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Decimonovena sesión, 9 de junio 2026, 16.20 horas (cont.)**Nineteenth sitting, 9 June 2026, 4.20 p.m. (cont.)****Dix-neuvième séance, 9 juin 2026, 16 h 20 (suite)**

Presidenta: Sra. López

Chairperson: Ms López

Présidente: M^{me} López**Discusión de los casos individuales (cont.)****Discussion of individual cases (cont.)****Discussion des cas individuels (suite)****República Democrática Popular Lao (ratificación: 2005)**

Convenio sobre la edad mínima, 1973 (núm. 138)

Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

Convention (n° 138) sur l'âge minimum, 1973

Presidenta – Siguiendo con los avances del día de hoy, el tercer caso se refiere a la aplicación del Convenio sobre la edad mínima, 1973 (núm. 138) por parte de la República Democrática Popular Lao.

Señores les ruego que tomen asiento y guarden silencio, por favor. Ya estamos comenzando las tareas de la Comisión.

Para la discusión sobre este caso contamos con 20 oradores inscritos en la lista, sobre esta base la Mesa decidió reducir el tiempo máximo de intervención de los delegados que hablan a título individual de 5 a 3 minutos. Contamos con su comprensión y colaboración para adaptar el discurso al tiempo otorgado.

Invito ahora al representante gubernamental de la República Democrática Popular Lao, el Sr. Oudone Maniboun, Subdirector General del Departamento de Gestión Laboral, a tomar la palabra.

Government representative (Mr MANIBOUN, Deputy Director-General, Department of Labour Management, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) – I have my Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare who is also sitting here next to me. The comment on which the Government is invited to respond today is an observation of the Committee of Experts on the application of the Convention, which Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) ratified in 2005.

In this regard, the Government has taken concrete steps to eliminate child labour, in line with the Convention, by strengthening legislation on minimum age and hazardous work and advancing the National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, with a focus on agriculture and informal sectors in rural areas. The Government has increased the number of trained labour inspectors and conducted targeted inspections, resulting in the identification of violations, withdrawal of children from hazardous work, and enforcement of penalties. Furthermore, the Government has also implemented community-based programmes in rural districts to support vulnerable families and reduce reliance on child labour, while expanding access to education through scholarships, school feeding programmes, and reintegration of working children into schools.

In cooperation with partners such as the ILO and UNICEF, the Government has carried out awareness campaigns to change attitudes towards child labour. Improved data collection, including national surveys, shows that the rate of child labour has declined from 41.5 per cent in 2017 to 23 per cent in 2023. However, the Government acknowledges that child labour remains prevalent, particularly in hazardous conditions and rural areas, and commits to further strengthening its efforts. The National Plan of Action is being considered as the National Strategy on Elimination of Child Labour, and the Government assures the Committee that it will provide a full copy of the updated strategy immediately upon its formal adoption. The Government will continue to strengthen its data collection and monitoring systems to provide updated and reliable statistical information on the nature, extent, and trends of child labour, in line with its obligations under the Convention. In this regard, the Government will improve administrative data systems to ensure comprehensive and disaggregated data by age, gender, sector, and rural-urban location in collaboration with international partners.

Furthermore, the Government remains dedicated to maintaining transparency by continuing its collaboration with the Lao Statistics Bureau and UNICEF to produce regular, updated statistical data. This ongoing data collection will not only allow the Government to monitor the nature and extent of child labour trends, but also ensure that its "redoubled efforts" lead to the progressive and total elimination of child labour in the country.

The new Decree on Labour Inspection is now in force and actively implemented to strengthen the monitoring of child labour in line with the Convention. Under this Decree, the authority and capacity of labour inspectors have been enhanced, including the ability to conduct inspections in both formal and informal sectors, particularly in rural and high-risk areas. The

Government has increased the number of trained inspectors and carried out targeted inspections in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and small-scale enterprises, leading to the detection of cases of underage and hazardous child labour. The Government will continue to strengthen enforcement and provide detailed data on inspection activities, violations, and penalties in future reports.

Regarding hazardous work for under 16 years of age: The Government is committed to taking the necessary measures to bring national legislation into full conformity with the Convention by ensuring that no child under the age of 16 is authorized to perform hazardous work under any circumstances. Regarding Decision No. 4677/MOLSW of 2023 (Decision No. 4677), it was introduced to update the list of hazardous occupations and to better regulate the participation of young persons in vocational training and apprenticeship settings, including allowing 15-year-olds to engage in certain work activities only under strict conditions such as safety training, supervision, technical guidance, and provision of protective equipment. However, the Government recognizes the concern that this provision is not fully aligned with Article 3(3) of the Convention, which clearly sets 16 years as the minimum age for any authorization to perform hazardous work, even when protective measures and training are provided. The Government acknowledges that maintaining this lower age threshold may create a risk of inconsistency with international labour standards on child protection. In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is currently reviewing Decision No. 4677 with the aim of bringing national legislation fully into compliance. This includes assessing amendments to ensure that all hazardous work is strictly prohibited for persons under 16, while strengthening vocational training frameworks that are safe and non-hazardous for younger adolescents. The Government also indicates its commitment to improving enforcement, inspection, and reporting mechanisms, and will provide updates on legislative revisions and implementation of progress to relevant supervisory bodies.

Regarding the minimum age for apprenticeship, the Government confirms that the Law on Vocational Education (Amended) No. 63/NA as in 2019 sets the minimum age for entering into basic vocational training and apprenticeship programmes at 14 years. This legislative provision is designed to align with Article 6 of the Convention, which permits vocational training for individuals from the age of 14 in Member States whose economic and educational facilities are still in a stage of development. This age threshold is further reinforced by Article 102 of the Labour Law (Amended) No. 43/NA, which stipulates that employers may only engage persons between the ages of 14 and 18 for specific types of work that are not hazardous or does not impede with their physical or mental development.

Consequently, any apprenticeship undertaken by a 14-year-old is legally categorized as a learning and skill-acquisition process rather than exploitative employment. As requested by the Committee of Experts, the following translated provisions from the *National Gazette* are provided as evidence of compliance, as provided in article 24: “Basic vocational training provides short-term technical and vocational skills to individuals to enable them to secure a career and find employment. This level of training is specifically intended for students who have completed primary school or those who have not yet finished general education, provided that the participants in these programmes are at least 14 years of age”.

In addition, article 85: “Vocational education institutions are strictly prohibited from allowing students or apprentices to perform work that is heavy, dangerous to their health, or in violation of the regulations concerning the protection of children and young workers”.

However, the Government remains steadfast in its efforts to bridge the gap between basic education and the labour market through safe, regulated vocational pathways. By maintaining the apprenticeship age at 14, the Government ensures that youth who have completed their

primary and lower-secondary cycles have immediate access to skill-building opportunities, thereby reducing the risk of informal and unprotected child labour. All such programmes are subject to inspection by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to ensure strict adherence to the safety standards mandated by both national law and international Conventions.

In conclusion, the Government reaffirms its commitment to continue observing and implementing ratified ILO Conventions. In this regard, the Government would like to take this opportunity to request the Committee, the ILO, all international development partners and social partners to appreciate its constraints, as well as the efforts of the Government and the social partners to ensure the implementation of the Convention effectively.

Let me end by thanking the Committee in advance for its advice in these matters and assuring it of the Government's fullest cooperation.

Presidenta – Voy a dar ahora el uso de la palabra a la Sra. Laura Giménez, portavoz del Grupo de los Empleadores, para que realice su declaración inicial.

