



Governing Body

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Policy Development Section

POL

Minutes of the Policy Development Section

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Employment and Social Protection Segment

1. The role of the ILO in addressing climate change and a just transition for all (GB.340/POL/1)

1. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the Office must focus its efforts on how labour markets would be affected both by climate change itself and by the transitions made to minimize and mitigate climate change. Changes to economies, labour markets and to the mix of industries and ways of working would create real challenges for millions of working people and their communities, and positive labour market outcomes relied on sound, employment-sensitive approaches.
2. The successful reduction of carbon emissions would depend strongly on coherent industrial policy frameworks and technological research and development. The creation of national frameworks for more skilled and flexible working populations would be crucial to the transition to sustainable economies. For enterprises to make the transition to a lower-carbon economy, stable and affordable energy prices, clear and supportive regulatory frameworks and suitable incentives to foster competitiveness, innovation and productivity were necessary.
3. The Employers' group welcomed the focus in the Office document on the role to be played by the social partners in the transition and also the alignment with the key focus areas of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work of economic growth, job creation, productivity, an enabling environment for enterprises, and skills. Action should be prioritized over discussion, as existing frameworks and guidelines were already a sound normative base for action. There was no need to create additional standards, and doing so would delay urgently required action. The Office must take into account the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often required support in areas such as access to finance, capacity-building and simplified bureaucratic frameworks and conditions. The Employers urged the Office to recognize that there were both threats and opportunities for jobs in the transition, which were not limited to multinational enterprises. The informal economy also had to be addressed, as workers and employers often lacked access to social protection, training and skills development, and support and incentives to adapt business models. The ILO must concentrate its efforts on employment and livelihoods in order to avoid overlap or conflict with existing multilateral measures on climate change.
4. The group would like additional information on the ILO's work in the area, and therefore proposed that systematic monitoring of progress and outcomes and reporting back to the Governing Body should be included in the decision and that more detail should be provided on upcoming activities and research projects. The group also asked the Office to outline how the current discussion would interact with existing work on climate change, such as the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative.
5. Noting that the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG) had submitted in writing a proposed amendment to the draft decision, the Employers' group proposed the following subamendments: In subparagraph (a), "research" should replace "discussion" to place a stronger onus on outcomes and deliverables; however, the need to add "focusing in all specific sectors", as proposed by ASPAG, was questionable. In subparagraph (c), the following should be included: after "the ILO", "its constituents", because the Office should promote the role of employers' and workers' organizations to its partners where appropriate; before "addressing", "that are", for clarity; and "rising sea levels" at the

request of the Pacific States. The Employers endorsed ASPAG's proposal to include a reference to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit outcomes in regard to the Decade of Action. The group proposed a new subparagraph (d), "report back to the Governing Body on the outcomes and effectiveness of ILO work on the labour dimensions of climate change and associated mitigation and transition measures, and in the new subparagraph (e), "initiate" should be replaced with "continue to pursue", to reflect the progress outlined in paragraphs 54 to 57 of the Office document.

6. **The Worker spokesperson** called on governments to build, implement and finance plans for a just transition to low-carbon economies in the same spirit in which they had led during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in line with national development priorities and national commitments. A just transition was the way for developing countries to achieve environmental sustainability alongside social and economic objectives.
7. The Office should integrate the issue of a just transition into all policy outcomes for the 2020–21 and 2022–23 biennia and create a post in each region specifically to address a just transition and foster tripartite consultations on the issue. On advancing knowledge and understanding of the impacts of climate change on employment, the Office must take into account food security and sovereignty when drafting and implementing its policies. In addition to the sectors proposed, more research should be carried out on the transition away from fossil fuels and on the construction sector. The Workers' group reiterated the request it made at the 337th Session of the Governing Body regarding the Office's research strategy.¹ Furthermore, the Office should generate knowledge on the effects of trade and investment agreements on the creation of green jobs, as they, alongside the World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations and the Energy Charter Treaty could create barriers to transition. With around 80 countries having signed the Just Transition Declaration and the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative, the ILO must ensure that decent work and a fair transition were key elements of a green transition, the circular economy and the bioeconomy. The Office must work with its constituents to ensure that governments negotiated with workers' and employers' organizations when developing new climate-related plans. Such plans must include long-term strategies and measures to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change that were fully in line with the ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*. They must also promote training and capacity-building incorporating a gender perspective to give women access to jobs requiring skills or previous training.
8. The Workers' group welcomed the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative and insisted that tripartite consultations must be held on all of the Initiative's activities. In its efforts to support initiatives by ILO constituents, the Office should promote the ratification, implementation and supervision of relevant international labour standards, including the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94), and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). The Workers' group also welcomed the European Green Deal. In line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the Office should convene discussions to ensure that any supply chains in which European countries were involved outside the continent were sustainable. Capacity-building of constituents should focus on training of trainers and should disseminate knowledge and policies to all levels of governance. Partnering with the Global Labour University to create a course on a just transition would be very helpful for

¹ GB.337/INS/PV, paras 254–261.

workers. The Office should also continue to collaborate with its strategic partners within the UN.

9. The Workers' group expressed concern regarding the conflict of interest generated by the increasing participation of corporate actors in environmental negotiations, and asked the Office to be aware of and avoid any such conflicts. The Office should consider options to reduce its own carbon emissions. The COVID-19 crisis would presumably result in more environmentally sustainable travel practices and increased use of technology, but the Office should also encourage staff members to use public transport or bicycles with a view to reducing emissions. The Workers' group agreed with the draft decision.
10. **Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC)**, a Government representative of Barbados noted that the measures implemented during the pandemic to curb the rate of infection had led to a notable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. The crisis also offered an opportunity to rebuild the economy based on sustainable consumption and production mechanisms. Continuous participation by all actors in the world of work was necessary to achieve a just transition for all. The group noted with appreciation the Director-General's Green Initiative and the Office's participation in the 2019 Climate Action Summit, and underscored the relevance of the Office's efforts to promote knowledge and understanding of the effects of climate change on employment and to support the application of its guidelines for a just transition for all. The group supported the draft decision.
11. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Senegal said that the increasing impact of climate change on the world of work, particularly on the most vulnerable people, meant that the ILO's crucial role in combating the phenomenon and ensuring a just transition for all must be strengthened. All constituents must consider environmental issues and their effects when defining national policies.
12. Notwithstanding the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, one positive effect had been the reduction, albeit temporary, in greenhouse gas emissions and improvement in air quality. The recovery from the pandemic must involve sustainable environmental policies for all States, and enterprises must have the resources to adapt to a just transition and develop the skills that would be demanded in the green economy. Social dialogue was a vital tool in reaching a strong consensus on a sustainable economic recovery conducive to decent work and to resilient and sustainable enterprises.
13. All Member States must implement measures to increase resilience in the face of the alarming figures set out in the document. The Abidjan Declaration represented a solid basis for promoting decent work and social justice during the transition. The Africa group called on all countries to strengthen their work with technical and financial partners in order to mobilize sufficient resources.
14. While his group agreed broadly with the subamendments proposed by the Employers' group, it did not agree that the reference to specific sectors should be removed from subparagraph (a). Subparagraph (c) should end after the phrase "international institutions", and the words "and effectiveness" should be deleted from the new subparagraph (d) proposed by the Employers' group.
15. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Indonesia said that her group encouraged the ILO to continue its research into the green transition with a particular focus on sectors such as agriculture and food systems, biodiversity, tourism and transport. The ILO should provide support for Member States in drafting

environmental policies, in particular by enhancing knowledge-sharing among the constituents and improving research and analysis on the impact of climate change on labour.

16. The ILO's work to address climate change and formulate policies that promoted decent work and social justice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each country under the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). Special attention should be paid to developing economies, and policies and investment should create jobs in countries with different socio-economic development, for men and women in different sectors and at all skill levels. Her group supported the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative to enable ambitious climate action that delivered decent jobs and advanced social justice.
17. ASPAG called on the Office to enhance its engagement with relevant institutions, global processes and strategic partners in its climate change activities. The group supported the ILO's active role in the United Nations (UN) system-wide approach to climate action and encouraged it to continue its work under the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 8 and 13. The ILO should increase its capacity-building for constituents and staff in green and low-emission technology and job skills, in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO. ASPAG supported the Organization's efforts to become carbon-neutral, and asked when that target would be met and what measures would be implemented to that end.
18. ASPAG had submitted amendments to the draft decision proposing that: at the end of subparagraph (a), the words "focusing on all relevant sectors" should be added; in subparagraph (c), "in" should be inserted between the words "institutions" and "addressing"; before "desertification", "deforestation" should be added to the list of environmental issues; and before "with a view", "and reducing emissions as well as implementing the Decade of Action towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" should be inserted.
19. **Speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States**, a Government representative of Germany said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Iceland, Norway and Armenia aligned themselves with her statement. She emphasized that the post-pandemic economic recovery should pave the way for sustainable and socially inclusive production and consumption. Just transition mechanisms should address the economic effects of the transition, focusing on the most vulnerable regions, industries and workers. Social dialogue and international cooperation were vital to ensuring public support for climate measures. Her group therefore welcomed the Organization's engagement with the social partners.
20. Occupational safety and health, social protection and skills programmes with environmental objectives should be a priority for the ILO in the coming years. The ILO must step up its efforts in promoting stronger links between environmental regulation and labour policies and legislation, and take into account environmental aspects when drafting or rewriting standards. Climate change should also form an integral part of capacity-building for ILO officials and constituents.
21. The *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* represented an appropriate framework for action. Constituents should promote the inclusion of environmental policies in international framework agreements and collective agreements, and develop environmental, social and governance policies within enterprises. The Organization should continue to take the lead in integrating decent work and a just transition in international environmental policies. The Office's reduction in carbon emissions was welcome. Her group favoured reducing emissions,

but could also support the purchase of Adaptation Fund Certified Emission Reduction credits if the target of climate neutrality by 2020 could not otherwise be met. Her group could support either the original draft decision or the version as amended by ASPAG.

