of human intelligence at work. He supported the draft decision.

1249. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, a Government representative of Denmark took note of the increase in requests for ethics advice, which might be linked to the challenging context faced by the Office. IMEC emphasized the importance of strengthened ethical awareness and welcomed mandatory ethics training, as well as the emphasis on grounding responses in ethical principles and social dialogue. IMEC noted the growing number of questions related to the use of AI tools and supported the recommendation on interdisciplinary monitoring, requesting further information on the types of queries received. The representative also underlined the importance of ensuring awareness of the Ethics Office as a safe space, including in field offices, and requested information on outreach efforts to the regions. IMEC welcomed the high level of engagement from senior staff, as well as initiatives such as the Ethical Leadership programme. She also emphasized the importance of accountability and protection against retaliation, including in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, and, referring to the report of the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Officer, welcomed progress in mainstreaming prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse across the Office. IMEC supported the draft decision.

1250. A Government representative of the United States expressed support for strong ethics frameworks and oversight mechanisms that promoted integrity, accountability and responsible conduct and highlighted the important role of the Ethics Officer in this regard. He considered that the internal values framework contained vague or divisive language and requested that it be revised. In light of substantiated cases of misconduct reported by the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight (IAO), the representative stressed the importance of focusing efforts on areas of ethical risk with tangible impact. He observed the low number of reported cases of retaliation and requested clarification on measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Office's whistle-blower protection framework.

1251. A representative of the Director-General (Ethics Officer) replied to the questions raised, providing information on the types of queries received on the use of AI (such as confidentiality and personal data precautions, ensuring reliability of outputs, requiring disclosure when AI was used to perform certain tasks, ensuring human ownership over work products, and safeguarding user cognitive abilities when using AI tools). He explained how the outreach to the regions was being carried out, at a time when financial constraints did not allow for in-person visits. This included online tailored ethics workshops, designed in response to the needs and context of each region and office (often using surveys and stakeholder discussions in their preparation), scheduled availability for one-on-one consultations with the Ethics Officer, and seizing any other opportunities such as participating in directors' meetings and engaging with Staff Union representatives. The Ethics Office also gave precedence to staff in the regions with regard to both consultation requests and access to the Ethical Leadership programme. The Office was fully committed to protecting whistle-blowers, and the new Integrity Hotline facilitated the confidential submission of requests for protection. Efforts from the Ethics Office also focused on prevention, with measures agreed with whistle-blowers and taken before retaliation could occur. Furthermore, all receivable retaliation complaints had been swiftly referred to the IAO for investigation, and the Ethics Officer would continue focusing on outreach to encourage reporting, prevent retaliation and protect whistle-blowers.

Decision

1252. The Governing Body took note of the report of the Ethics Officer for the year ended 31 December 2025:

(GB.356/PFA/11, paragraph 4)

12. Other personnel matters

(There was no document for discussion under this item.)

► Appendix I

Opening address of the Director-General of the ILO to the 356th Session of the Governing Body (Monday, 23 March 2026)

Madam Chairperson of the Governing Body,

Madam Worker Vice-Chairperson,

Mr Employer Vice-Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Governing Body,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is, as always, a great honour to welcome you to the 356th Session of the Governing Body.

We meet at a moment of profound global uncertainty.

The conflict in the Middle East is echoing throughout the world of work. It is disrupting businesses and livelihoods in the countries concerned, affecting workers and enterprises alike, including migrant workers, seafarers and their families. We stand in solidarity with all those affected directly or indirectly.

With regard to our duty of care in the region, we have been working very closely with the United Nations Security Management System to establish the necessary procedures, and operations are currently running smoothly.

Earlier this year, we published our report *Employment and Social Trends 2026*. It projected that global unemployment would reach 186 million in 2026 – roughly the same level as in 2025. The global jobs gap, which we have measured for a number of years and which captures the number of people who want to work but cannot find employment, is estimated at 408 million.

Around 2.1 billion workers worldwide remain in informal employment, without adequate protection or security.

Youth unemployment remains stubbornly high in many regions, while millions of young people are neither in employment, education nor training. Women continue to face barriers to employment and discrimination in labour markets. In many countries, real wage growth has failed to keep pace with inflation, eroding purchasing power and increasing insecurity.

Global economic growth, projected at around 3 per cent, is insufficient to generate the quality jobs our societies demand.

In short, although labour markets worldwide showed resilience last year, the outlook remains fragile and could deteriorate if the world faces prolonged conflict and instability.

Against this backdrop, we must also confront a challenge closer to home: ensuring that the ILO can continue to deliver effectively on its mandate in a context of growing financial constraints and the UN80 reform process.