Miembros empleadores – El presente caso nos convoca para examinar la aplicación tanto en la ley como en la práctica del Convenio en la República Democrática Popular Lao. Desde su ratificación en el año 2005, la Comisión de Expertos ha realizado un seguimiento constante emitiendo observaciones en 2017, 2019, 2023 y más recientemente en 2025. Es la primera vez que la Comisión discute la aplicación de este Convenio en la ley y en la práctica, en este país.

Deseamos agradecer al Gobierno por haber emitido información escrita para esta reunión, así como por las informaciones suministradas oralmente y como hemos manifestado en otros casos, consideramos que la voluntad de diálogo y la entrega de información actualizada, son señales prometedoras de un compromiso genuino con la erradicación del trabajo infantil.

Sin embargo, tras analizar exhaustivamente las observaciones de la Comisión de Expertos, observamos brechas críticas que requieren no sólo reformas normativas, sino un profundo trabajo de fortalecimiento institucional. En cuanto a la política nacional y aplicación en la práctica, y, en particular, con respecto al desafío de la informalidad rural, los miembros empleadores reciben con optimismo los datos estadísticos que reflejan una reducción significativa en la tasa de trabajo infantil llegando al 23 por ciento en 2023 para niños de entre 5 y 17 años.

No obstante, no podemos ignorar que casi uno de cada cuatro niños en Lao sigue trabajando. Esta cifra sigue siendo alarmantemente alta. Tomamos nota de que según las estadísticas proporcionadas por el Gobierno la incidencia es mucho mayor en zonas rurales, en comparación con las zonas urbanas. Tomamos nota también, con preocupación, de que el informe de la Comisión de Expertos recoge que, los niños en Lao están expuestos a condiciones extremas: como frío, calor, humedad excesiva, y el uso de herramientas peligrosas o maquinarias pesadas. En contraste, vemos con buenos ojos el hecho de que el Gobierno menciona que está en proceso de elevar una nueva Estrategia Nacional para la Prevención y Eliminación del Trabajo Infantil.

Al igual que en otros lugares del mundo, el trabajo infantil en Lao prevalece en la agricultura familiar y la economía informal. Los miembros empleadores subrayamos que la falta de conciencia sobre los efectos negativos del trabajo infantil en el desarrollo del niño, a menudo lleva a una aprobación cultural, de su contribución al ingreso familiar, práctica que además de perjudicar de manera inaceptable los derechos de las niñas y niños, perjudica al entramado productivo entero, y en especial a los jóvenes adultos que se integran al mundo del trabajo, tras haber sido privados de su derecho a la educación.

Instamos al Gobierno a redoblar los esfuerzos de sensibilización comunitaria, para cambiar estas percepciones y acompañar a las familias, los empleadores, y los trabajadores en el afianzamiento de estos principios. Frente al contraste entre estas informaciones, los miembros empleadores insistimos en que una estrategia en papel no es suficiente. Solicitamos al Gobierno que, una vez adoptada la nueva estrategia, proporcione información detallada sobre su implementación práctica y los recursos financieros asignados para que no sea un documento inerte.

Con respecto a la discrepancia crítica en la edad para trabajos peligrosos en los términos del artículo 3 del Convenio, se constatan en este caso graves brechas de cumplimiento. El artículo 3 es taxativo. La edad mínima para los empleos que puedan comprometer la salud o seguridad no debe ser inferior a 18 años y solo pueden permitirse excepciones donde se acepte reducirla a los 16 años bajo condiciones estrictas de protección y formación, previa consulta con las organizaciones de empleadores y de trabajadores interesadas. En contraste, la Decisión núm. 4677, establece los 15 años como edad permitida para que los jóvenes realicen trabajos peligrosos, siempre que reciban instrucción técnica y equipo de seguridad adecuado. Esta disposición contraviene al Convenio en su literalidad.

El Gobierno ha reconocido en su informe que esta norma no está totalmente alineada con el artículo 3, y ha expresado su intención de revisar dicha decisión. Los miembros empleadores urgen al Gobierno a acelerar esta reforma legislativa y somos enfáticos, en que ningún argumento puede justificar la demora en el cumplimiento de esta norma. No puede haber excepciones para menores de 16 años en trabajos peligrosos independientemente del nivel de supervisión o el equipo que se les proporcione. El cumplimiento de esta norma no es una mera formalidad. Un niño de 15 años expuesto a riesgos físicos, químicos o mecánicos, no sólo pone en peligro su integridad inmediata, sino su desarrollo cognitivo, su continuidad escolar, y su salud a largo plazo. Agrava, además, una trampa estructural. Los niños que trabajan en condiciones peligrosas difícilmente completan su educación, lo que los condena a empleos de baja productividad en la adultez, perpetuando el ciclo de pobreza, que en primer lugar los empujó a trabajar.

En cuanto al cumplimiento del artículo 6 del Convenio sobre el acceso a la educación profesional y aprendizaje, tomamos nota de que la Comisión de Expertos solicitó aclaraciones sobre la educación profesional, en cuanto a la Ley sobre Formación Profesional (en su versión enmendada) núm. 63/NA. Observamos que la declaración del Gobierno menciona que el artículo 24 define la formación vocacional básica y establece explícitamente que los participantes deben tener al menos 14 años de edad. Agradecemos al Gobierno la aclaración sobre que este límite se deduce de los niveles educativos previos que se establecen como obligatorios a la norma.

Sin embargo, con respecto a la prohibición de que los aprendices realicen trabajos pesados o peligrosos para su salud, tomamos nota que, esta disposición no surge de la lectura de la norma provista, como de la documentación complementaria, y solicitamos al Gobierno que aclare esta situación. Los empleadores somos conscientes de que el desafío en Lao es asegurar que estos programas de aprendizaje no sean utilizados como una cubierta, para el empleo explotador en el sector informal y solicitamos al Gobierno que mantenga un registro estricto de estos programas y asegure que la Inspección del Trabajo tenga acceso a los centros de formación.

En relación a esto, la Comisión de Expertos ha comentado sobre el cumplimiento del artículo 9 del Convenio, referido al fortalecimiento de Inspección del Trabajo. Los miembros empleadores recibimos con optimismo la entrada en vigor del Decreto sobre la Inspección del Trabajo núm. 289 de julio del 2025. Este nuevo marco otorga facultades robustas a los inspectores, les permite ingresar a los lugares de trabajo, y entrevistar a empleados y

empleadores, y les da la potestad de ordenar la suspensión inmediata de maquinaria peligrosa e imponer multas.

A pesar de esto, la Comisión de Expertos ha notado con preocupación la ausencia de datos concretos sobre las actividades de inspección. El Gobierno indica que, ha aumentado el número de inspectores, pero al mismo tiempo los inspectores informaron no haber detectado casos de trabajo infantil en sus visitas recientes. Esta desconexión entre la tasa alta de estadística de trabajo infantil y la nula detección por parte de la inspección sugiere que, el sistema sigue fallando en su alcance, especialmente en la economía informal y las zonas rurales. Instamos al Gobierno a asegurarse de fortalecer las capacidades inspectoras, inclusive mediante la formación de inspectores en materia de trabajo infantil y trabajo adolescente protegido, así como a evaluar los medios provistos, el acceso al transporte y tecnología adecuados para llegar a las áreas de difícil acceso.