22. **A Government representative of Bangladesh** said that the inherent links between climate change and employment, as recognized in global environmental agreements, meant that the ILO's actions to address the phenomenon's effects on the world of work were critical. Its active role at various climate summits was welcome, as was its involvement in developing guidelines for ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
23. The ILO should advocate for green jobs and conduct more research into the challenges, gaps and opportunities for the world of work brought about by the green transition. It should support Member States in developing coherent strategies for sustainable production and consumption and in equipping workers with the skills that would be required as part of the transition. It should also address income inequality between developed and developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones, build strategic partnerships with forums such as the Climate Vulnerable Forum and assist in channelling resources to vulnerable developing countries.
24. **A Government representative of the United States of America** said that the ILO's work on the replacement of workers by technology in the energy sector should be expanded to other sectors affected by such changes. The Organization should prioritize restoring growth and employment for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Office's action on climate change must be aligned with the ILO's mission and expertise. He asked how the issues of desertification and biodiversity loss, referenced in subparagraph (c) of the draft decision, related to the ILO's mandate.
25. **A Government representative of India** said that countries' differing development levels necessitated region-specific quantitative research by the ILO on the impact of the transition to a low-carbon economy. The transition would likely have an adverse effect on low-skilled workers, women and indigenous peoples, and policies must therefore be targeted and inclusive. Workers must be equipped with the skills to capitalize on emerging employment opportunities, and there must be coordination between labour, skills and environment policies. The ILO must foster social dialogue to build a sustainable future of work in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial, technological and capacity-building support was required to meet the national determined contribution commitments and to adapt to climate change. Moreover, the response to climate change should be international and based on the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities.
26. **A Government representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** encouraged all countries to come forward with ambitious 2030 climate plans and long-term strategies to achieve zero carbon emissions as soon as possible, and commended the ILO on its carbon neutrality plans. The ILO's engagement on the energy proposals, its agreement to participate in the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) Energy Transition Council, and its work to support its constituents in promoting recovery through investment in low-carbon sectors, green jobs and a just transition, were welcome. Her Government supported the draft decision as amended by ASPAG and was open to further work to achieve consensus.
27. **A Government representative of Canada** said that it was essential to ensure that the perspectives of women and girls were taken into consideration and that they actively participated in climate action. Providing women and girls with the necessary skills and

resources to play a meaningful role in the transition could be a unique opportunity to reduce the gender wage gap. The Office should therefore guarantee gender-responsive and inclusive climate responses in all related policies. Environmental committees at the enterprise or sectoral levels could be a useful mechanism for dialogue on the environmental dimensions of the recovery. Her Government supported the Office's work relating to the creation of green jobs, digital transformation and a just transition in global supply chains, which needed to be made more resilient in the fallout from the pandemic. The ILO should continue to focus its efforts on knowledge sharing, enhanced policy advice, capacity-building for constituents and strategic partnerships. She endorsed the original draft decision, but expressed interest in hearing the views of others on the proposed amendments.

28. **A Government representative of Peru** said that it was important to follow up on the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative and the commitments arising from it. Peru, together with Spain, had co-chaired the Coalition for Social and Political Drivers of Climate Action which, in the framework of the Climate Action Summit in September 2019, promoted an initiative focused on achieving a just transition for all with the support of the ILO. The participation of governments, the private sector and workers was necessary to achieve low-carbon growth, by fostering the creation of decent work and green jobs, and ensuring the inclusion of all groups, particularly the youngest and most vulnerable workers. The Office should pursue its efforts to promote knowledge and studies on the effects of climate change on employment. He encouraged Member States to support the application of the ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*.
29. **A Government representative of Ecuador** agreed that, in order to address the serious impacts of climate change, coherent and consistent efforts had to be made through strategic partnerships that enabled a just transition towards an environmentally sustainable future of work. In view of the negative impacts of the pandemic, robust policies for the recovery, sufficient cooperation for climate change mitigation and adaptation, technology transfer, and capacity-building were needed more than ever. The Director-General should continue to drive an agenda focused on knowledge and understanding of the impacts of climate change on employment, and support for the different country initiatives on the issue.
30. **A Government representative of Barbados** said that the climate-related challenges faced by small island developing States with coastal economies were mentioned in only a very cursory way in the document. The impact of hurricanes should be considered in terms of frequency and intensity as well as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) loss caused by even individual storm systems. The ILO should work closely with other institutions in the multilateral system to address the issue of GDP per capita which should not be the only criterion for a country to be able to access critical resources. As marine resources were highly susceptible to the impact of climate change, more emphasis should be placed on the promotion of sustainable development in the blue economies of small island developing States. The connection between green and blue economies should be made very clear. Research assistance was required to help small island developing States and less developed countries identify skills gaps and potential future jobs in their specific context. He welcomed the focus on the circular economy model and proposed including the word "reduction" in the "reuse, recycling, remanufacture and repair of goods" paradigm referred to in the document. The specific circumstances of small island developing States, particularly those that were tourist-dependent, should be taken into account in the ILO's discussions to ensure a just transition for workers there.

- 31. A Government representative of Panama** said that the Office should consider amending subparagraph (c) of the draft decision to include food production and hydro-economics in the issues to be addressed through collaboration between the ILO and relevant international institutions.
- 32. A representative of the Director-General** (Deputy Director-General for Policy) noted the comments made regarding the need for additional research strategies on the impact of green jobs. She recognized the importance of supporting bold solutions for a just transition towards a sustainable future, and of facilitating an inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Regarding its policy work in the area of green jobs, the ILO would continue to advance its knowledge base and policy-informed action through social dialogue and implement measures to ensure the achievement of decent work and a just transition for all.
- 33. Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Enterprises Department) recognized the importance of addressing informality and productivity in relation to SMEs. The Green Jobs Unit was well placed within the Enterprises Department, as the Department interacted with the Small and Medium Enterprises Unit, which dealt with the issue of informality. Progress had been made in the areas of innovation and productivity, which would be evidenced by an information paper submitted for the current Governing Body session. Discussions had recently been held on innovative ways of encouraging the informal sector to become more formalized, and the ILO, together with other UN agencies, was looking at specific initiatives with a climate action component. The ILO would ensure that components on women and indigenous peoples were incorporated into all future activities.
- 34.** Regarding procurement, the ILO was already exploring ways to integrate sustainability dimensions into development cooperation projects. Work was also being carried out to promote an update of ILO standards in the common UN approaches to sustainable procurement. He acknowledged that the Green Jobs Initiative should be linked to other components and said that the ILO's outstanding amount of greenhouse gas emissions was low. The ILO recognized the importance of the capacity-building of its constituents and had been providing an input for the European Green Deal through the European Commission and the European Parliament. The ILO had signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification to enhance cooperation on the issue. The blue economy was a matter of importance and a regional strategy had already been developed for Africa, which would then be expanded to other regions.
- 35. The Employer spokesperson** emphasized the importance of engagement with business, and recognized the support for a longer version of subparagraph (c) of the draft decision. He reiterated his group's proposal to include a reference to rising sea levels.
- 36. The Worker spokesperson** said that it was a challenge to word a draft decision on which there could be general consensus. Further work therefore needed to be done before a definitive result could be produced.

(The Governing Body resumed consideration of the item after the Office circulated a revised draft decision following consultations.)

- 37. The Employer spokesperson** supported the amended draft decision.

38. **The Worker spokesperson** supported the amended draft decision and emphasized the importance of reaching a consensus on climate change and a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all when addressing the unprecedented challenge of climate change. That should go hand in hand with efforts to promote human and labour rights and social justice to ensure that the transition to an economic model with zero emissions would be attained without leaving anyone behind.
39. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Senegal supported the amended draft decision.
40. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Germany said that North Macedonia, Albania and Norway aligned themselves with her statement. She welcomed the tripartite agreement to ensure that the ILO could contribute to a just transition for all, and the compromise reached in subparagraph (c) to incorporate all four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda. She supported the amended draft decision.

Decision

41. **The Governing Body took note of the information and update provided by the Office in document GB.340/POL/1 and requested the Director-General to:**
 - (a) **promote further discussion, research, knowledge and understanding of the implications of climate change for the world of work, focusing on all relevant sectors;**
 - (b) **advance the application of the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, with a focus on assisting governments, workers' organizations and employers' organizations in the development of policies through social dialogue to implement their climate change commitments, including through the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative;**
 - (c) **promote collaboration between the ILO, its constituents and relevant international institutions addressing climate change and related key environmental issues, such as deforestation, desertification, rising sea levels and biodiversity loss, adaptation and reduction of emissions as well as implementing the Decade of Action towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 8, with a view to advancing a just transition for all;**
 - (d) **continue to pursue carbon neutrality at the ILO, in line with the United Nations target to reach carbon neutrality by 2020; and**
 - (e) **report back to the Governing Body on the implementation of the above-mentioned points.**

(GB.340/POL/1, paragraph 58, as amended by the Governing Body)
42. **A Government representative of Brazil** said that the decision just adopted requested the Director-General to promote collaboration between the ILO, its constituents and relevant international institutions addressing climate change and related key environmental issues. It went further by providing a list of those key environmental issues purportedly related to climate change: deforestation, desertification, rising sea levels and biodiversity loss, adaptation and reduction of emissions. He expressed the expectation that the Office would abide by its mandate, core mission and comparative advantage, instead of duplicating efforts and spreading scarce resources too thinly.

Brazil had expressed its belief during the consultations that specifying a list of key environmental issues and relating them to climate change was not an appropriate approach in the ILO context. Firstly, establishing such a relationship exceeded the competence of the Governing Body and also went beyond the ILO's mandate. Secondly, a multitude of more relevant issues could be mentioned, meaning that the list would be excessively long or insufficiently comprehensive. The list in the adopted decision was not only insufficient but also misleading, as according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 73 per cent of global carbon emissions originated from fossil fuels, making them by far the main cause of climate change. However, fossil fuels had not been included in the list, only issues that accounted for a minority of emissions. It was regrettable that the Governing Body had ultimately adopted a decision that deviated from addressing the core issues where action by the ILO would have a real impact in terms of a just transition.

2. Renewing commitment to youth employment by endorsing a follow-up plan of action on youth employment for the period 2020–30 (GB.340/POL/2)

43. **The Worker spokesperson** said that young people faced high unemployment rates and, when employed, many were engaged in poor-quality and low-wage jobs or worked in the informal economy with significant decent work deficits. Young women workers faced greater difficulties than their male counterparts, owing to persisting gender inequalities. COVID-19 had sadly exacerbated all those challenges and created new ones. While platform-mediated work had resulted in job opportunities for young people, those jobs remained by and large of a precarious nature and with low wages. During lockdowns, telework created particular challenges for young women, who alarmingly sometimes faced domestic violence while endeavouring to strike a balance between professional and family life. For many people, telework might not be an option if appropriate measures were not taken to address the digital divide.
44. The Workers' group strongly supported the ILO's leadership in promoting decent work for young people as part of measures aimed at recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience. It endorsed the objectives of ensuring full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all young people and of achieving gender equality, and welcomed the reference to doing so in accordance with the relevant Conventions and Recommendations. They welcomed the Office's attempt to balance demand- and supply-side measures in the action plan and stressed the need to address the quantity and quality dimension of jobs.
45. In the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the majority of resources were devoted to various supply-side measures. The Initiative needed a greater focus on rights and decent work. It was important that the ILO took into account the recommendations of the high-level independent evaluation carried out in 2018 and placed greater emphasis on demand-side measures. It should strengthen its macroeconomic policy expertise, research, data collection, and employment and labour market analysis. The Office should link macroeconomic frameworks with the promotion and implementation of the relevant international labour standards, and especially the Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) and Recommendation (No. 122), 1964, and the Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169). Action on macroeconomics should not only be limited to the cluster on knowledge development and dissemination but should be expanded to include the cluster on technical support and capacity-building and the cluster on advocacy and partnerships that includes resource mobilization.