The reform proposals before you outline a strategic vision for the Organization built around three key pillars.

First, to sharpen our focus on the ILO's core mandate through a very clear prioritization.

Second, to strengthen our capacity in the regions – closer to our constituents – while maintaining essential expertise at headquarters.

And third, to improve efficiency by streamlining business processes and reducing fragmentation.

These reforms build on the ILO's distinctive strengths:

- our normative mandate and the authority of our supervisory system;
- our evidence-based policy advice and technical cooperation across the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda.

Taken all together, these measures are expected to generate efficiency gains of approximately 12.5 per cent by the 2028–29 biennium.

Let me be clear: reform is not a retreat from ambition. It is about ensuring that the ILO remains strong, relevant and effective in a rapidly changing world of work.

Targeted investments could strengthen several of our key priorities. These include our work on fundamental principles and rights at work – and we know what happened to activities on child labour and forced labour further to cuts in some of our development cooperation activities – our ability to support constituents in the regions, our capacity to analyse emerging trends – especially around artificial intelligence – and our partnerships with the international financial institutions.

In November 2026, the Governing Body will discuss programme and budget proposals for the 2028–29 biennium. The ILO's reform agenda should not pre-empt those discussions.

However, it might be important to consider to what extent part, if not all, of the 12.5 per cent efficiency gains could be used to strengthen the expertise of this house.

Reform workstreams are advancing, and several measures have already been implemented, including a streamlined headquarters structure, more efficient use of office space, and the abolition of posts through agreed termination or natural attrition.

At the same time, we must acknowledge our financial uncertainty. For this reason, we are also presenting a **contingency plan** in the event of an income shortfall of up to 20 per cent. If such a scenario were to materialize, it would require a severe contraction, negatively affecting the ILO's capacity to support its constituents.

Looking ahead to November 2026, we may also need to explore options to ensure long-term financial sustainability, including the potential establishment of a revolving fund to address financial contingencies.

Let me stress that this reform process will be conducted with full transparency and in close consultation with constituents.

Reform cannot succeed unless it is understood, debated and shaped through our tripartite governance and through social dialogue within the Office.

I am pleased to report that we have recently signed a **memorandum of understanding with the Staff Union** on the reform, establishing a shared understanding on issues requiring information, consultation and negotiation.

Ultimately, the success of this reform will depend on the staff of the ILO. I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude for their dedication, professionalism and commitment throughout this period of uncertainty and change.

The new **human resources strategy** submitted to this Governing Body provides guidance on managing change in times of uncertainty while strengthening inclusion and opportunities for all.

Despite growing uncertainty and financial constraints, the ILO continues to respond to its constituents' expectations.

The Programme Implementation Report for 2024–25, which is before you, bears witness to our joint commitment to promoting decent work and social justice in the world.

In total, the ILO has contributed to the achievement of 1,196 country level outcomes during the biennium, as part of the eight strategic outcomes – that is 5 per cent more than the goal fixed in the programme and budget.

I offer warm thanks to our development cooperation partners. Their constant support has been decisive in achieving these results.

The **development cooperation strategy**, also presented to you for consideration, paves the way for strengthening the ILO's capacity to fulfil its fundamental mandate, and to do so with the continuous support of our partners.

Finally, the Sixth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, held in February 2026 in Marrakech, once again demonstrated the strength of tripartism in action. The adoption of the Global Action Framework reaffirmed the determination of the international community to speed up the progress towards the complete elimination of child labour.

Governing Body members,

For more than a century, the ILO has undergone numerous crises.

On each occasion, the Organization has overcome the difficulties by remaining loyal to its founding values and by basing itself on the strength of tripartite social dialogue, even in the most difficult times, and by retaining the sense of pragmatism.

The world will not recall our procedures. It will remember our capacity to bring dialogue to life, especially at the time when it mattered the most.

It will remember what we have demonstrated: that social justice is not a past ideal but a requirement for the future of the world of work.

And finally, it will remember whether we have been able to prove that multilateralism can still protect people where it matters the most: in their work, in their enterprises, and in their daily lives.

The future of work will be shaped by forces that we do not always control.

But the fact that this future is fair, stable and human will depend on the choices that we make.

I hope that the Governing Body will live up to this responsibility.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson.

► Appendix II

Statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee (24 March 2026)

Madam Chairperson,

Director-General,

Members of the Governing Body,

Dear colleagues and all of you here today, whether in this room or online,

I would first like to express my full solidarity and empathy with my colleagues and with the entire community of workers around the world who are affected by conflicts or war that run counter to the founding principles of the fundamental human right represented by the right to work, the foundation of a person's dignity, their well-being and their fulfilment as human beings. These decisions profoundly challenge our values and our convictions that peace must be built on social justice and not through force, and that, to this end, respect for human beings must lie at the heart of our commitments, our decisions and our actions.