Por último, pero no menos importante, debemos referirnos a la protección contra la explotación y el tráfico de menores. No podemos concluir este análisis sin referirnos a la vulnerabilidad de los niños frente a las peores formas de trabajo infantil. Tomamos nota de los esfuerzos bajo la Ley contra la Trata de Personas y la capacitación a 277 oficiales de policía y fronteras. También tomamos nota de la cooperación con la Unión de Mujeres de Lao que ha permitido asistir a 226 víctimas infantiles entre el 2017 y el 2022. No obstante ello, los bajos índices de procesamiento y condena de los prestadores siguen siendo una debilidad institucional. Los miembros empleadores enfatizan que la lucha contra el trabajo infantil es indivisible de la protección contra la explotación comercial y urge al Gobierno para que garantice que en la práctica esto se cumple.

Solicitamos en consecuencia al Gobierno que garantice la realización de investigaciones exhaustivas y el desarrollo de procesos penales sólidos, que todos los responsables sean enjuiciados, y que se impongan sanciones suficientemente efectivas y disuasorias. Asimismo, solicitamos al Gobierno que continúe proporcionando información detallada sobre el número de investigaciones llevadas a cabo, los enjuiciamientos iniciados y las condenas dictadas.

Presidenta – Voy a pasar el uso de la palabra a la Sra. Mikyung Ryu, portavoz del Grupo de los Trabajador, para que realice su declaración inicial.

Worker members – This is the first occasion in which our Committee is examining the application of the Convention by Lao PDR. However, concerns regarding the prevalence of child labour and the need for strengthened action to combat this phenomenon have been raised repeatedly by the Committee of Experts over a number of years.

At the outset, the Worker members note with concern that child labour remains a significant challenge in the country, affecting approximately 23 per cent of children aged 5 to 17 in 2023. The statistical information provided reveals significant disparities between rural and urban areas, with 26 per cent of children in rural areas engaged in child labour compared with 16 per cent in urban areas. The data further indicate that many children continue to perform hazardous work, including exposure to extreme environmental conditions, dangerous tools and machinery, and the carrying of heavy loads.

The Worker members take note of the measures reported by the Government to address child labour. In particular, we note that a new National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, which is expected to include targeted measures for the agricultural and informal sectors, remains pending adoption. We also acknowledge the implementation of community-based programmes in rural districts aimed at supporting vulnerable families and reducing reliance on child labour, as well as initiatives to expand access to education through scholarships,

school feeding programmes, and the reintegration of working children into the education system.

While we welcome the reported reduction in child labour from 41.5 per cent in 2017 to 23 per cent in 2023, we share the concerns of the Committee of Experts that the incidence of child labour remains unacceptably high. Progress is encouraging, but sustained and intensified efforts are still required.

The Worker members therefore consider it essential that the Government further strengthen its effort to eliminate child labour, with particular attention to rural areas and hazardous forms of work. We would appreciate additional information on the implementation of prevention and assistance measures, school retention and reintegration programmes, and, importantly, the concrete results achieved. We also encourage the Government to adopt and implement, without further delay, the National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour and to ensure its effective monitoring and evaluation in consultation with the social partners.

Turning to labour inspection, we note the information provided by the Government concerning the entry into force of the Decree on Labour Inspection, which reportedly strengthens the mandate and authority of labour inspectors, including their ability to conduct inspections in both the formal and informal economy, particularly in rural and high-risk areas. We also note the reported increase in the number of trained inspectors and the targeted inspections carried out in sectors such as agriculture, construction and small enterprises, which have led to the identification of cases of child labour and hazardous work performed by children.

While these developments are welcome, we regret the limited information available regarding the operation and impact of labour inspection services in practice.

Effective enforcement is a cornerstone of the Convention. In the absence of detailed information on inspections conducted, violations detected, penalties imposed and follow-up measures taken, it remains difficult to assess the effectiveness of implementation and enforcement.

In this regard, the Worker members encourage the Government to further strengthen the capacity, coverage and resources of the labour inspectorate, particularly in rural and remote areas, and to ensure that inspectors are fully equipped to identify, prevent and address child labour in all its forms.

The Worker members also take note of the legislative developments concerning hazardous work. However, the Worker members remain concerned by Decision No. 4677, which appears to permit children from the age of 15 to engage in hazardous work under certain circumstances. We recall that Article 3(3) of the Convention allows such exceptions only from the age of 16 and only under strict conditions guaranteeing the full protection of the health, safety and morals of young persons.

The Worker members note the Government's indication that the Decision No. 4677 is currently under review with a view to ensuring full compliance with the Convention, including provisions to prohibit hazardous work for all persons under the age of 16 and to strengthen safe and non-hazardous vocational training opportunities for younger adolescents.

The Worker members therefore urge the Government to bring its legislation into full conformity with the Convention as a matter of priority.

At the same time, the Worker members note the adoption of provisions regulating light work from the age of 12, provided that such work does not prejudice a child's education, health or

development. The Worker members encourage the Government to ensure that these provisions are effectively monitored and strictly enforced in practice.

Finally, we note the information provided concerning the Law on Vocational Education (Amended) No. 63/NA of 2019, which establishes a minimum age of 14 years for admission to apprenticeship programmes in accordance with the Convention.

In conclusion, the Worker members remain concerned by the persistently high incidence of child labour, particularly in rural areas and in hazardous forms of work. The Worker members urge the Government to take robust and sustained action through a comprehensive approach that combines effective implementation of plans and programmes, improved access to education, strong labour inspection and targeted prevention measures. Particular attention must be given to rural communities, where child labour remains most prevalent and where children continue to face the greatest risks.

The elimination of child labour is not only a legal obligation under the Convention; it is a prerequisite for ensuring that every child can enjoy their right to education, development and decent future opportunities. We therefore call on the Government to accelerate its efforts and to work closely with workers' and employers' organizations to achieve tangible and lasting progress.

Presidenta – Pasamos ahora el uso de la palabra a la Sra. Daovading Phirasayphithak, quien es empleadora de la República Democrática Popular Lao.

Employer member, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Ms PHIRASAYPHITHAK) – I am honoured to speak today on behalf of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), representing the employers and the business community of Lao PDR.

The LNCCI wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the Government and explicitly voices the strong support of the Lao business sector for the Government's constructive responses and ongoing efforts regarding the implementation of the Convention.

As representatives of the private sector, we firmly believe that a responsible, sustainable, and compliant business environment is fundamental to Lao PDR's integration into regional and global supply chains. The LNCCI views the eradication of child labour not only as a compliance requirement but as a crucial pillar for developing a skilled, educated, and resilient future workforce. To this end, we have consistently championed corporate social responsibility and strict adherence to national labour laws among our members.

The LNCCI would like to highlight the practical steps the private sector is taking to support the Government in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention:

- **Promoting Code of Conduct and Compliance:** the LNCCI actively encourages enterprises, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, garment and tourism, to adopt codes of conduct that strictly prohibit the recruitment of underage workers. We are working to ensure that minimum age standards are mainstreamed into corporate hiring policies.
- **Supply Chain Auditing and Guidance:** we have developed and distributed practical toolkits and guidelines for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to help them monitor their supply chains. This is aimed at eliminating the risk of informal, underage labour among subcontractors, which remains one of our most complex challenges.
- **Public-Private Partnerships for Education and Skills:** recognizing that keeping children in school is the best deterrent against early entry into the labour market, the LNCCI actively supports Technical and Vocational Education and Training programmes. By strengthening the links

between schools and future employers, we provide clear, legal career pathways for youth at the appropriate legal age.