46. Another important priority for the Workers' group was formalization of the informal economy and increasing the quality of jobs for young people. The proposed plan of action must also address precarious jobs and various forms of triangular and disguised employment, which had a negative effect on aggregate demand in the economy and slowed down growth and development. Priority should also be given to young people facing multiple barriers in the labour market due to discrimination and structural inequality. The Office and governments must take action to develop an intersectional approach to address inequalities not only concerning gender, but also on issues such as LGBT, racial discrimination, issues concerning people with disabilities, indigenous and migrant youth, promote secure employment, direct employment relationships and collective bargaining, and ensure universal access to social protection for all, including young workers.
47. The Global Apprenticeships Network was a business-led public-private partnership; the Office should also engage with trade unions on the issue of apprenticeships. In the fourth proposed element of the plan of action, on promoting sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work, the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) should be included as one of the actors or collaborating entities for cluster B.
48. The Workers' group endorsed the draft decision with the amendment proposed by GRULAC.
49. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain groups of the population, particularly young people, had confirmed that there was a need for a more strategic and focused policy approach based on both supply-side and demand-side measures. Experience had shown that the major policy challenge lay in ensuring coordination between the various relevant government agencies and systematic participation by the social partners.
50. Certain aspects of the ILO's recommendations and guidance needed to be strengthened, particularly with regard to demand-side interventions, policy coordination, strengthening implementation capacity at national level, promoting the support of all parties involved, and reforms that would better align educational systems with the needs of the labour market. Above all, youth employment policies needed to be adopted in a holistic manner, because the level of employment was closely linked to an enabling environment for business, which meant access to finance including for SMEs, access to appropriate infrastructure, good skills development strategies and a stable political and economic environment where laws and rules were consistent and predictable. If the environment was conducive to business development, businesses would be able to create more jobs for all, not only for young people. The overall aim was to improve the prospects for everybody of being able to work full-time in a productive and decent job. Economic policy must also encourage recovery of the labour market and economic resilience, not only during the pandemic but also following it.
51. The decisive role played by education and vocational training in the fight against youth unemployment should be strengthened. Educational establishments needed to promote a flexible approach and set up partnerships and relationships with other parties, and more evidence-based research should be conducted. The social partners, particularly employers, must be closely involved in the development and implementation of educational and vocational training programmes. Cooperation on apprenticeships with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as part of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and partnerships with the Global Apprenticeship Network should be strengthened.

52. A more targeted and nuanced approach should be adopted, with the ILO assisting Member States in setting the correct priorities to help young people. That meant focusing on young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET). Instead of advocating an approach based on the rights of young people, the Employers' group would prefer an approach based on principles. That meant establishing the principles that guided regulations, sharing good practices, promoting social dialogue and encouraging positive civic attitudes.
53. With regard to productivity, the lack of skills sought by businesses stifled both the employability and the productivity of young people. Even when young people did have certain skills, they often worked in sectors or businesses that were not productive. The Employers' group therefore supported simultaneous action on both the demand and supply sides. There was a need to encourage young people to develop digital skills and skills in the use of new technologies, because that would make them more easily employable and help businesses in general to increase productivity.
54. The Employers' group supported approval of the follow-up plan of action and the amended draft decision as proposed by GRULAC.
55. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Uganda said that the current situation was critical in Africa, where the ILO estimated that over 64 per cent of young workers lived in poverty, youth unemployment was 10.8 per cent and 95 per cent of young workers were in the informal sector. It was clear that the COVID-19 pandemic and its ripple effects had exacerbated that fragile situation. Africa was keen to make decent work a reality for its young people by transforming the informal and rural economies, as articulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Abidjan Declaration – Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the future of work in Africa.
56. The independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy and actions for improved youth employment prospects, 2012–17, had concluded that the impact and sustainability of the ILO's projects had been unsatisfactory, and that few projects had achieved a good balance between growing new jobs and improving the employability of young jobseekers, and that there was disproportionate focus on entrepreneurship training which puts much responsibility for job creation on young people and not on governments to pursue pro-employment policies. Aware that employment creation had both micro and macro dimensions, the Africa group advised the Office to ensure that a balance was struck between supply- and demand-side interventions. The group wished to know what concrete measures were in place to address the weaknesses identified by the independent panel of evaluators, and what impacts the follow-up plan for the period 2012–19 had had on youth employment.
57. Noting that the paper under consideration acknowledged that different challenges were being faced across regions, he asked whether there was a special plan to address the unique challenges for Africa, and what indicators would be used to measure its performance. The financing of the plan of action was premised on extrabudgetary fund mobilization; did the Office have any existing funds and if so, how much was available? Lastly, he wondered whether the Office had considered including a specific stand-alone output under policy outcome 3 of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23, in order to allocate an appropriate budget.
58. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Barbados said that young people were around three times more likely to be unemployed compared with adults aged 25 and above. Since early 2020, a substantial and rapid increase in youth unemployment had been recorded, owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

GRULAC therefore welcomed the proposal to renew the ILO's commitment to youth employment, through a follow-up plan of action for the coming decade. The plan of action should respond to the Centenary Declaration call to address the challenges and opportunities of the digital transformation of work, including platform work, technological and demographic shifts, as well as climate change. Moreover, the plan should include concrete actions, with a cross-cutting gender perspective in order to ensure the access of young women to labour markets and decent work.

59. GRULAC looked forward to the development cooperation strategy that the Office would produce in support of the implementation of the plan of action and stressed the need for a strong regional approach, in order to adapt the cooperation strategy to the particular realities and needs of Member States. The group supported the clusters identified in the plan of action and their link to COVID-19 recovery, and in particular cluster B related to technical assistance and capacity-building. The Office should provide more information about the indicators for measuring progress.

60. GRULAC proposed that the draft decision should be amended to read:

The Governing Body:

- (a) endorsed the renewal of the follow-up plan of action on youth employment for the period 2020–30 as outlined in document GB.340/POL/2; and
 - (b) requested the Director-General to take full account of the suggested strategy and operational elements and the guidance provided in its discussion when allocating resources for the Office's work on youth employment as may be available during the current biennium and in future biennia, and to facilitate the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources for the implementation of the follow-up plan of action on youth employment for 2020–30.
61. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Saudi Arabia said that ASPAG supported measures to tackle the social consequences of the youth employment crisis while ensuring financial sustainability, and called for ongoing technical assistance to promote the implementation of international labour standards. The youth employment crisis could be tackled by addressing the changes in young people's behaviours with innovative thinking; for example, the desire among many young people to start their own businesses should be considered in policy and programme development. Knowledge development and dissemination would be essential to that end.
62. ASPAG supported the Office's proposals on technical assistance and capacity-building, which should be bolstered by action-oriented partnerships at the country level, and called for constituents – including young women – to be involved in the design and implementation of youth employment policies. Youth entrepreneurship and apprenticeship programmes had proven effective and should be further promoted; to that end, the Office should strengthen its cooperation with the Entrepreneurship Research Center on G20 Economies to facilitate the sharing of experiences on the topic.
63. The Office should promote the ILO as a global leader in the field and continue to advocate for youth employment as a development priority in international forums. It should also boost youth engagement in the ILO and incorporate the perspectives of young people into policy and programme development. The plan of action should be aligned with the Strategic Plan for 2018–21, the Programme and Budget for the biennium 2020–21 and the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy for 2020–25 to secure the financial resources for its implementation and the Office should regularly report on its progress to the Governing Body. ASPAG supported the draft decision as set out in the document.

64. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Germany said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Iceland, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Romania aligned themselves with the statement. The creation of decent work opportunities and productive employment for young people was integral to the achievement of SDG 8, and the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact would be vital in that regard, especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. She recalled the guiding principle in the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), to pay special attention to young people rendered particularly vulnerable as a result of a crisis.
65. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth was a powerful means to achieve the youth employment targets of the 2030 Agenda and to build partnerships and international policy coherence. The ILO's work in knowledge creation through the production of flagship reports such as *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020* was welcome.
66. The plan of action should be an ambitious, comprehensive tool that would build on the lessons learned, specifically address the COVID-19 pandemic and take into account the challenges and opportunities arising from the changing world of work. It should contain targeted and enhanced action under each of the three clusters of the action plan, in particular through addressing the mismatch between job supply and demand by encouraging skills development and training, and focus specific efforts on NEETs where programmes such as the Youth Guarantee in the EU have had positive impact.
67. She welcomed the proposal to hold a tripartite global youth forum in 2025 to assess progress, encouraged the Office to coordinate efforts with UN system stakeholders in regional and global partnerships on youth employment and called for enhanced implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy. She urged the Office to develop and implement results-oriented indicators at the outcome level in the plan of action, but emphasized the importance of effective resource allocation and accountability in its implementation. The plan of action should also give more consideration to work-life balance and gender equality. She supported the draft decision and could accept the amendment proposed by GRULAC.
68. **Speaking on behalf of the Eastern European group (EEG)**, a Government representative of Bulgaria described the obstacles to decent work for young people in many Eastern European and Central Asian countries, including scarce job opportunities, skills mismatches and the over-representation of young people in the informal economy and precarious work. Although governments in the region had taken targeted action to support youth employment, more efforts were needed to reduce NEET rates, especially given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
69. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth was a powerful accelerator for the achievement of the SDGs, and the ILO should continue its work to strengthen international policy coherence and partnerships. He welcomed the proposed plan of action, but would welcome a more innovative and targeted regional approach. He supported the draft decision and could accept the amendment proposed by GRULAC.
70. **Speaking on behalf of ASEAN**, a Government representative of Thailand supported the emphasis in the plan of action on knowledge development and dissemination and on technical assistance and capacity-building. At the 36th ASEAN Summit in June 2020, ASEAN leaders had adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work to outline a joint strategic direction for education reform and had agreed to develop a road map prioritizing digital skills, literacy, vocational training and higher education to fulfil the Declaration. He encouraged the Office to

continue to provide Member States with guidance on preparing for the future of work to ensure that young people would be able to contribute actively to sustainable development and efforts to rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic. The Office and the international community should strengthen their cooperation and help Member States to foster a culture of lifelong learning and raise awareness among young people, employers and workers of the importance of skills development to adapt to the changing world of work.

