

Committee on the Application of Standards

CAN/PV General Survey

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Discussion on the General Survey *Achieving gender equality at work*

Chairperson – We will now turn to the second item on the agenda, which is the discussion on the General Survey of the Committee of Experts entitled *Achieving gender equality at work*, and this is based on several Conventions: the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Recommendation, 1958 (No. 111), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165), and the Maternity Protection Recommendation, 2000 (No. 191).

I would like to recall for the benefit of the Committee that, according to its working methods, we have already established speaking time limits for the discussion of the General Survey and let me share these timings with you: 20 minutes for the Employer and Worker spokespersons, 12 minutes for Government groups, 5 minutes for other members and 10 minutes for the concluding remarks by the spokespersons of the Workers' and Employers' groups. I would like to invite the two Vice-Chairpersons to make their introductory statements.

Worker members – Discussion of the General Survey offers us an opportunity to go in greater depth into a subject addressed by ILO standard-setting instruments, to draw up an exhaustive review and to foresee initiatives in which we can engage as ILO constituents with a view to reinforcing the effectiveness of the instruments and promoting their universality. The subject this year is gender equality. It is a subject that has always been at the heart of ILO action.

Gender equality is also at the heart of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

More specifically, the General Survey this year covers Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183 and their accompanying Recommendations Nos 111, 165 and 191. These instruments address, respectively, discrimination, workers with family responsibilities and maternity protection.

Over the years, many countries have recognized that the concept of gender discrimination covers a very broad spectrum of situations, such as discrimination based on sex, maternity and pregnancy, on the aptitudes and physical, mental and professional capacities attributed to one or other sex or gender, on civil status, family situation, family responsibilities, sexual orientation and gender identity. In short, it consists of a truly inclusive approach to the concept of gender discrimination.

One of the important observations made by the Committee of Experts concerns the interconnection, and even interdependence between these instruments.

Although the General Survey is limited to these six instruments, the Committee of Experts also very rightly emphasizes that many other ILO standards also deal with issues relevant to gender equality. It provides a comprehensive overview of this in paragraph 5 of the General Survey.

This all demonstrates the need to address the issue of gender equality in a transversal manner. If we refer, for example, to the question of the reduction of wage gaps between women and men, it would be false to believe that the single instrument for the achievement of this objective is the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

The effective application of Conventions Nos 156 and 183 can also contribute to this objective, since maternity protection and the protection of workers with family responsibilities are essential both to promoting gender equality and accordingly reducing the wage gap.

The General Survey allows us to draw up an inventory of the areas in which work is required to fully achieve such equality, and there are many of them.

All of these areas must be included in any coherent national policy to combat discrimination. And evaluation and continuous follow-up of this national policy are also fundamental to ensuring its effectiveness and making the necessary adaptations where needed.

As rightly indicated by the Committee of Experts, the development of statistical tools and data gathering are essential for this follow-up and the review of national policies. They make it possible to determine objectively the nature, extent and causes of discrimination and to remedy the shortcomings observed.

Finally, it appears to be important to insist on the fact that action to combat gender discrimination is a shared responsibility for all ILO constituents. Indeed, gender equality is a fundamental value that lies at the heart of the ILO's mandate.

The social partners must play a primary role in the implementation of the instruments to combat discrimination and in the formulation, evaluation and revision of national policies to promote equality.

It is in the interests of everyone and of all Member States, enterprises and trade unions to work fully for the development of an environment that is conducive to the achievement of gender equality, particularly through the adoption of specific and proactive measures. The General Survey offers an excellent catalogue for this work.

Another Worker member, speaking on behalf of the Worker members – No society in the world can reasonably claim to be free from discrimination. Discrimination is a universal and constantly evolving phenomenon that requires constant attention and action. Discrimination is not always obvious. It can be subtle and pernicious, but has equally devastating effects on women's equal opportunities. This is a point clearly made by the Committee of Experts, who further note that the concept of indirect discrimination is still not clear and fully recognized in some countries. Indirect discrimination is often the result of the interaction between apparently neutral conduct and structural barriers that produce unequal outcomes. These structural barriers may be linked to gender stereotypes or to phenomena such as occupational segregation. For example, minimum wage levels in sectors or occupations where women predominate remain significantly lower than in other sectors. The elimination of direct discrimination is essential, but not sufficient to ensure substantive equality and to close persisting gender gaps. Remedying both direct and indirect forms of discrimination through clear definitions, strong legal frameworks and firm prohibitions is

therefore essential if we are to achieve gender equality. Particular attention must also be paid to multiple and intersectional discrimination. Where persons belong to more than one disadvantaged group, multiple and intersectional discrimination tends to compound and exacerbate existing inequalities. This can typically be the case for women and girls of African descent, women and girls with disabilities, rural women and indigenous women. Similarly, migrant or foreign women, refugees and women from minority groups can experience multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. As recalled by the Committee of Experts, it is not the addition, but the inextricable link between two grounds of discrimination that creates a unique disadvantage.