Lao PDR is an economy characterized by a large agricultural sector and a vast number of micro, small, and medium-enterprises (MSMEs). Navigating compliance within these informal structures presents genuine operational challenges. It is our firm view that these challenges are best met through capacity-building, institutional strengthening, and continuous awareness-raising rather than through measures that disrupt trade or economic progress.

We commend the Government for maintaining an open, consultative, and highly collaborative relationship with the employers through our national tripartite mechanisms. The LNCCI remains fully committed to this partnership, ensuring that business growth goes hand-in-hand with social responsibility and international labour standards.

In conclusion, the LNCCI calls upon this Committee to take a balanced and supportive approach in its conclusions. We urge the ILO and the international community to continue providing targeted technical assistance to both the public and private sectors in Lao PDR, helping us build a robust, child-labour-free economy.

Presidenta – Damos ahora la palabra al Sr. Athilath Oudomdeth, quien habla en representación de los trabajadores de la República Democrática Popular Lao.

Worker member, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Mr OUDOMDETH) – The Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU) highlights its commitment to eliminating child labour and upholding the Convention, seeing child labour as a critical issue of children's rights, social justice, decent work, and sustainable development. Despite government efforts, child labour remains high, especially in the informal economy. The LFTU notes significant gaps in enforcement, monitoring, and protection, particularly in rural areas.

The LFTU shares the Committee of Experts' concern about legislative inconsistencies. Specifically, Decree No. 4677 sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 15 years and contradicts Article 3 of the Convention, which specifies 18 years for hazardous work, with a limited exception of 16 years, under strict safeguards. The LFTU also emphasizes that apprenticeship programmes must be properly regulated and establish a minimum age of at least 14 years to prevent premature entry into the labour market. Clear legal provisions are crucial for protection and continued education.

To combat child labour, the LFTU identifies five key priorities beyond legal amendments:

1. Strengthen Labour Inspection Services by providing adequate staffing, resources, and training for inspectors, especially in remote and high-risk sectors.
2. Address child labour in the informal economy by improving community-based monitoring, local coordination, and awareness among employers and families.
3. Improve access to quality education by keeping children in school to prevent child labour.
4. Expand social protection systems by supporting vulnerable households to reduce economic pressures leading to child labour.
5. Prioritize social dialogue by engaging trade unions, employers' organizations and social sectors in awareness-raising, monitoring and policy development.

The LFTU calls for the Government to address legislative gaps, strengthen enforcement, and intensify efforts against child labour, especially in hazardous work and the informal economy, to ensure all children have access to education and a future free from exploitation.

Presidenta – Antes de continuar con nuestras labores, me gustaría informarles que el proyecto de resultado de la discusión de la Comisión sobre el Estudio General titulado: *“El empleo y el trabajo decente para la paz y la resiliencia”*, ya está disponible en la página web de la Comisión.

Dicho esto, voy a pasar ahora la palabra a la Sra. Georgia Ioannou, quien habla en representación de la Unión Europea y pertenece al Gobierno de Chipre.

Government member, Cyprus, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States (Ms IOANNOU) – I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova ¹ as well as the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its Member States are committed to the promotion, protection, respect and fulfilment of human rights, including labour rights, children’s rights and the fight against child labour, as enshrined in the Convention. We promote universal ratification and effective implementation of fundamental ILO Conventions and support the ILO in developing and promoting international labour standards and supervising their application.

The EU and its Member States have been committed development partners of Lao PDR, including through the “Everything But Arms” arrangement under the EU’s General Scheme of Preferences. The trade benefits granted under the “Everything But Arms” arrangement are subject to the condition that Lao PDR respects core international principles, enshrined in core UN and ILO Conventions.

We note with concern that the number of children engaged in child labour in the country remains high, despite the decrease observed since 2017. We request the Government to intensify its efforts to ensure the progressive and complete elimination of child labour, including in hazardous work and rural areas and to step up the provision of detailed information to the Committee of Experts on the measures taken and results achieved, including disaggregated statistical data.

We also take note of the written information provided by the Government related to the actions undertaken to eliminate child labour and strengthen legislation on minimum age and hazardous work, including the development of a new National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour. We note with interest the Government’s commitment to further strengthen its efforts and we encourage the Government to proceed swiftly with the adoption of the updated National Action Plan. Upon adoption, it should be shared with the Committee of Experts.

In order to effectively monitor and detect cases of child labour, the capacities of the labour inspection services should be adapted and reinforced. We request the Government to strengthen its efforts in this regard, both in the formal and informal economy. We note the Government’s indication that the new Decree on Labour Inspection is now in force and actively implemented to strengthen the monitoring of child labour, particularly in rural and high-risk areas, and we encourage the Government to provide additional information on the activities of the labour inspectorate, including on the number and nature of violations detected and the penalties imposed.

We note with concern that the age of admission to hazardous work is still not aligned with the provisions of the Convention. We request the Government to take the necessary measures

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

without delay to bring its legislation into conformity, to ensure that children under 16 may not, under any circumstances, be authorized to perform hazardous work.

We are further concerned by the reported increase in trafficking of women and children, the low prosecutions rates and the insufficient resources to combat this serious issue. We reiterate the Committee of Experts' call to the Government to take all necessary measures to prevent and combat the worst forms of child labour, in particular the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children under 18 and to ensure thorough investigations and prosecutions, as well as the imposition of effective and dissuasive penalties for all perpetrators.

We recall the importance of the fundamental ILO Conventions not yet ratified by Lao PDR, namely 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 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), along with the governance Convention, the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81).

The ratification and effective implementation of these Conventions together with other Conventions on human rights, environment and good governance will constitute a prerequisite for Lao PDR to apply for becoming a beneficiary of the Generalised System of Preferences Plus trade scheme with the EU once the country graduates from its "Least Developed Country" (LDC) status.

The EU and its Member States remain committed to a joint constructive engagement with Lao PDR with the aim of strengthening the Government's capacity to address the issues raised in the Committee of Experts' report.

Presidenta – Pasamos el uso de la palabra al Sr. Jeffrey Valdez, representante gubernamental de Filipinas, que hablará en nombre de la Asociación de Naciones de Asia Sudoriental (ASEAN).

Government member, Philippines, speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Mr VALDEZ) – I deliver this statement on behalf of the 11 Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN commends the Government for its constructive steps, political will and continuous efforts in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. As an active member of the global community and a committed member of ASEAN, the Lao PDR has consistently demonstrated its dedication to the fundamental principles and rights at work, particularly the progressive elimination of child labour. This commitment is evidenced by its comprehensive national legislative frameworks which explicitly align with international standards to protect young people and ensure their rights to education and development.

ASEAN takes as a positive note, the proactive measures undertaken by the Government, including legislative and policy alignment, the ongoing refinement and effective implementation of the comprehensive employment law and national legal frameworks that clearly define minimum working age thresholds and restrict hazardous labour.

Targeted national campaigns: The recent launch of coordinated multi-sectoral national awareness campaigns developed in partnership with domestic social partners and international stakeholders to prevent and eliminate child labour at the grassroots and community levels.

Socio-economic interventions: The integration of child labour elimination strategies into broader national development goals, including reduction, vocational and technical education reform, and the systematic expansion of the national social protection system with the technical support of the ILO.