- 71. A Government representative of India**, expressing concern at the high rate of poverty among young workers, said that she supported the focus on knowledge development and dissemination. The ILO should broaden the scope of its research to informal labour market conditions, causes of informality and ways to increase formal employment. She highlighted the need to focus on new forms of work carried out by young people, in particular in the gig economy, and to ensure that those workers were covered by adequate social protection measures, describing steps taken by her Government to that end. The ILO should promote institutional training and skills development in developing countries to help those economies recover from the impact of the pandemic. Assessments of youth employment interventions should take into account the national economic situation. The ILO could encourage social security partnerships and agreements between countries to promote the international migration of skilled workers as a way to boost income equality and decent work. She supported the Office's proposal to build partnerships on youth employment and connect to high-impact global and regional forums, and called on the Office to incorporate input from those partnerships into its policy and programme design.
- 72. A Government representative of the United Kingdom** welcomed the steps taken by the ILO to renew its commitment to tackling youth unemployment and called on the Office and constituents to redouble their efforts in that area. The plan of action should contain a greater focus on how to improve the transition to work among young people, especially in developing countries. It would be useful to identify ways to share lessons learned and the ILO should continue to work on data collection and analysis. Her Government had implemented initiatives to encourage skills development and job creation for young people and endorsed the G20 Youth Roadmap 2025. While the inclusion of a gender dimension was welcome, she encouraged the Office to consider including other dimensions such as ethnicity, disability and mental health to remove barriers to participation in education and employment among disadvantaged and under-represented groups. The Office should also consider involving young people to a greater extent in youth employment programme design.
- 73. A Government representative of Mexico** said that, in Mexico, the closure of non-essential businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic had mostly affected the jobs of young people; his Government had therefore offered grants and established programmes to encourage young people into education, employment and training. He invited countries and regions to share experiences in order to develop policies to promote youth employment.
- 74. A Government representative of Bangladesh** said that crisis recovery and response measures should be centred on young people and that support for vulnerable young people, particularly those living in poverty, should be prioritized to ensure that recovery would be inclusive. Noting the importance of investment in digital skills, he called on the Office to provide technical assistance towards skills development among young people to increase their access to decent jobs. The Office should also help constituents to scale up management training and establish systems to support SMEs to include them in the

fight against unemployment. Young people should also be covered by social safety nets such as job retention schemes.

75. **A Government representative of Barbados** said that the global data presented in the document, suggesting that the increase in youth unemployment since February 2020 affected young women more than young men, did not fully reflect the situation in Barbados. However, in the domestic context, women were more negatively impacted during the pandemic with issues of violence and harassment. The term “apprenticeships” was not attractive to many young people, and he drew attention to the National First Jobs Initiative that could be presented as an alternative model. He agreed that entrepreneurship was crucial to addressing youth unemployment, and that young entrepreneurs needed financial and fiscal sustainability, which must be provided through relevant frameworks and structures. The ILO should continue to support efforts to move businesses to the formal economy. Noting the importance of soft skills, which should more accurately be referred to as core skills, he thanked the ILO for supporting the Employability Project in his country, which had provided training on core skills and entrepreneurship.
76. He recognized that States had to ensure access to the internet and devices if young people were to leverage key digital skills; but said that GDP should not be the only measure of a State’s ability to bridge that digital divide, particularly in small island developing States. The civil society sector could provide young people with employment as well as channelling their passion for service. His Government had implemented legislation to prevent discrimination in the workplace and was working with the UN to develop a related awareness-raising programme. Finally, he encouraged Member States to facilitate access to education up to the tertiary level.
77. **A Government representative of Ethiopia**, noting the continuity with the follow-up plan for 2012–19 as the three clusters remained the same, welcomed the linkages with the Centenary Declaration and with areas of COVID-19 response. She highlighted the particular youth employment challenges in Ethiopia and the policies being applied in her country to overcome them. The plan of action would contribute to such national initiatives. However, the appendix did not clearly show the intended outcomes, and did not contain defined outputs, target indicators and timelines. She asked how the plan of action should be aligned with national initiatives on youth employment to ensure constituents’ active participation and ownership.
78. **A Government representative of Peru** welcomed the human-centred plan of action, which would promote full and decent work for all young people, particularly given the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth employment. Thus, he expressed support for the draft decision, as amended by the representative of GRULAC.
79. **A Government representative of Ecuador** emphasized the need for strategies and policies to ensure access to decent work for young people, especially those without previous work experience or those whose ability to train had been limited by the pandemic, and to facilitate the transition from education and training to work. Such strategies and policies should be aligned with the SDGs, especially target 8.6. Interventions should also consider the future of work, anticipate future labour needs, and take into account technological advances, climate change and globalization. The plan of action should include a gender perspective, including to address the gender pay gap and inequalities in access to formal employment. He expressed support for the draft decision, as amended by the representative of GRULAC.

- 80. A representative of the Director-General** (Deputy Director-General for Policy) welcomed the guidance provided by the Governing Body, which would be taken into account by the Office. She confirmed that ILO research had shown that there had been a substantial and rapid increase in youth unemployment in 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and that, at a global level, young women were affected more than young men. She also confirmed that the plan of action had been developed after extensive consultations with the social partners and with young people and gave her assurances that the Office would continue to seek youth engagement in the development and implementation of the plan of action.
- 81.** Concerning the budget for activities under the plan of action, the Office was not yet in a position to provide specific figures for resource mobilization, but recognized that the scale of the disruptions in jobs and training was much larger as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic than in any previous crisis. That perhaps meant that more resources would be needed than in the past. However, in recent years, the Office had been relentlessly mobilizing internal and external resources to tackle the youth employment challenge and remained committed to ensuring the efficient and strategic use of resources, including those gained through global partnerships. The proposed action plan showed that the Office continued to commit to working together to make the best use of existing resources. Also, the Office was mobilizing external resources with the donor communities and through global partnerships, such as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The Governing Body's endorsement of the plan of action would be a clear signal of the ILO's commitment to youth employment and would strengthen the Office's position regarding resource mobilization. Concerning the inclusion of ACTRAV as a collaborating entity in the proposed elements of the plan of action, she reassured the Governing Body that ACTRAV had been consulted in the preparation of the plan, and that the document would be reviewed to ensure that its input was duly reflected, particularly under cluster B. Lastly, she confirmed that the Office had no objection to the amendment to the draft decision proposed by the representative of GRULAC.
- 82. Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Employment Policy Department) thanked members for sharing suggestions and policy initiatives that would advance and guide the work of the Office, particularly in ensuring that measures were appropriate to the regional and national contexts. He reiterated that the crucial element of the plan of action was its actions to impact both labour supply and demand. The Office had made important organizational and resource adjustments to strengthen efforts to promote macroeconomic policies and related policy areas, which had yielded positive results in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 83.** He welcomed the advice provided on the need to focus on vulnerable or at-risk groups, in particular young women, and said that Office-wide coordination would continue in that regard. Furthermore, the Office would continue to work with, as well as for, young people. It would continue to strengthen its collaboration with UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other entities to strengthen initiatives, which would also require greater coordination between national ministries, in particular between employment, education and finance.
- 84.** He recognized the unique challenges being faced in Africa, and said that the Office would continue its existing work to address the rural economy and barriers to formalization, and how to facilitate structural transformation to create more and better jobs for young people. Region-specific strategies would remain important. Finally, he said that measurable performance indicators would be developed in order to report progress on the implementation of the plan of action, as it was set out in its appendix.

- 85. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Uganda said that his group would need more time in order to consider the proposed amendment in the light of the responses provided by the Office. He therefore requested the Chairperson to defer discussion of the draft decision to a later sitting.
- 86. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Japan, recognizing that the proposed amendment did not change the substance of the draft decision, said that his group would have liked clarification regarding whether it reflected good governance practice. However, as the representative of the Director-General had indicated that the Office accepted the proposed amendment, ASPAG was also prepared to do so.

(The Governing Body resumed consideration of the item after the Office circulated a revised draft decision following consultations.)

- 87. The representative of the Director-General** (Deputy Director-General for Policy) confirmed that human and financial resources had been allocated to youth employment, as reflected in outcomes 3 and 5, including specific outputs, of the Programme and Budget for 2020–21 and the proposals for 2022–23. However, given the scale of the current crisis and its impact on young people, extrabudgetary resources would also be required to complement existing resources to fully implement the plan of action.
- 88. The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for the explanation and supported the amended draft decision.
- 89. The Worker spokesperson** supported the amended draft decision.
- 90. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Uganda expressed his group's appreciation to the social partners and the other regional groups for their flexibility and spirit of consensus, particularly in addressing the concerns raised by the Africa group. He reiterated that the Office should ensure that the gaps identified by the independent panel of evaluators were addressed during the implementation of the plan of action. The Africa group supported the amended draft decision.
- 91. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Germany said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Norway aligned themselves with her statement. The EU and its Member States considered it critical to support young people through the provision of opportunities for employment, education or training. She called on the Office to undertake timely and targeted actions in that respect, particularly in the context of the crisis, which posed further challenges to youth employment. Welcoming the compromise reached in the wording, she supported the amended draft decision.

Decision

- 92. The Governing Body:**
- (a) **endorsed the renewal of the follow-up plan of action on youth employment for the period 2020–30 as outlined in document GB.340/POL/2 and requested the Office to start implementing the plan using existing resources; and**

- (b) requested the Director-General to take full account of the suggested strategy and operational elements and the guidance provided in its discussion, when allocating resources for the Office's work on youth employment during the current biennium and in future biennia, and to facilitate the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources for the implementation of the follow-up plan of action on youth employment for 2020–30.

(GB.340/POL/2, paragraph 34, as amended by the Governing Body)

3. Decent work and productivity

(The document under this item was submitted for information only.)

Social Dialogue Segment

4. Sectoral meetings held in 2020 and proposals for sectoral work in 2021 (GB.340/POL/4(Rev.1))

- 93. In preparation for the adoption of a decision by correspondence, the Office held a briefing session for Governing Body members on this item on 23 October 2020.
- 94. The Screening Group agreed to put the item forward for a decision by correspondence on the understanding that the Office would publish a revised version of the document.
- 95. The decision contained in document GB.340/POL/4(Rev.1) was adopted by consensus and announced to all Governing Body members by a communication of 11 November 2020.