Even more so than usual, the global context in which we operate cannot be ignored. Across the world, we are seeing trends that deeply challenge those working in the service of multilateralism. Investment in peace, cooperation and international institutions seems increasingly called into question; investment in conflict, militarization and destruction appears to be gaining ground. As global citizens, we face a dilemma: that of accepting that considerable resources are being mobilized to defend against destruction and respond to emergencies at the expense of those that should have been devoted to development and progress.

In such a context, an organization like ours is all the more valuable, but also all the more fragile. All the more so if poor decisions accompany this chaos.

Last November, I called for the building of a bridge, founded on social dialogue, that would enable us to cross a chasm, thereby expressing the concern that we were plunging the ILO into the abyss, as a result of decisions that were dangerous for the Organization.

At the last session of the Governing Body, we witnessed your commitment and vigilance in seeking, as far as possible, to prevent the adoption of such dangerous decisions. In your decision, you clearly reiterated the principles necessary for a robust social dialogue within the ILO. And indeed, we have been able to work – not without difficulty – with the Administration since November to overcome our differences and ensure a common understanding of internal social dialogue. This was formalized in a memorandum of understanding on social dialogue signed at the beginning of March. The Administration has also agreed, following repeated requests from the Staff Union, to move forward with negotiations on an agreement to address any potential staff adjustments, whatever they may be, in the context of a comprehensive reform or a more severe budgetary crisis. The Staff Union would have liked to make faster progress on such an agreement. This is in line with the mandate received from its members last October, which aims to define the framework, processes and measures necessary to address the challenges of potential staff reductions, while upholding the principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, proportionality and due diligence towards the Organization's staff. It is essential that we finalize this agreement in the coming months.

Alongside the reform, the Staff Union, together with the Administration, has made progress on other issues. A new policy on the employment of people with disabilities has been

adopted, providing a clearer framework without any financial implications; we are close – we hope – to publishing a health and safety policy that has been under negotiation for four years – and I would like to thank all colleagues involved in these negotiations. We also need to finalize a review of the travel policy, aimed at reducing costs, while ensuring that conditions for health and safety at work, a fundamental human right, are maintained. Implementing this policy will require effort from everyone, but it is one of the elements that will enable us to continue fulfilling our shared mandate. There has also been – and you will certainly have noticed this as you walked through our offices – a move in record time, over the December–January period, which has disrupted the way many of us work and our working environment. Colleagues from the first to the tenth floor – with the exception of CABINET – have thus vacated a significant number of offices at the Administration's request, and almost half the building is now available for rent. I would like to thank the colleagues and teams who carried out this move. Who said we couldn't move mountains when we had to? We are, however, still waiting for new neighbours, partly because the move was driven by a sense of urgency that no longer seems relevant, and partly because we would like our efforts not to have been in vain. In the meantime, we are not permitted to use the empty offices, nor to walk through these now-closed corridors, the sight of which is certainly depressing. This reality is all the more striking when one sees the progress made on the building renovation and the preservation of this architectural and cultural heritage of which we are proud. Nevertheless, the feeling remains bitter, with the impression that perhaps the Organization's human heritage is not the focus of quite as much attention.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Governing Body, as part of the reform process, the Staff Union has also stepped up to the plate, when invited to do so, to participate in the various working groups set up to develop proposals, thereby safeguarding the interests of all staff within an established framework of consultation, in line with our principles of social dialogue. We remain, however, concerned about the objective of these groups, which are required to formulate proposals within six months for a far-reaching reform of the ILO – a reform that appears to be driven primarily by financial pressure. So, are we really talking about necessary objectives of greater effectiveness and efficiency, or will the work of these groups ultimately consist of retroactively justifying decisions that have already been taken? Is the Administration trying to find solutions to meet budget reduction targets? The situation remains highly unclear due to conflicting trajectories: on the one hand, we have a budget approved with zero nominal growth, and on the other, forecasts of a 12 per cent decline in the long term, or even the possibility of an even more drastic fall in the budget within the next four years.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Governing Body, allow me to refer to the documents you will be considering today, and of course, in particular documents GB.356/INS/7, GB.356/PFA/4 and GB.356/PFA/9. The Staff Union supports the principle of a reform process aimed at improving the ILO's effectiveness and efficiency, provided that it is based on clear priorities, genuine transparency and social dialogue in good faith. It recognizes some positive developments in the recent proposals, notably a more balanced approach, phased implementation, and the stated commitment to strengthening capacity in the field and streamlining internal procedures. However, serious concerns remain regarding the lack of strategic coherence, the absence of sound and transparent financial analyses, and the lack of clarity on the long-term impacts of the proposed measures, particularly with regard to staff and the Organization's ability to fulfil its mandate.