ASEAN firmly believes that addressing compliance issues within this Committee should be approached through a spirit of constructive tripartism, mutual respect and social dialogue. Complex socio-economic challenges such as the total eradication of child labour in developing economies require sustained technical assistance, capacity-building, and localized institutional support rather than punitive scrutiny. In this regard, ASEAN appreciates the ongoing cooperation between the Government and the ILO. We highly encourage the ILO and international partners to continue providing tailored technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of Lao PDR's labour inspectorate and statistical systems and local administrative bodies.

In conclusion, ASEAN reiterates its full confidence in the Government's commitment to continuously improve its labour standards and effectively implement the Convention in both law and practice.

ASEAN calls upon the Committee to reflect the progress made, the concrete responses provided and the specific national realities of Lao PDR in its conclusions.

Presidenta – Damos ahora la palabra a la Sra. Thi Thu Huong Ngo, que habla en representación del Gobierno de Viet Nam.

Government member, Viet Nam (Ms NGO) – We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegate of the Philippines on behalf of the ASEAN Member States. Viet Nam has taken note of the observations of the Committee of Experts and the information provided by the Government concerning the application of the Convention. We recognize the efforts undertaken by the Government to strengthen its legal and institutional framework for the protection of children and the elimination of child labour, including through measures relating to labour inspection, age verification and access to education. We also welcome the Government's continued engagement with the ILO supervisory mechanisms and its cooperation with employers' and workers' organizations in addressing child labour and promoting the effective implementation of the Convention.

We recognize that challenges remain. In this regard, continued engagement with the ILO and social partners will be important in supporting further progress. Viet Nam, therefore, encourages the continuation of technical cooperation and capacity-building support to the Government in implementing the Convention and addressing the remaining challenges.

Presidenta – Pasamos la palabra al Sr. Sophoan Tep, quien habla en representación de los empleadores de Camboya.

Employer member, Cambodia (Mr TEP) – On behalf of the Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA), I offer our perspective on the Government's implementation of the Convention. The Committee of Experts show persistent gaps in the Government implementation of the Convention. The rate of child labour remains high in the country with concerning numbers of children engaged in hazardous work. Most critically, Decision No. 4677 continues to permit hazardous work for children under 16 in violation of Article 3(3) of the Convention.

However, against this backdrop, a positive shift is happening. The Committee of Experts' report references a decrease in child labour over the course of seven years. From 41.1 per cent in 2017 to 23 per cent in 2023. The decline is significant, showing encouraging progress that should not only be noted in passing. Rather, the progress needs to be examined carefully by all concerned parties, including the Office, to capture lessons learned and to identify further avenues of policies and support for the Government.

It is also our view that gaps identified by the Committee of Experts are not due to the lack of political will but to constraints in institutional capacity and resource. The Government needs stronger legal frameworks, better trained labour inspectors and more efficient tripartite mechanisms. We, therefore, call on the Government to take three urgent actions, amend Decision No. 4677 to prohibit hazardous works for all children under 16, strengthen labour inspections with adequate resources, and deepen social dialogue through regular tripartite consultations. But these actions require support. We appeal to the Office to provide technical assistance to both Government and social partners, including legal revision support and capacity-building of the labour inspectors.

We call on the Committee to adopt balanced conclusions that acknowledge progress, highlight persistent gaps and call for coordinated actions to ensure every child in the country is protected, in accordance with the Convention.

Presidenta – Pasamos el uso de la palabra al Sr. José Sonny Matula, quien habla en representación de los trabajadores de Filipinas.

Worker member, Philippines (Mr MATULA) – Lao PDR is famously known as the land of a million elephants, but it appears that there is another elephant in the room. I hope it is not. I can identify it as the reduction of protection for children. The Government decided to lower protection from 16 years old to 15. This is not progress but leaving children behind. Progress should mean raising standards for children, not lowering those standards.

We submit that childhood is not a probationary period for dangerous work. The workers of the Philippines share the concerns expressed by the Committee of Experts.

We acknowledge the efforts made by the Government. The Labour Law generally reflects the requirements of the Convention. The minimum age for employment is 14 and light work is permitted from age 12. However, in December 2023, Decision No. 4677 introduced a troubling change. While revising the list of hazardous occupations, it lowered the minimum age for hazardous work from 16 to 15. At first glance, one year may seem like a small difference, but with regards to hazardous work one year is not a rounding error. For a child operating dangerous machinery, carrying heavy loads or working in harmful conditions, that year can make all the difference.

We support the concern of the Committee of Experts. Article 3(3) of the Convention is clear. Hazardous work may be permitted only from the age of 16 and only under strict safeguards. The Convention states 16 as the protective floor. Decision No. 4677 lowered that floor. When a floor is lowered, children do not rise higher. They simply fall farther.

While Decision No. 4677 provides for training and protection measures, a hard hat is not a substitute for childhood. Protective gloves cannot cure a legal standard that falls below the Convention.

Presidenta – Pasamos la palabra a la Sra. Anastasiia Toropova, que habla en representación del Gobierno de la Federación de Rusia.

Interpretation from Russian: **Government member, Russian Federation (Ms TOROPOVA)** – The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is taking consistent steps in accordance with its obligations under the Convention, as well as other applicable international standards. These include both legislative measures and comprehensive practical steps aimed at combating child labour. In particular, in collaboration with authoritative international organizations, including UNICEF, programmes are being implemented to raise awareness on the issue of child labour. The legislation adopted explicitly prohibits the employment of persons under 16 in

hazardous work and restricts the admission of persons under the age of 14 to apprenticeship programmes.

The Government is taking active steps to counter trafficking in persons, including the trafficking of minors. To this end, an inter-sectoral legislative package, covering the labour, social and criminal justice spheres, has been adopted. Training programmes for law enforcement and social service personnel are being implemented. Given the context, it's clear that the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is taking all the necessary measures to counter child labour. Although the problem still exists, it can be stated that the country has a strong legal framework in place to address it, and with its steps in practice, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is showing its willingness to implement legislation. We support the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in its efforts to eliminate child labour, and we call on the ILO to provide technical assistance on this matter to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Presidenta – Damos la palabra a la Sra. Sor Chew Choo, quien habla en representación de los trabajadores de Singapur.

Worker member, Singapore (Ms CHOO) – I would like to join my fellow workers' representatives to express our concern regarding the continued failure of the Government to comply with the Convention, particularly in relation to the Law on Vocational Education (Amended) No. 63/NA of 2019. While we note the Government's efforts to strengthen its vocational education framework, the Committee of Experts has identified significant gaps in the Law that are not in conformity with the Convention.

Firstly, the Law does not clearly establish a minimum age for admission to apprenticeships and vocational training in line with the Convention. The absence of a clear and explicit minimum age requirement creates legal uncertainty and opens the possibility for children to enter vocational pathways prematurely. The Committee of Experts notes that the Government has not specified whether the amended Law on Vocational Education (Amended) No. 63/NA sets a minimum age of at least 14 years for admission to apprenticeships. This is particularly problematic where it may allow entry into training before the completion of compulsory education, which runs counter to the fundamental principle of the Convention, that children must not be drawn into economic activity at the expense of their basic education.

Secondly, the Law does not sufficiently ensure that vocational education is compatible with children's right to education and development. There is a lack of clear safeguards to guarantee that training programmes are genuinely educational and not combined with work arrangements that may amount to economic exploitation.

Without clear legal provisions on the nature, conditions and oversight of apprenticeships, the distinction between education and work remains blurred, increasing the risk that children are exposed to inappropriate or premature work situations.