Decision

96. The Governing Body, by correspondence:

- (a) took note of the report of the Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport and authorized the Director-General to publish the final report;
- (b) requested the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for future work, the recommendations for future action by the ILO made by the Forum;
- (c) took note of the series of tools on sectoral impact and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and requested the Director-General to continue to support sectors in responding to the pandemic and building back better; and
- (d) decided that, should it be agreed to include an additional meeting in the programme of global sectoral meetings for the biennium 2020–21, the resources kept in reserve be used for a technical meeting or meeting of experts on either the protection of whistle-blowers (or independence and protection in the public service – fight against corruption) or another sectoral issue.

(GB.340/POL/4(Rev.1), paragraph 18)

Summary of written comments received during the consideration of the item by correspondence ²

- 97. The Employers' group** supported the new terminology used in subparagraph (c) as it ensured a coherent and coordinated approach. SECTOR's work should be aligned with and reflect the ILO's overall Strategic Plan and consequently the Employers would not support the development of a myriad of strategies. The group asked that SECTOR's ongoing programme be made known to the sectoral advisory bodies to enable constituents to provide input. Subparagraph (d) reflected the fact that it had not yet been decided whether to include an additional meeting in the 2020–21 programme. The tripartite constituents should consider that decision during the consultations outlined in GB.340/INS/21. The Office was requested to prepare a detailed document outlining how virtual and hybrid sectoral meetings could take place in practice, also containing information on the consequences of postponing meetings to 2022 and the consequences for the 2022–23 biennium, to enable constituents to take an informed decision during the consultations.
- 98. The Workers' group** noted that the conclusions of the Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport would promote the Decent Work Agenda for career athletes. Regarding upcoming meetings, travel restrictions had greatly reduced the ILO's ability to organize most of the sectoral meetings planned for 2020–21. Given the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sectors, the group welcomed the Office's adjustment of its sectoral work and development of tools to support severely affected sectors. It noted the proposal to hold tripartite consultations to decide the dates and formats of cancelled meetings. Regarding including an additional meeting on the programme of sectoral meetings in 2020–21, it reiterated that the subject of the protection of whistle-blowers was sufficiently mature for examination by a meeting of experts. The Workers welcomed the Office's work to provide sectoral responses to the COVID-19 crisis, grounded in international labour standards. Welcoming the bipartite and government initiatives in the various sectors, the group warned that rights violations continued during the crisis, sometimes even worsening. It was imperative to continue sectoral work to ensure that the way out of the crisis improved working conditions, strengthened collective bargaining and put in place occupational safety and health measures to secure the rights and health of all workers. The ILO's collaboration with other UN agencies was exceedingly important, and its 100 years of standards-related expertise in labour relations were invaluable in that regard.
- 99. The group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC)** noted that sport was a key enabler for achieving the 2030 Agenda and welcomed the consensus that the Office, governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and other relevant stakeholders should create an enabling environment to promote decent work in sport. The working conditions of athletes varied across regions and sport disciplines, between team and individual sports, and within a wide spectrum, and consequently an innovative approach to policy development was needed.
- 100.** Given the travel limitations and postponement of the programme of sectoral meetings for 2020–21 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, IMEC welcomed the proposal to hold tripartite consultations on how to address the meeting backlog. An additional sectoral meeting requiring a lighter than usual preparatory stage could still be organized in the

² The complete text of each comment in the original language is available on the [Governing Body's web page](#), together with the decision.

2020–21 biennium, on either the protection of whistle-blowers or another sectoral issue. IMEC supported subparagraph (d) of the draft decision.

101. IMEC also welcomed the refocus of the Office's sectoral work to supporting constituents' efforts to respond to the pandemic, and the ILO's proactive engagement and leadership in addressing the pandemic through its partnerships with other UN agencies and across the wider multilateral system.
102. In the statement made on behalf of **the EU and its Member States**, it was noted that Montenegro, Albania, Norway and Armenia aligned themselves with the statement. It was also noted that the EU and its Member States supported the IMEC statement. In respect of subparagraph (d) of the draft decision, interest was indicated in having a future sectoral meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector. The tourism ecosystem had been severely impacted across the globe. Specific support measures had been taken in the EU for recovery in the sector, which represented on average 12 per cent of its employment. A tripartite discussion on addressing the challenges posed and using the crisis as an opportunity to improve the sustainability and resilience of tourism, in particular through upskilling and reskilling employees, would be very timely. While a meeting on the protection of whistle-blowers was relevant, a discussion on the tourism sector should be given priority; the work of the Office in response to the COVID-19 pandemic could serve as a solid basis for its preparation. Should it not be possible to include a sectoral meeting on the subject in the current biennium, the matter should be discussed at the sectoral advisory bodies meeting in January 2021, to ensure its inclusion in the programme of meetings for 2022–23.

Development Cooperation Segment

5. Enhanced programme of development cooperation for the occupied Arab territories (GB.340/POL/5)

103. In preparation for the adoption of a decision by correspondence, the Office held a briefing session for Governing Body members on this item on 23 October 2020.
104. The Screening Group agreed to put the item forward for a decision by correspondence. The decision was adopted by consensus and announced to all Governing Body members by a communication of 11 November 2020.

Decision

105. **The Governing Body took note by correspondence of the information provided in GB.340/POL/5.**

(GB.340/POL/5, paragraph 41)

Summary of written comments received during the consideration of the item by correspondence ³

106. **The Employers' group** noted that the document had outlined the struggles smaller enterprises faced, and asked how the ILO could help to ensure business continuity, beyond the fund for income support. The group requested more information in the next

³ The complete text of each comment in the original language is available on the [Governing Body's web page](#), together with the decision.

report on how the ILO could provide guidance on developing an enabling environment for business to grow, and asked whether the ILO's Jobs for Peace and Resilience flagship programme could give guidance on a strategic approach for more peaceful and resilient societies through employment, decent work and social dialogue.

107. Despite substantial ILO support on consultative processes, reviews and studies, uptake at the political and decision-making level had been limited, therefore the ILO should instead focus its interventions on employment. The increased work in coordination with other international agencies was welcome, in particular the project proposal to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in addressing and recovering from the effects of the pandemic through the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The Employers' group could provide relevant technical support for the project, if needed, and requested regular status updates; there would also be added value in sharing information with UN resident coordinators, to strengthen the ILO's role as the lead agency on labour and social issues. The group also called on the ILO to provide more capacity-building for the social partners; for employers, there should be more training on upskilling, on digitization to help tap into international markets and on harnessing entrepreneurial and core skills.
108. **The Workers' group** expressed deep concern at the fact that the Palestinian economy had been particularly negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions. Public welfare, employment and livelihoods were under threat and existing inequalities were at risk of further exacerbation. The group welcomed the social dialogue process, which had played a critical role in identifying solutions to protect workers and provide a lifeline to enterprises. A tripartite agreement adopted in March 2020 by the Minister of Labour and the social partners, in which the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions had played a key role, had allowed employers to pay half of the wages they were due in March and April and the other half at the end of the crisis. The group welcomed the ILO's series of capacity-building workshops for workers and employers on collective bargaining and negotiation skills, and the fact that the ILO planned to organize trade union literacy trainings on a broad range of topics.
109. The Workers' group requested the Governing Body to take note of the urgent need for expanded and diversified development assistance to Palestinian workers, and the Palestinian labour market more broadly. Extending support to include skills development, employability and active labour market programmes, as well as continued assistance to social protection initiatives, would be instrumental in addressing the evolving labour market challenges, particularly during COVID-19.
110. **The Government of Bahrain**, on behalf of Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, stated that the collapse of the Palestinian labour market was caused by the policies of the occupying authority imposing restrictions on people and goods, which constituted an obstacle to growth, sustainable development and reducing unemployment rates, and obstructed Palestinian workers' access to decent work. It therefore called on the ILO and other relevant international organizations to protect workers' rights and eliminate the injustice they experienced.
111. The Appendix to the Report of the Director-General, on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, should be discussed in a plenary session of the International Labour Conference and then translated into specific steps and programmes with the aim of improving workers' conditions. The group reiterated its call to the Director-General, the Governing Body and donor States to provide financial support to revive and activate

the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection, and to continue to make efforts in coordination with international agencies, donor countries and the Arab Labour Organization to raise the financial support necessary to support the development needs in responding to the impact of COVID-19. It also called on the Governing Body to make efforts to provide financial resources to support the fund to help Palestinian workers overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and alleviate their suffering. The ILO must intervene effectively to restore Palestinian workers' rights, and to ensure that Palestinian workers were paid in accordance with international labour standards and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, in the light of the difficult financial circumstances faced by the Palestinian National Authority. The group requested the Director-General to report to the Governing Body on the ILO's efforts in that regard at the March 2021 session.

- 112. The Government of Indonesia** endorsed the strategic priorities of the second Palestinian Decent Work Programme and expressed its strong support for the continuation of the ILO's efforts to implement it and align it with the broader frameworks of the UN system and the UN country team. It emphasized its support for the efforts to overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as the ILO's commitment to the attainment of the National Policy Agenda 2017–2022 and the 2030 Agenda, in particular target 8.5 to realize decent work for all. It encouraged the ILO to focus its efforts on countering possible exploitation and increasing the protection of the rights of Palestinian workers in Israel and the occupied territory, while also ensuring decent working conditions for them. It also supported the efforts to expand and diversify development assistance to Palestinian workers, including to extend support to include skills development, employability and active labour market programmes, as well as continued assistance to social protection initiatives.
- 113.** Indonesia noted with particular concern the worsening hardship faced by Palestinians due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of Indonesia had announced an increased contribution to Palestine and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) during the Extraordinary Ministerial Pledging Conference for UNRWA that year. However, enhancing the Decent Work Agenda and realizing social justice for Palestinian people required an end to the instability in the territory, therefore a credible multilateral peace process must be started to find a comprehensive, just and sustainable solution.
- 114. The Palestinian Minister of Labour**⁴ noted that Palestinians had been facing the same huge challenges that had been caused by COVID-19 everywhere. In addition, the occupation, the expansion of settlements and the economic and financial blockade had exacerbated the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable and had increased poverty. At the same time, the Palestinian Authority's capacity to support its social partners was diminishing, which would eventually jeopardize the outcomes already achieved under the Decent Work Programme signed with the ILO.
- 115.** More than 100,000 Palestinian workers in Israel had lost their jobs and incomes, as they were not allowed access to their workplaces. Palestinian workers continued to experience humiliation and discrimination at border crossings, withholding of their wages and a lack of adequate occupational safety and health. In addition, the continued

⁴ The publication of this statement does not affect in any form or manner the legal status of Palestine in the International Labour Organization.

blockade on Gaza prevented thousands of workers from accessing their workplaces in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem, and in Israel. According to international reports, including the annual Report of the ILO Director-General to the International Labour Conference, Gaza had become a large prison for more than 2 million Palestinians.