We have come to be guided almost exclusively by figures, which are bandied about without any understanding of their origin and which conceal numerous uncertainties and, above all, the human reality they represent. And yet this reality is very much here: first and

foremost, there are the 120 posts in GB.356/INS/7, which are set to be phased out over four years and which account for the largest number of redundancies within the Organization. Behind this figure are senior colleagues who will be leaving the Organization in the coming months, taking with them expertise and institutional knowledge that will be difficult to replace in the short and even medium term, as the timetable and context do not allow for the necessary handover, transition or even replacements. But there are also colleagues in precarious situations whose contracts are not and will not be extended, and who are leaving without a social safety net, in silence. Then there is the figure of 350 jobs in GB.356/PFA/4, which is essentially nothing more than a mathematical projection of the possible effects of a hypothetical severe budgetary crisis, without any transparency regarding the full range of measures that could be envisaged in advance, and without the risk analysis that is nevertheless essential for taking the necessary decisions. Behind these 350 posts lie major human and institutional consequences because, let us remember, labour is not a commodity, and the expertise and institutional memory that risk being lost cannot easily be replaced. We have already lost a total of 4.5 per cent of our colleagues between 2024 and 2025, including 10 per cent of those working on development cooperation. And the proposals would lead to a planned reduction of between 7 and 20 per cent of colleagues under the regular budget.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Governing Body, you once again have a packed agenda before you, across all these sections. We will need to take decisions at a time when the reality shaping our discussions, our choices and, more broadly, our era, is marked by uncertainty. Uncertainty regarding the future of multilateralism, uncertainty regarding available resources, uncertainty regarding the political priorities of some of our partners, and uncertainty stemming from the failure of certain Member States to meet their financial obligations. Uncertainty, of course, about the immediate future of our Organization and those who work here. Allow me, therefore, to ask a fundamental question: can uncertainty become a deadly principle of governance? Can it lead to timely political decisions being made on the basis of dubious certainties, the impacts of which are long-term and the human consequences of which are increasingly severe? This has led staff in recent months to become accustomed to the gradual erosion of our capacity to act, to cope with the lack of replacements following the departure of colleagues, to be increasingly subject to cumbersome procedures, to become accustomed to losing skills and points of reference, and to gradually question less and less what would otherwise seem unacceptable.

It is precisely in these moments of uncertainty that institutional courage becomes essential. The courage to ask the right questions, the essential ones. The courage to request the necessary information. The courage to slow down, at times, when haste risks leading to irreversible decisions.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Governing Body,

I am not here today to offer simple answers to complex questions. But I am here to share with you a deep conviction held by the ILO's staff: the decisions that lie ahead must be guided not by fear or urgency, but by a vision – a clear and well-founded vision of what we wish to preserve and build for the future of the Organization. And perhaps, if it is not possible to be certain about these future prospects, the realistic option would be to refocus for the time being on a common denominator, a more solid minimum basis centred on protecting our values and the uniqueness of the ILO; setting aside the issues that divide us or are a source of disagreement, and thus establishing a clear boundary between what is acceptable and what is not. A boundary that must not be lost from sight and must be kept in mind to remind us that the main strength of this Organization remains its human-centred values, its human capital and its mission to promote universal and lasting peace on the basis of social justice.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Governing Body, the prospect of facing the coming months is daunting. We hope that the progress made in recent months in terms of social dialogue and rebuilding trust will not be in vain and will continue. What would be unacceptable to the Staff Union is no longer being able to rely on social dialogue to tackle the challenges, and for the principles of solidarity and respect to be compromised; we must choose to make progress on a number of negotiating issues and protect the Organization's staff, who make it what it is.

Finally, I would like to express my deep respect for the many colleagues who will be leaving in the coming months, either through voluntary departure or to take their well-deserved retirement. Most of them have dedicated their careers to the ILO and to fulfilling the mandate you have entrusted to us, ladies and gentlemen of the Governing Body. Whether they have worked in country offices or at headquarters, in the General Service, as Professionals, managers, in support functions or in policy departments, they have helped to make this Organization what it is today, by bringing its magnificent values to life. The vast majority are members of the Staff Union; some are or have been elected staff representatives, or have been key partners in internal social dialogue. They entrust this legacy, this heritage, to us. It is now up to us to have the courage to take care of it.

Thank you.