Thirdly, the Law lacks adequate provisions to ensure effective supervision and oversight of vocational training programmes. The Committee of Experts has noted the need for stronger mechanisms to monitor implementation and ensure compliance.

We call on the Government to take urgent and concrete steps:

First, amend the Law to explicitly establish a minimum age for admission to vocational training and apprenticeships that is fully aligned with the Convention.

Secondly, introduce clear legal provisions to ensure that all vocational training programmes are genuinely educational in nature, with defined learning outcomes and strict safeguards that prevent their use as a source of labour.

Thirdly, strengthen the Law by incorporating robust supervision, and monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, including coordination between the education authorities and labour inspectorates.

Finally, ensure that these reforms are developed through meaningful social dialogue, with the full involvement of workers' and employers' organizations.

Presidenta – Pasamos la palabra al Sr. Adrian Steiner, quien habla en representación del Gobierno de Suiza.

Membre gouvernemental, Suisse (M. STEINER) – La Suisse soutient la déclaration faite par l'Union européenne et souhaite faire part des points suivants.

La Suisse prend note des informations fournies par le gouvernement concernant l'application de la convention, ainsi que des observations formulées par la commission d'experts.

Nous relevons avec intérêt l'élaboration en cours d'un nouveau plan d'action national sur la prévention et l'élimination du travail des enfants, qui sera prochainement soumis au cabinet pour approbation. Nous encourageons les autorités à adopter rapidement ce plan et à en assurer une mise en œuvre effective.

La Suisse note également les progrès réalisés, notamment la diminution du taux d'enfants engagés dans le travail des enfants, passé de 41,5 pour cent en 2017 à 23 pour cent en 2023. Toutefois, ce taux demeure élevé, en particulier dans les zones rurales, où les enfants restent davantage exposés, y compris à des travaux dangereux.

Nous encourageons dès lors le gouvernement à poursuivre et à intensifier ses efforts en vue de l'élimination progressive du travail des enfants, en particulier dans ses formes dangereuses, et à fournir des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises ainsi que sur les résultats obtenus.

La Suisse prend note de l'intention d'adopter un nouveau décret visant à renforcer l'inspection du travail. Nous invitons les autorités à préciser les activités menées dans ce domaine et à veiller à ce que les services d'inspection disposent des ressources nécessaires pour exercer un contrôle effectif, tant dans l'économie formelle qu'informelle.

Par ailleurs, nous notons avec préoccupation que la législation actuelle permet l'accès à certains travaux dangereux dès l'âge de 15 ans. Nous rappelons que, conformément à la convention, ce seuil devrait être fixé à 16 ans au minimum, sous réserve de garanties strictes en matière de sécurité, de santé et de formation. Nous encourageons le gouvernement à poursuivre ses efforts afin d'aligner pleinement sa législation sur les dispositions de cette convention fondamentale.

Presidenta – Pasamos la palabra al Sr. Ryo Saito, que habla en representación de los trabajadores del Japón.

Worker member, Japan (Mr SAITO) – Child labour remains a serious challenge in Lao PDR, particularly in agriculture and other sectors where children are exposed to hazardous conditions. The persistence of hazardous child labour is not simply a consequence of poverty; it is also a consequence of inadequate enforcement and insufficient political will. The Convention establishes a fundamental principle: children belong in school, not at work. Every child engaged in hazardous labour is a child whose right to education, health, development and a decent future is being denied. We therefore fully support the request of the Committee of Experts and urge the Government to take immediate and concrete measures to:

First, substantially strengthen and reinforce the labour inspection system so that the inspectors can effectively monitor workplaces and detect child labour throughout both the formal and informal economy, including in remote rural areas.

Second, ensure that labour inspections lead to effective enforcement, including the identification of violations, the imposition of appropriate sanctions and the removal and protection of children found in hazardous work.

Third, provide comprehensive and transparent information on the measures taken and the results achieved, including labour inspection statistics, the number and nature of the violations identified, the penalties imposed and the actions taken to withdraw children from child labour.

The Japanese trade union movement strongly supports the international efforts to eliminate child labour in all its forms. In this regard, Japan has been supporting efforts in Lao PDR through cooperation with the ILO and other partners. This includes support for the collection of reliable data through national child labour surveys, which are essential for understanding the scale and characteristics of child labour and for developing effective policies and targeted interventions. In addition, the Japan International Labour Foundation has been implementing projects aimed at improving the livelihoods and incomes of workers in the informal economy and at strengthening workers' organizations at the community level. Such initiatives contribute to reducing the economic vulnerabilities that often push families to rely on child labour and help create conditions in which children can remain in school and enjoy their childhood.

However, international cooperation cannot substitute for national responsibilities. External support can assist and complement national efforts, but the primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Convention rests with the Government. The continued existence of child labour, particularly hazardous child labour, demands urgency, not promises. Children need effective protection now. We therefore urge the Government to translate its commitments into concrete action and measurable results so that every child in Lao PDR can enjoy their right to education, health, safety and future free from exploitation.

Presidenta – Pasamos la palabra a la Sra. Aime Triana Sevajanes, quien habla en representación del Gobierno de Cuba.

Miembro gubernamental, Cuba (Sra. TRIANA SEVAJANES) – Cuba agradece el útil documento presentado por el Gobierno, en el que se informan de las medidas adoptadas para cumplir con las obligaciones derivadas del Convenio.

Valoramos y saludamos especialmente la voluntad y disposición del Gobierno de mantener un diálogo abierto y constructivo con esta Comisión, así como su positiva respuesta a la solicitud de presentar información por escrito. Destacamos, de manera particular, los esfuerzos sostenidos que ha venido realizando el Gobierno para fortalecer su sistema de recopilación de datos y seguimiento, en colaboración con expertos de la Oficina de Estadística Nacional y el Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (UNICEF).

Estas acciones encaminadas a generar información estadística actualizada, fiable, y desglosada constituyen un paso importante y positivo para facilitar la comprensión sobre la naturaleza, el alcance, y las tendencias del trabajo infantil, y para orientar las políticas públicas de manera más efectiva. Asimismo, reconocemos los palpables avances en materia de inspección laboral con la entrada en vigor del nuevo Decreto sobre Inspección del Trabajo, el aumento de los inspectores capacitados y la realización de inspecciones específicas en sectores como la agricultura y la construcción.

Ello demuestra un compromiso tangible con la aplicación de la ley y la protección de los menores. Valoramos también positivamente la adopción de las disposiciones legislativas como la Ley sobre Formación Profesional (en su versión enmendada) núm. 63/NA, y la Ley del Trabajo que buscan armonizar la edad mínima para el aprendizaje con lo previsto en el artículo 6 del Convenio, al tiempo que se prohíben expresamente las labores peligrosas para los jóvenes. Si bien, persisten retos y desafíos como ocurre en todos los países, saludamos la actitud receptiva del Gobierno ante las preocupaciones de la Comisión de Expertos y las acciones concretas realizadas que demuestran su firme determinación de intensificar la prevención, garantizar la rendición de cuenta de los infractores, y fortalecer los sistemas de protección.

Presidenta – Pasamos el uso de la palabra al Sr. Victor Novikov, quien habla en representación del Gobierno de Belarús.

*Interpretation from Russian: **Government member, Belarus (Mr NOVIKOV)*** – First of all, our thanks go to the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for providing the information before us. The Government is demonstrating its steadfast commitment to applying the Convention and consistently carrying out a set of measures to eliminate child labour.