116. The Palestinian Authority, in collaboration with its social partners and using ILO technical support, had been easing the impact of the pandemic through a contingency plan which included, among other elements: the signature of a tripartite agreement on wage protection, in the early months of the crisis, and the establishment of an unemployment support fund; provision of low-interest finance to SMEs by the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection; and continued implementation of the Decent Work Programme signed with the ILO, which faced a risk of delays and obstacles for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under that programme, the first ever Palestinian National Employment Policy represented one of the most important achievements of the ILO's technical cooperation, and it was hoped that it would strengthen the Palestinian labour market by enhancing its capacity to create decent jobs. One of the priorities ahead with the support of the ILO was social security coverage, for which momentum had been restored at the national level.
117. All progress achieved was attributable to collaboration with the social partners, Palestinians' resilience in coping with the Israeli occupation and its discriminatory practices, the upholding of responsibilities to protect Palestinian workers, and a commitment to social dialogue as a means of addressing crises. The Palestinian Authority thanked the Office, donor countries and partners for their technical and financial support for the implementation of the Decent Work Programme, and requested the Governing Body to: maintain and enhance the technical and financial resources for the ILO's programmes and activities for the remaining two years of the Decent Work Programme; prepare a resource mobilization strategy linked to the National Employment Policy with a view to enhancing the capacity of the Palestinian economy to create decent jobs; support the ILO Director-General in assuming a mediating role with Israel with a view to recovering the Palestinian social security dues held by Israel since 1970; place an item on the agenda of the next Governing Body session for the consideration of the conclusions of the Director-General's annual Report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories; and provide urgent assistance to the Palestinian fund in support of wages.
118. **The Government of Israel**, exercising its right of reply, indicated its regret at the misuse of the forum by some delegations to promote a political agenda. Israel supported the ILO's technical assistance and development programmes, including in the Palestinian territory. It had always cooperated with the ILO and facilitated its activities in the territory, including the annual mission. However, the data presented under the item did not reflect the reality on the ground in an accurate and balanced manner and the report had methodological and factual deficiencies.
119. The goal of the ILO's assistance and programmes in the territory should be to improve the lives and livelihoods of the Palestinian people. However, the report did not provide information on or an analysis of the working conditions of Palestinians in areas that were under the Palestinian Authority's control. Furthermore, it referred only superficially, if at all, to many elements that affected the situation, such as the informal economy, the inter-Palestinian divide, the control exerted by Hamas on the world of work, discrimination against women, the minimum wage and gender pay gaps. It would have benefited from a more extensive analysis of actions taken on topics such as employment creation, vocational training, cooperatives and social entrepreneurship, supporting

entrepreneurship and tackling youth unemployment, which were central to the ILO's work.

120. There was a lack of clarity regarding the sources of the data used in the report. For the report to be relevant in terms of understanding and improving the situation on the ground, it was necessary to build a solid methodology to guide the work of the mission and data collection, which should include setting high standards with regard to the use of external sources and reports. Israel urged the ILO to maintain its credibility and professional standards and to work on accomplishing its global mandate.

6. ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25 (GB.340/POL/6)

121. **The Worker spokesperson** said that the core challenge was to ensure a long-term strategy that strengthened the normative and tripartite mandate of the ILO against the backdrop of UN reform. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was posing major challenges for the achievement of the SDGs and decent work, that should not be used to justify shirking the commitments made to overcome the challenges with a rights-based approach. Reform of the UN system meant that work in the field was gaining prominence. Resident coordinators should therefore engage with the social partners to evaluate development challenges and identify priorities for UN partnerships. The 2020 Global Rights Index of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) showed that labour rights violations were endemic, therefore the ILO must strengthen the capacities and work of the social partners at the national level so that they were invited to participate in dialogue, their priorities were considered and the Organization's normative mandate was reflected in national priorities. When identifying priorities, resident coordinators must be made aware of the results and comments of the ILO supervisory system. Appropriate information and statistics on SDG 8 and its indicators could make an important contribution to Common Country Assessments, and the ILO should also assist governments in providing timely information on all relevant SDG indicators. An effective development cooperation strategy must have labour rights and standards at its core. If labour rights were not respected, the Organization's engagement with the reformed UN system and the achievement of decent work would be at risk.
122. The Strategy's first area of focus, services to constituents, was clearly the most important and was linked to the ILO's standard-setting mandate. As to how ILO development cooperation would support such services, it was vital to respond to the comments made by the ILO supervisory system. The Workers' group supported the proposals to improve the integration of the DWCPs, capacity-building, research and statistics, and South–South and triangular cooperation. The group strongly encouraged the ILO to provide technical assistance in the areas of social protection and fiscal space analysis. It was regrettable that the Governing Body had not been able to discuss the ILO's strategy on coherence within the multilateral system, given the potential major contribution to development that would be made by a global debate on progressive fiscal reform, combating tax evasion and debt relief mechanisms.
123. As to partnerships for policy coherence, the Workers' group agreed that policy, programmatic and budgetary coherence were key. It was crucial for the ILO to assess the risks and opportunities of innovative financing mechanisms and to promote the mainstreaming of international labour standards, social dialogue and appropriate public service provision guarantees, and protection of beneficiaries into any such mechanisms. The ILO played a crucial role in involving the social partners and the Decent Work Agenda in Common Country Assessments and United Nations Sustainable Development

Cooperation Frameworks, particularly in countries where grave labour rights violations occurred. Beneficiary countries and workers must also participate in those discussions, which should be guided by the Decent Work Agenda. The Workers' group attached great value to the ILO's role in promoting rights-based policy coherence with international financial institutions, which had imposed conditions that had proven disastrous for decent work, pensions and social protection.

124. Concerning private sector engagement and partnerships for funding, the Strategy made no reference to the Governing Body's guidance of innovative financing mechanisms pending analysis of the related risks and opportunities. However, there were indications throughout the document that the ILO would indeed engage with such mechanisms; his group objected to such action without a clear assessment of the risks and opportunities and transaction costs. Engagement with the private sector must be based on monitoring of enterprises' actions, particularly with regard to labour rights, and should not be used primarily for corporate marketing purposes.
125. With regard to voluntary financing from donor countries, the main source of the ILO's financing, the Workers' group called on governments to increase official development assistance to meet or exceed the 0.7 per cent objective. The group welcomed the alignment with the programme and budget, resident coordinators and the UN Funding Compact. The ILO should evaluate the transaction cost of smaller-scale projects, to which donors often attached their own objectives. South-South cooperation should serve to encourage donor countries to improve respect for labour rights. The Workers' group welcomed the ILO's aim to increase its share of funding from UN channels and encouraged it to systematically apply the guiding principles for public-private partnerships when working with other UN agencies. The group requested clarification on how those guiding principles would interact with the UN Common Approach to Due Diligence.
126. The Workers' group welcomed the proposals under "efficiency, decent work results and transparency". The spokesperson asked how impact assessments would be integrated into the programme and budget, given that most ILO work on labour rights produced long-term results, which made it difficult to evaluate development cooperation over a single biennium. The Workers' group did not endorse the proposed amendments to the draft decision submitted in writing by the Employers' group.
127. **The Employer spokesperson** said that development cooperation provided sufficient resources to enable the Organization to act on the ground in cooperation with its development partners. In the context of economic recovery and UN reform, it was important to leverage the ILO's comparative advantage, its tripartism. However, it was unclear from the Strategy what specifically the ILO planned to do differently from other UN agencies, how it would deliver added value to constituents and how development cooperation could enhance tripartism and social dialogue. Concrete action was required to ensure that all projects strengthened social dialogue, tripartism and the participation of social partners in setting decent work priorities, mobilizing resources and strengthening social dialogue as a means of ensuring that projects and programmes responded to constituents' needs and reduced supply-driven activities, which had been identified as a shortcoming in a number of independent and high-level evaluations. In addition to being demand-driven, development cooperation projects needed to address the root causes of problems at the national level, most importantly informality, which was not mentioned in the Strategy.

128. The Strategy lacked clear provisions to evaluate its effectiveness and its contribution to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2022–25. Measurement and reporting would be difficult, as the enabling outcomes to which reporting was linked encompassed only funding and partnerships. It was important to measure the effectiveness of DWCPs to engage with constituents and support their priorities on the ground. The Employers' group had therefore submitted a proposed amendment to the draft decision to include a request to the Office "to develop an accompanying implementation plan as well as to set up an internal task force to monitor progress" (which should include the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and ACTRAV) and "to submit a mid-term review of the Strategy in 2023".
129. She expressed surprise that the "One ILO" approach, based on full tripartite engagement and reflected in the DWCPs, had not been made a key element of the Strategy. The statement that the ILO would be "more proactive when articulating the needs of DWCPs" should be replaced with a statement that embraced the "One ILO" approach. The Strategy must also include a commitment to making DWCPs fully consultative, given that their success depended largely on the quality of engagement with constituents on the ground.
130. The Strategy did not clarify how the ILO would adapt to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and UN system reform. Deliberate, targeted action was required to enable constituents' participation in the UN system at the country level, with particular focus on the social partners. In challenging economic times, the Strategy could not assume that traditional financial sources such as official development assistance would be available. The document lacked an analysis of potential funding mechanisms and possible contingency plans. It was disappointing that the Strategy did not include a specific commitment to increasing resource mobilization for underfunded outcomes linked to tripartism and capacity-building for the social partners; that commitment should be included in the implementation plan.
131. The Employers' group welcomed the emphasis on greater policy, programmatic and budgetary coherence in partnerships for policy coherence. However, as the key element of SDG 17 was strengthening the means of implementation, including domestic resource mobilization, the corresponding section of the Strategy should include a direct reference to that element, and also the creation of an enabling environment for enterprises. In addition, the Strategy should articulate how the Office would implement the vision set out in the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2022–25. The Employers' group could endorse the Strategy, subject to the adoption of its proposed amendments to the draft decision.
132. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Côte d'Ivoire welcomed the inclusion in the Strategy of the component on combating the COVID-19 crisis. With reference to the area of focus on services to constituents, the national development programmes, DWCPs and Common Country Assessments were appropriate means of guiding work at the national level. It was also important to promote national development cooperation at an institutional level. The Office should accelerate the production of research, impact assessments and statistics with a view to an exhaustive evaluation by 2030. There was a need for synergies between the first area of focus and the second, partnerships for policy coherence. The group welcomed the proposed risk assessment of resource mobilization and would like to see timely results. With regard to the third area of focus, partnerships for funding, encouraging increased voluntary contributions would be welcome, with the aim of strengthening partnerships and obtaining supplementary funding for sustainable development. The Office should provide constituents with regular updates on the use of the extrabudgetary account for

the implementation of the Strategy. In addition to the Centenary Declaration, the Africa group encouraged the Office to take into account the Abidjan Declaration and its implementation plan in connection with the Strategy. The group supported the draft decision, but was prepared to consider any amendments submitted.