We welcome the efforts of the Government to improve legislation in this area, in particular the establishment of a minimum age for admission to work and a prohibition of hazardous work for persons under 18 years of age, as well as limiting working hours for minors along with measures to protect their health and safety. The adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour is making a significant contribution to the policy on child labour prevention applied in the Lao People's Democratic Republic through monitoring the situation at the national and local levels, and providing training for labour inspectors and representatives of the private sector. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is actively cooperating with the ILO, UNICEF and other UN agencies to organize awareness-raising campaigns aimed at changing public attitudes toward child labour and raising awareness of children's rights. Therefore, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has not only aligned itself with international standards on child protection but is also taking practical measures to reduce child labour, strengthen enforcement of legislation and safeguard children's rights to education and a safe childhood. We welcome the commitment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to a constructive approach, and we call on the Office for providing the necessary technical assistance so that the country can make progress in fulfilling its obligations under the ILO Conventions and strengthen its potential in the social and labour sector.

Presidenta – Pasa ahora la palabra a la Sra. Zihua Zhong, quien habla en representación del Gobierno de China.

*Interpretation from Chinese: **Government member, China (Ms ZHONG)*** – We thank the detailed statement delivered by the representative of the Government.

China notes that the Government has taken active measures to fulfil its obligations under international law for the protection of labour rights. Since ratifying the Convention in 2005, the Government has continuously improved its domestic legal framework, developed relevant national action plans and prioritized policies for rural areas and the informal economy. The Government has also launched assistance programmes, provided subsidies to vulnerable families to reduce child labour and offered scholarships and school meals to help working children return to school. In light of its national development realities, the Government has earnestly implemented its obligations under the Convention and achieved positive progress and accomplishments which deserve our recognition. China hopes that the Office will keep in close contact with the Government, provide necessary technical assistance based on its actual needs,

and help the Government to further enhance its capacity to implement the Convention and advance decent work and social justice in the country.

Presidenta – No veo más solicitudes de palabra, por lo cual invito ahora al representante gubernamental de la República Democrática Popular Lao, el Sr. Oudone Maniboun, Subdirector General del Departamento de Gestión Laboral, a que formule sus conclusiones.

The Government representative (Mr MANIBOUN) – We reach the conclusion of the discussion on this individual case regarding the application of the Convention.

First and foremost, my Delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Chairperson and the officials of this Committee for the professional, transparent, and balanced manner in which these proceedings have been conducted. We also highly value the constructive interventions, insights and recommendations put forward by the Employer and Worker members as well as the representatives of various Member States who have spoken on this case. The eradication of child labour and the strict enforcement of minimum age standards are not merely statutory obligations under our ratified Conventions. They are core priorities deeply embedded within our national development agenda.

As we have detailed in our earlier submission, the Government has made significant strides in aligning our domestic legal framework including our national labour law, national social economic strategies and targeted action plans with the strict parameters of the Convention. We have listened very closely to the comments and concerns raised by the social partners today regarding remaining gaps, particularly concerning the effective monitoring of the informal sector, agricultural communities and the capacity of our labour inspection system. We acknowledge these observations with the utmost sincerity. For a developing nation like Lao PDR, bridging the gap between rigorous legal provisions and full operational implementation across remote areas presents real structural and financial challenges.

However, let me assure this Committee that our political views remain unwavering. The challenges we face do not diminish our commitment. Rather, they sharpen our focus. Moving forward from this session, the Government pledges to prioritize the following key areas of action.

First, we will continue to refine and strengthen our labour inspection mechanisms, maximizing our available resources to better reach vulnerable and informal sectors where hidden child labour risks are most persistent.

Second, we will intensify our nationwide awareness campaigns, working closely with local authorities, communities and families to emphasize the critical importance of keeping children in school and out of hazardous work.

Third, we will further solidify our domestic tripartite cooperation, ensuring that our social partners, the workers' and employers' organizations of Lao PDR are actively consulted and embedded into the monitoring and execution of our national strategy on the elimination of child labour.

No single nation can tackle the socio-economic root causes of child labour in isolation. To accelerate our progress, the Government will continue to seek and welcome the technical assistance and guidance of the ILO. We highly value the collaborative spirit of the ILO and look forward to partnering on targeted capacity-building programmes that will directly address the operational gaps discussed today.

In conclusion, we respectfully request the conclusions of this Committee to accurately reflect the substantial progress, genuine efforts and concrete milestones that Lao PDR has already achieved since ratifying the Convention. We ask that the Committee take into full consideration

the socio-economic realities and resource constraints of our country, framing its final recommendations in a supportive, collaborative and forward-looking manner. The Government remains fully committed to the foundational values of the ILO. We depart this session with a renewed determination to protect our children, safeguard their futures and ensure that decent work becomes a reality for every citizen across our nation.

Presidenta – Muchas gracias Sr. Maniboun por su participación en las labores de la Comisión y por la información facilitada.

Ahora es el turno de palabra de los dos portavoces. Voy a dar la palabra, en primer lugar, a la Sra. Mikyung Ryu, portavoz del Grupo de los Trabajadores, para que realice su declaración final.

Worker members – The Worker members would like to thank the Government for its engagement in this discussion and for the additional information provided. We also thank all delegates who contributed to this constructive exchange.

In concluding our consideration of the application of the Convention by the Government, the Worker members recognize the efforts undertaken by the Government while emphasizing that important challenges remain in ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Convention in law and in practice.

We take note of the information provided by the Government, including the pending adoption of a new National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, as well as the implementation of measures aimed at addressing the root causes of child labour, including community-based programmes to support vulnerable families and initiatives to expand access to education through scholarships, school feeding programmes and the reintegration of working children into schools.

While we acknowledge the reported reduction in child labour since 2017, the data confirm that child labour remains a significant concern, affecting a substantial proportion of children in the country, particularly in rural areas and in hazardous forms of work. The persistent disparities between rural and urban areas, together with the continued prevalence of hazardous work involving dangerous tools and machinery, exposure to harsh environmental conditions and physically demanding tasks, demonstrate that sustained and targeted action remains urgently needed.

The Worker members also reiterate their concern regarding the limited information available on the functioning and effectiveness of labour inspection services. Effective labour inspection is a cornerstone of the Convention and an essential tool for identifying, preventing and addressing child labour. In the absence of comprehensive information on inspections conducted, violations detected, sanctions imposed and follow-up measures taken, it remains difficult to assess the effectiveness of enforcement in practice. Strengthening the capacity, coverage and resources of the labour inspectorate, particularly in rural and remote areas, should therefore remain a priority.

The Worker members further reiterate their concern regarding the legal framework governing hazardous work. As highlighted by the Committee of Experts, Decision No. 4677 appears to permit children under the age of 16 to engage in hazardous work under certain circumstances. This is not compatible with Article 3(3) of the Convention. The Worker members therefore urge the Government to complete, without delay, the review of the legislation and to ensure full conformity with the Convention by prohibiting hazardous work for all persons under the age of 16.

At the same time, the Worker members take note of the provisions regulating light work from the age of 12 and emphasize the importance of ensuring that such work is strictly supervised and does not compromise children's education, health, development or well-being.

The Worker members also note the information provided regarding the minimum age for admission to apprenticeship programmes and encourage the Government to continue ensuring that vocational education and training frameworks remain fully aligned with the requirements and objectives of the Convention.