- 133. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Barbados welcomed the fact that the Strategy took into account other initiatives and programmes both within and outside the ILO, as it was fundamental to optimize resources, to promote coherence and effectiveness and to avoid duplication of work. In the context of UN reform, the engagement of the resident coordinators with the social partners should include governments, as governments of developing countries were entitled to set the priorities for partnerships with UN agencies. Priority should be given to the preparation of cooperation plans that took into account not only the interests of donors but also those of recipient countries. Further details on regional differences should be incorporated into the Strategy. It was important for South–South and triangular cooperation to remain a priority and to be promoted effectively at the international, regional and subregional levels by headquarters and regional offices. The Strategy should seek to harness the potential of such cooperation to meet the demands of partner countries and to promote decent work and productive employment. While the consideration of innovative funding, including from the private sector, was welcome, such alternatives complemented rather than substituted official development assistance. The Strategy should be flexible enough to respond to internal and external changes, not only within the ILO, but also in relation to UN reform, and to constantly adapt to the fluctuating situation arising from the COVID-19 crisis. GRULAC supported the draft decision.
- 134. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of China said that the Strategy should serve as a vehicle to operationalize the ILO’s vision. It was also key to ensure a better, faster and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, and demonstrate the unique value of the ILO in the process to reform the UN development system. The Office should use the Strategy to meet Member States’ decent work needs, taking into account national circumstances. Further information on the assessment of risks and opportunities presented by the different finance mechanisms would be welcome. Adequate and predictable funding was crucial for the success of the Strategy, particularly as governments and potential donors were now faced with a more constrained budget. The Office should therefore step up its efforts to further expand its funding partnerships through the four innovative approaches proposed in the Strategy. It was important that the Office should leverage its potential to mobilize lightly earmarked and unearmarked contributions in addition to earmarked contributions and also explore the possibility of expanding the use of the Regular Budget Supplementary Account when doing so. The group requested the Office to conduct an analysis of funding gaps, taking into account the decent work needs of the national constituents, to ensure the effective and efficient investment of resources. The Office should allocate the necessary financial and human resources to ensure the implementation of the Strategy. The International Training Centre of the ILO should play a proactive role in the process of capacity-building and dissemination of knowledge and good practices, and it was imperative to invest in the Centre’s information and communications technology infrastructure and the digital skills of its staff.
- 135.** The Strategy should be a critical component of the ILO’s overarching strategic framework in the coming years. However, it should also be accompanied by specific details on how the ILO intended to implement the Strategy and achieve the objectives, otherwise it would be difficult to measure its success, discuss lessons learned and ensure that it remained responsive to constituents’ needs. The group requested the Office to

provide the Governing Body with a mid-term implementation report of the Strategy in 2023 and a final report in 2025. ASPAG endorsed the proposed amendment concerning a mid-term review.

- 136. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Ireland said that the ILO's commitment to work as "One UN" was vital to ensure that the Member States and the social partners are effectively supported in achieving the SDGs. The Strategy should give a clearer outline of the results that it was expected to deliver by 2025 and should incorporate a mechanism for a mid-term review to ensure that it remained relevant and appropriate. This would align well with the two-year programme and budget cycle to operationalize the objectives. The ILO should strategize beyond its existing partnerships to further advance its mandate within development cooperation. The Strategy should move towards the adoption of a programmatic, results-oriented and systemic approach, and should include measures for more efficient, evidence-based and cost-effective use of ILO resources. The Strategy was predominantly focused on funding and process, with little emphasis on what and how the ILO intended to contribute to advancing the strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and poverty reduction. The commitment to integrating cross-cutting issues such as social dialogue, gender equality and environmental sustainability should be more prominent. The Strategy should take into account the lessons learned, including from the pandemic response activities. Innovative practices and concrete steps towards increased relevance, flexibility and agility should be identified. The Strategy should elaborate further on how the ILO would improve its development cooperation, demonstrating real-world results for outcomes and impacts. IMEC urged the Office to update and resubmit the Strategy on the basis of the Governing Body's guidance. The group could not yet endorse the Strategy or the amendment proposed by the Employers' group, although it was in favour of a mid-term review.
- 137. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Germany said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Armenia aligned themselves with the statement. The document required further review to ensure closer alignment with the guiding principles for future ILO development cooperation established in the conclusions adopted by the 107th Session (2018) of the International Labour Conference. It should also include a strong vision, and a rationale in terms of objectives and results, and include references to how the Decent Work Agenda would be promoted to contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequalities and ensuring no one was left behind. The ILO should be more innovative and clearly outline what it could and needed to do differently to respond more effectively to changing circumstances. The linkage of the Strategy with the ILO Strategic Plan 2022–25 and the programme and budget merited further strengthening. The Strategy should also look beyond the established process and seek to outline a path forward that was focused on priorities and results and indicate a clear timeline until 2025. The ILO should also include lessons learned from previous experience, and ensure that they were reflected in new programmes and partnerships. The EU and its Member States proposed suspending the discussions on the Strategy until later in the session, in order for the Office to consider the guidance provided by the Governing Body and prepare a detailed response. They supported the mid-term review element of the Employers' group's proposed amendment.
- 138. A Government representative of Mexico** said that his country welcomed the Strategy, which was aimed at channelling resources and efforts so that no person, State or nation was left behind. Mexico was introducing a new labour model that was modern, fair and equitable. The first step had been the adoption of the historic labour reform on 1 May 2019, to ensure trade union democracy and freedom, as well as genuine collective

bargaining and ongoing dialogue between organizations of employers and workers at all levels. The country was aiming to transition to a new system of labour justice that was independent, impartial and efficient. Mexico was grateful to the ILO for its ongoing support and would continue to foster mechanisms and projects for cooperation to make the new labour model a reality.

139. **A Government representative of Brazil** welcomed the Strategy's aim of promoting and expanding South-South and trilateral cooperation, in line with the outcome document of the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). His country was convinced of the importance of trilateral cooperation for building capacity development, peer-to-peer exchange and local expertise. In that regard, he encouraged the Office to continue to support South-South and trilateral cooperation initiatives between developing countries. He emphasized, however, that any such initiatives, and the identification and implementation of new formats of cooperation, should always be undertaken in consultation with the governments of the developing countries involved. Brazil had been able to mobilize financial contributions to specific South-South cooperation projects, with the ILO's participation, but innovative ways of financing, such as partnerships with the private sector, were needed. The Office could adopt eligibility criteria for projects financed through those partnerships, in order to best harness their potential to meet nationally defined priorities and needs. Brazil supported the draft decision.
140. **A representative of the Director-General** (Deputy Director-General for Field Operations and Partnerships) thanked members of the Governing Body for their comments and guidance. As they had emphasized, the ILO's development cooperation must be embedded in the normative framework of the Organization, fully respect the principles of tripartism and social dialogue, and meet national priorities as expressed in DWCPs. Due note had been taken of the emphasis to be placed on the role of development cooperation in enabling the ILO to address the COVID-19 crisis and contribute to giving effect to the central tenet of the SDGs, to leave no one behind. The ILO would accordingly engage, proactively and at various levels, in partnerships and UN reform processes. The ILO Development Cooperation Strategy for 2020–25, together with the new Strategic Plan and the programme and budget, constituted a set of measures for tackling the devastating socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
141. **Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Partnerships and Field Support Department) recalled that the Governing Body at its 335th Session (March 2019) had given the Office very clear guidance on innovative financing. The UN already engaged very strongly at the national level in discussions on financing strategies, and UN country teams were developing joint proposals for submission to the UN Joint SDG Fund, drawing on ILO expertise. The Office was also following other UN initiatives related to the financing of the SDGs. Recalling that, at its 335th Session, the Governing Body had called on the Office to develop the capacity of constituents to further build their awareness of innovative finance mechanisms as a basis for their potential engagement in financing mechanisms, she said that the Office, in cooperation with the International Training Centre of the ILO, had recently concluded an online capacity development and knowledge-sharing course, using a comprehensive South-South cooperation approach, on financing decent work, attended by 60 participants representing the tripartite constituents.
142. The Office continued to apply existing procedures governing public-private partnerships, while taking account of the recommendations of the high-level evaluation of the ILO's public-private partnerships, 2008–18. At the country level, the reference for

a UN resident coordinator was the UN common approach to due diligence, which not only incorporated international labour standards but also referred to the importance of consulting with workers' and employers' organizations. The ILO would always ensure that the constituents were included in engagement with the private sector. Regarding impact assessments, she mentioned they were a particular form of evaluation that took place at various levels, and in particular at the level of development cooperation projects. She recalled that development cooperation activities were defined in time subject to the funding available and national priorities. Impact assessments at the country level were often related to existing results frameworks and were a source of data to demonstrate how project activities and interventions could be scaled up for sustainable impact.

143. The Employer spokesperson said that her group wished to maintain its proposed amendment to the draft decision. She believed there was a need for further consultation to see if consensus could be reached.

144. The Worker spokesperson suggested that the Governing Body should postpone taking a decision on the item.

145. The Chairperson suspended consideration of the agenda item to allow for informal consultations.

(The Governing Body resumed consideration of the item after the Office circulated a revised draft decision following consultations.)

146. The Worker spokesperson supported the revised draft decision.

147. The Employer spokesperson reiterated her group's position that there were several elements missing from the draft Development Cooperation Strategy and urged the Office to bear the group's concerns in mind when proceeding with the next steps. The Employers' group would use all of the elements outlined in its initial statement to judge the success of the Strategy. Lack of ownership and consultation regarding development cooperation projects in some areas would weaken the ILO's overall impact and relevance as a tripartite organization, and the limited treatment of social dialogue and tripartism as a comparative advantage remained a concern. It was disappointing that the reference to an internal task force had been removed from the amended draft decision, but it was assumed that the development of an implementation plan would involve all relevant departments in the Office, in order to place support for tripartism, social dialogue, constituents' needs and ownership at the forefront, in addition to resource mobilization. She looked forward to the submission of a clear implementation plan in March 2021. The Employers' group could support the revised draft decision.

148. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, a Government representative of Côte d'Ivoire welcomed the consensus reached on the revised draft decision, which addressed all of the concerns and approaches of the different groups. It was appropriate to have a strategy that included a comprehensive implementation plan and review. The Africa group called on the Office to use the Centenary Declaration and the Abidjan Declaration to guide the implementation of the Strategy. The Africa group supported the revised draft decision.

149. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG, a Government representative of China reiterated that the Strategy should be implemented in line with the guidance given under not only the present agenda item but also other strategic items, concerning the Strategic Plan for 2022–25, the Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23 and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. ASPAG welcomed the inclusion of a mid-term review and implementation plan to be discussed at the 341st Session (March 2021) of the Governing

Body. The group asked the Office to include clear and tangible outcomes in the implementation plan that were based on close examination of existing and future budgetary resources, while ensuring consistency and coherence between the plan's targets and the indicators of the results framework for the programme and budget. The Office should communicate the Strategy to all departments and regional and field offices in a timely manner to allow for proper guidance to be given. ASPAG supported the revised draft decision.

- 150. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Ireland welcomed the inclusion in the draft decision of an implementation plan and mid-term review, which addressed some of the group's questions. The implementation plan should present a clear vision of how the ILO intended to implement the Strategy and give effect to the conclusions concerning effective ILO development cooperation in support of the SDGs adopted at the 107th Session (2018) of the International Labour Conference. In addition, it should clearly align with the programme and budget cycle, operationalize its objectives and more clearly outline the development cooperation results to be achieved by 2025. One of IMEC's major concerns was the lack of objectives and measurable milestones and targets. The ILO must articulate its theory of change and results framework to guide programmes and actions and link up to its results-based management system in order to measure its contributions to the achievement of the SDGs. IMEC looked forward to consultations with constituents to address those shortcomings and to contributing constructively to the implementation plan. IMEC supported the revised draft decision.
- 151. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Germany said that North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania aligned themselves with her statement. She thanked the Office for proactively taking on board the guidance provided by the Governing Body during the discussion. Noting that the emphasis of the draft Strategy was primarily on funding and processes, she welcomed the Office's proposal to develop an implementation plan to be presented to the Governing Body at its next session and its commitment to providing the requested clarity on actions and indicators in the four areas of focus. She endorsed the proposed mid-term review of the Strategy and the implementation plan, which would guarantee continued relevance and a focus on the delivery of the key objectives. She welcomed the Office's commitment to engaging in meaningful consultation with all constituents between sessions of the Governing Body and supported the revised draft decision.
- 152. The representative of the Director-General** (Deputy Director-General for Field Operations and Partnerships) said that the Office would take all comments into consideration when implementing the Strategy. All groups had supported the four areas of focus proposed in the Strategy. There was also consensus on certain key principles underpinning it, namely that: development cooperation must be guided by the ILO strategic framework and play a key role in helping associated programmes to achieve their objectives; it was important to take a participatory approach involving the ILO and other UN agencies with respect to the changes in the UN system; and development cooperation must respond to national priorities, as defined in the DWCPs.
- 153.** He welcomed the clear recommendation to include, as part of the reformed UN development system, measures to allow the ILO to exercise its comparative advantage of tripartism and social dialogue, including in the collective UN response to the pandemic. To that end, the Strategy highlighted the fact that the tripartite constituents must be effectively involved throughout relevant processes with the UN system that were intended to ensure policy coherence. The Governing Body had called on the Office to do more to maintain, diversify and extend its partners for funding and the

mobilization of voluntary contributions, and to increase the quantity and quality of funding as suggested in the UN Funding Compact. In terms of the support for the Office's commitment to South–South and triangular cooperation, it would enter into and expand partnerships with countries of the South, in accordance with the outcome document of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation, and would ensure that all social partners interested in being involved in this form of development cooperation were able to do so.

154. The Strategic Plan for 2022–25 and the programme and budget proposals defined and prioritized what the ILO had to do to ensure human-centred progress in accordance with the Centenary Declaration. It was therefore very important to align the timeline of the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25 with the programming cycles. In adopting the Strategy, the Governing Body would enable the Office to immediately operationalize the guidance given in the resolution adopted at the 107th Session (2018) of the International Labour Conference. Development cooperation was an essential means of implementing the lessons learned from the pandemic: to be agile and to work more closely with UN country teams to develop a coherent approach in supporting post-pandemic recovery. Thanks to the ILO's constructive work with its funding partners, it had been able to reorient some development cooperation projects in response to the pandemic.
155. The Office had taken note of the recommendation to supplement the Strategy with an implementation plan detailing the specific actions to be undertaken by the ILO, which would be submitted to the Governing Body at its next session and would form the basis for a mid-term review. The Office would continue to rely on guidance from the Governing Body and would hold consultations with all groups on the development of the implementation plan.

Decision

156. The Governing Body:

- (a) **endorsed the proposed Development Cooperation Strategy for the period 2020–25;**
- (b) **requested the Director-General to consider its guidance in implementing the Strategy; and**
- (c) **requested the Office to submit for discussion and adoption an accompanying implementation plan to the Governing Body at its 341st Session (March 2021) and a mid-term review of the Strategy and the implementation plan in 2023.**

(GB.340/POL/6, paragraph 52, as amended by the Governing Body)

7. Update on preparations for the V Global Conference on Child Labour (GB.340/POL/7(Rev.1))

157. In preparation for the adoption of a decision by correspondence, the Office held a briefing session for Governing Body members on this item on 23 October 2020.
158. The Screening Group agreed to put the item forward for a decision by correspondence on the understanding that the Office would publish a revised version of the document in which the draft decision would include a reference to the fact that the Office would be organizing a tripartite consultation in Geneva prior to the 341st Session (March 2021) of the Governing Body.

- 159.** The decision contained in document GB.340/POL/7(Rev.1) was adopted by consensus and announced to all Governing Body members by a communication of 11 November 2020.

Decision

- 160. The Governing Body, by correspondence, requested the Office to:**

- (a) undertake consultations with the Government of South Africa, as the host country, on preparations to hold the V Global Conference on Child Labour in 2022, including the perspectives of the different regions;
- (b) organize a tripartite consultation in Geneva prior to the 341st Session (March 2021) of the Governing Body to discuss the way forward; and
- (c) inform the Governing Body on the progress of those consultations at its 341st Session (March 2021).

(GB.340/POL/7(Rev.1), paragraph 14)

Summary of written comments received during the consideration of the item by correspondence ⁵

- 161. The Workers' group** thanked the Office for the document and took note of the developments highlighted therein. In particular, it welcomed the fact that the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), had achieved universal ratification. Much remained to be done to ensure that commitments were transformed into action, however, and the ILO and its tripartite constituents had a crucial role to play in that regard. The Workers also welcomed the ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), by Myanmar in June 2020 and called for a strong campaign for the universal ratification of that Convention in the context of the UN International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, 2021, and the V Global Conference.
- 162.** Emphasizing the importance of political commitment to end child labour, the Workers welcomed the revised country-level activities under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) flagship programme and supported the Office's call for sustained and additional funding.
- 163.** The Workers would welcome information on the follow up to the 96 pledges that had been made at the IV Global Conference, in Buenos Aires, including details on how implementation was being evaluated and what was being done to increase the number of pledges. Consistency with international labour standards, an integrated rights-based approach based on decent work and long-term sustainability, should be the basis of any review. The Workers would also welcome further information about the road map being prepared by the Office in the context of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, particularly on the involvement of social partners.
- 164.** Concerned that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to an increase in child labour, the Workers supported the call for Member States to redouble their efforts to keep up with achievement of SDG target 8.7 by 2025.
- 165.** Commending the Government of South Africa's commitment to host the V Global Conference, the Workers requested further clarification on the consultation processes

⁵ The complete text of each comment in the original language is available on the [Governing Body's web page](#), together with the decision.

presented in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the document and agreed that a tripartite meeting should be convened to discuss the way forward. They also requested further clarification on the availability of funding for the V Global Conference.

166. IMEC thanked the Office for the systematic review of country-level activities under the IPEC+ flagship programme and welcomed the progress made by Alliance 8.7 in pathfinder countries. It noted with satisfaction the universal ratification of Convention No. 182 and called for the effective implementation of that Convention. It was important to keep the issue of child labour high on the agenda given that, due to COVID-19, the progress made in recent years in the fight against forced labour, human trafficking and child labour could be reversed. In that context, IMEC looked forward to the launch of the road map being prepared by the Office for the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.
167. IMEC thanked the Government of South Africa for its offer to host the V Global Conference. In view of the current circumstances, it understood and supported the Government's request to postpone the Global Conference to 2022, but encouraged the Government to organize it at the beginning of 2022, to mark a way forward after the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.
168. The approach proposed by the Office to hold consultations with the Government of South Africa on preparations to hold the V Global Conference in 2022, including the perspectives of the different regions, and to hold a tripartite consultation in Geneva prior to the 341st Session (March 2021) of the Governing Body to discuss the way forward, was fully supported by IMEC, which would actively participate in those meetings. IMEC urged the Office to pursue its actions on child labour expeditiously after the 340th Session of the Governing Body in order to ensure momentum in organizing the V Global Conference, in whatever form possible, taking into account the COVID-19 situation. Ending child labour and promoting decent work for all was more important than ever. IMEC supported the draft decision.
169. In the statement made on behalf of **the EU and its Member States**, it was noted that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Norway aligned themselves with the statement. It was also noted that the EU and its Member States aligned themselves with the IMEC statement. The Government of South Africa's offer to host the V Global Conference was appreciated and it was understood that the Conference had to be postponed to 2022. The universal ratification of Convention No. 182 was a welcome development. However, there was a need for enhanced implementation of both that Convention and Convention No. 138.
170. The EU would continue to cooperate with the ILO to defend the rights of every child in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024 highlighted that addressing child labour was a priority in actions to reinforce labour rights. The *EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child* and those on *Children and Armed Conflict* also continued to guide the EU's actions in that regard. A zero tolerance of child labour was also expressed in EU trade policy.
171. Given the challenges that had arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was vital to prevent a reversal or a standstill in the progress already achieved and to accelerate progress by all means possible in the fight against child labour and forced labour. In that regard, the actions of the IPEC+ flagship programme to address the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable were welcome. The Office was encouraged to make an overview of the pledges made in Buenos Aires.

- 172. The United Kingdom** aligned itself with the statement by IMEC and thanked the Office for the update. It congratulated the ILO on achieving the universal ratification of Convention No. 182. The United Kingdom agreed with the proposed next steps set out in the document and looked forward to participating in the discussions leading up to the V Global Conference, which it agreed should be postponed to 2022.
- 173.** The United Kingdom had made good progress in respect of the pledges made at the IV Global Conference, including through the roll-out of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians across England and Wales. It welcomed the Office's efforts to drive forward work to tackle child labour, not least given the significant impacts of the pandemic. The United Kingdom looked forward to continued dialogue with the Office with a view to achieving SDG target 8.7 by 2025. It also looked forward to taking part in the tripartite consultation prior to the 341st Session (March 2021) to discuss the way forward.