In conclusion, the Worker members recognize the steps taken by the Government to prevent and reduce child labour. Nevertheless, the scale and persistence of child labour, particularly in rural areas and in hazardous conditions, demonstrate that further decisive and sustained action is required.

The Worker members therefore encourage the Government to intensify its efforts through a comprehensive approach that combines effective enforcement, quality education, social protection and targeted prevention measures, with particular attention to rural communities where child labour remains most prevalent.

In this regard, the Worker members encourage the Government to:

- One: intensify its efforts to eliminate child labour, particularly in rural areas and in hazardous forms of work, including through the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, and to provide updated information on the measures taken and results achieved.
- Two: continue to implement and strengthen the community-based programmes and the measures aimed at expanding access to and retention in education, and provide information on their implementation and impact, particularly in rural areas.
- Three: strengthen the capacity, coverage, resources and effectiveness of labour inspection services, including in rural and remote areas, to ensure adequate monitoring and detection of child labour in both the formal and informal economy.
- Four: provide detailed information on labour inspection activities with regard to the detection of child labour cases, including the number and nature of violations detected, and the penalties imposed.
- Five: review and amend Decision No. 4677 to ensure that no person under 16 years of age is authorized to perform hazardous work under any circumstances, in line with Article 3(3) of the Convention.
- Six: ensure that the light work permitted from the age of 12 is strictly limited in practice, effectively monitored, and does not harm children's health or development or interfere with their education.
- Seven: provide updated and disaggregated statistical data on the nature, extent and trends of child labour in the country, including by age, sex, and geographic location.

The elimination of child labour is both a fundamental obligation under the Convention and an essential condition for ensuring that every child can enjoy their right to education, healthy development and decent future opportunities. In this regard, the Worker members invite the Government to avail itself of the technical assistance of the Office in addressing the outstanding issues identified by the Committee of Experts and in further strengthening the effective implementation of the Convention.

Presidenta – Voy a dar la palabra ahora a la Sra. Laura Ruth Giménez, portavoz del Grupo de los Empleadores, para que realice su declaración final.

Miembros empleadores – Los miembros empleadores agradecemos al Gobierno por la información suministrada y el firme compromiso expresado ante la Comisión.

Agradecemos también los representantes que participaron de la discusión y tomamos nota de sus comentarios. Tomamos nota de las acciones de cooperación del Gobierno con organismos internacionales y esperamos que la asistencia técnica recibida de la OIT y el UNICEF le permitan mejorar su sistema de datos para proporcionar estadísticas actualizadas sobre la naturaleza el alcance y las tendencias del trabajo infantil en el país.

A la luz del debate observamos que el Gobierno enfrenta desafíos persistentes. La reducción del trabajo infantil es un dato de la realidad, pero las brechas legales y la debilidad de la supervisión ponen en riesgo el progreso alcanzado.

El incumplimiento del Gobierno con el Convenio no es una mera formalidad jurídica: tiene consecuencias reales y documentadas en la vida de los niños del país. Permitir trabajos peligrosos desde los 15 años, en un país donde casi 1 de cada 4 niños trabaja, donde la pobreza rural supera el 24 por ciento, y donde los hogares reducen el gasto en educación y salud por presión económica, crea las condiciones perfectas para que estas prácticas no sean la excepción sino la regla.

Que el propio Gobierno haya reconocido que la Decisión núm. 4677 no está alineada con el Convenio, hace aún más urgente la reforma: cada mes de demora, es un mes en el que niños de 15 años siguen legalmente expuestos a trabajos que el derecho internacional considera inaceptables incluso para los de 16 años.

Al igual que señalamos en otros casos, los miembros empleadores insistimos en que enmendar la legislación vigente para alinearla con el Convenio, así como retirar a los niños y niñas del trabajo infantil, no constituyen soluciones sostenibles, si no se garantiza la permanencia de los niños en el sistema educativo y se mejoran las condiciones de vida de sus familias, así como se promueve la creación de trabajo de calidad en sus comunidades.

La economía de la República Democrática Popular Lao se sostiene en un entramado productivo de microempresas, pequeñas y medianas empresas, por lo cual, alentamos al Gobierno a complementar las medidas que aborden las causas estructurales del trabajo infantil y a que diseñe estrategias para promover la consolidación de un entorno compatible con las empresas sostenibles, que aseguren el empleo de calidad para los adultos.

En resumen, nuestras recomendaciones para el Gobierno en este caso son: armonizar sin demora la Decisión núm. 4677, para asegurar que la edad mínima para trabajos peligrosos sea de 16 años sin excepciones algunas para niños de 15; enmendar la legislación sobre educación profesional para incluir una norma que haga referencia explícita, a la edad mínima de 14 años para la formación profesional, así como la prohibición expresa de que los aprendices realicen trabajos pesados o peligrosos para su salud. Adicionalmente, requerimos al Gobierno que proporcione información estadística detallada y desglosada por sector y género derivada de la nueva Estrategia Nacional de Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil, una vez que sea adoptada.

Recomendamos al Gobierno asegurar que, en todos los casos de trabajo infantil, incluidos aquellos vinculados con los practicantes y los niños involucrados en trabajos peligrosos, se desarrollen investigaciones exhaustivas y procesos penales sólidos, que todos los responsables sean enjuiciados, y que se impongan sanciones lo suficientemente efectivas y disuasorias. Asimismo, proporcionar datos cuantitativos sobre la inspección: el número de visitas,

infracciones específicas de trabajo infantil detectadas y las sanciones impuestas en la práctica bajo el nuevo Decreto sobre la Inspección del Trabajo núm. 289. Además, alentamos al Gobierno a fortalecer las capacidades de los interlocutores sociales.

Tomamos nota del involucramiento de entidades de empleadores y de trabajadores en el desarrollo de estrategias de prevención y erradicación del trabajo infantil, y animamos al Gobierno a promover la continuidad de un diálogo positivo con entidades de empleadores y de trabajadores en el territorio.

Los miembros empleadores observamos que los desafíos en el terreno demandan un diálogo tripartito profundo para abordar las múltiples causas que se encuentran en el centro del problema del trabajo infantil, y llamamos al Gobierno a incluir a las organizaciones de empleadores y de trabajadores en el debate sobre cómo fortalecer el entramado socio productivo del país y diseñar estrategias multidimensionales para asegurar el cumplimiento de las normas sobre la edad mínima en la República Democrática Popular Lao.

Por último, alentamos al Gobierno a solicitar asistencia técnica específica de la OIT. Es urgente dedicar esfuerzos a un programa dedicado al Convenio, que ayude a fortalecer la recolección de datos administrativos y las capacidades de los organismos de inspección del trabajo, especialmente en las zonas rurales. Esperamos que el firme compromiso expresado por el Gobierno se materialice sin demora en medidas concretas, dirigidas a garantizar que los niños permanezcan donde deben estar en las escuelas, preparándose para construir el futuro de República Democrática Popular Lao.

Presidenta – Damos por concluida la discusión de este caso. Agradezco la participación del representante gubernamental de la República Democrática Popular Lao y todos los oradores que participaron en la discusión. Las conclusiones serán adoptadas por la Comisión, la mañana del jueves 11 de junio.

Ahora vamos a tener una pausa de solo 2 minutos para el cambio de oradores y continuamos.

Quiero anunciarles que tendremos una pausa hasta las 18.30 horas, así que tómense el tiempito para la pausa.

Se interrumpe la sesión a las 17.59 horas.

The sitting was suspended at 5.59 p.m.

La séance est suspendue à 17 h 59.