Addressing multiple discrimination requires legal approaches, including by fully recognizing the phenomenon in the legislation, by allowing complaints of discrimination on combined grounds and by ensuring effective protection and redress in these cases. Too often, women are still more likely than men to work in the informal economy, often as self-employed, in non-standard forms of employment or in sectors or occupations traditionally considered “female”, such as domestic work. Foreign and migrant women workers are especially at risk. The Committee of Experts also underlines that women workers are sometimes constrained to choose or remain in jobs that offer them the possibility to reconcile work and family responsibilities, or where they feel more protected against violence and harassment. These realities trap women in a vicious circle. As a result of occupational segregation, women are constrained to low-skilled work, lower pay, poorer working conditions and fewer career prospects. They also have more limited access to social security coverage, which compromises their income and access to health and long-term care services and puts them at a significantly higher risk of old-age poverty.

As ILO constituents committed to the realization of gender equality, we cannot accept that whole economic sectors and occupations are still excluded from the scope of protection. Member States must take the necessary measures to extend rights and protection, including social security coverage, to all workers, regardless of types of jobs, sectors or occupations, of employment status or types of working arrangements. Concrete measures should also be taken to address the discrepancies between statutory coverage and actual access to rights and protection which particularly affect women in these sectors and occupations.

Another Worker member, speaking on behalf of the Worker members – Discrimination in employment and occupation has harmful repercussions on the health and well-being of workers. Discrimination in the workplace must be seen as an unacceptable form of violence against workers and its elimination must be a cross-cutting concern for countries in all their national policies. In this regard, the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No.190), is a pivotal piece of any strategy to achieve gender equality. The Committee of Experts recalls that Convention No. 111 and Convention No. 190 are mutually reinforcing and therefore, in order to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, it is essential to guarantee equality and non-discrimination in employment and occupation. However, to date, only 27 countries have ratified Convention No. 190. ILO Member States can and must do better if they are serious about effectively tackling all aspects of gender discrimination.

Women across the world continue to face obstacles that prevent them from entering and remaining in the labour market and reaching their full potential at work from the moment they seek to start working until they retire. Despite the efforts made by Member States to combat gender discrimination, gender gaps have not narrowed in any meaningful way for over 20 years. The gender employment gap stands at 27.9 per cent, only 2 per cent less than 27 years ago, and the global gender pay gap is around 19 per cent.

The Committee of Experts also highlights the impact of pregnancy and motherhood on women's employment and pay. Far from decreasing, the motherhood pay gap increased by 38.4 per cent between 2005 and 2015. These sobering statistics only confirm that women workers still face enormous challenges to employment. Too often national frameworks for gender equality do not provide adequate protections for women. The Committee of Experts has identified significant shortcomings, particularly regarding maternity protection. Women are still exposed to discriminatory practices in recruitment, including in the use of pregnancy tests, and being asked about their plans to have children. Mothers' rights to return to work and to protection against discriminatory dismissals are often not guaranteed.

Many countries still make no provision for 14 weeks paid maternity leave and they do not fully guarantee remunerated nursing breaks or a daily reduction of working hours, nor do they provide cash benefits equal to the benchmarks provided in Convention No. 183.

The Committee of Experts also points out that there is no right to paid leave for prenatal medical examinations in a staggering 132 countries. This gap puts the health and economic security of both mother and child at risk and results in very high maternal mortality rates in many parts of the world, in particular in rural areas. The Committee of Experts rightly points out that the COVID-19 pandemic has set us back in the pursuit of gender equality. Employment losses have been more severe for women. Cost reduction measures which primarily affected sectors in which women are over-represented and where levels of social protection are already low were compounded by measures which were inadequate to mitigate the gendered impact of the crisis.

Adding to this situation, women are also over-represented in high-risk sectors. During the pandemic, these women were often required to work excessive hours in extremely difficult working conditions, while shouldering most of the family responsibilities and unpaid work. These alarming findings should serve as a reminder to all ILO constituents that there is a pressing need to provide solutions to the lack of decent work and social protection for women workers, particularly mothers.

Conventions Nos 156 and 183 are essential tools to achieve these objectives. However, the rate of ratification of these Conventions is currently far too low. We urge Member States to ratify Conventions Nos 156 and 183 and to implement national legislation and policies that meet these requirements.

For far too long, gender equality indicators have been in the red. Behind these statistics, millions of women workers around the world are suffering from a lack of decent work and are subjected to physical, psychological, economic and social violence as a result of persistent discrimination in the world of work. It is vital that all ILO constituents adopt a cross-cutting and comprehensive approach to gender equality.

Another Worker member, speaking on behalf of the Worker members – The situation of persistent inequality between women and men transcends the world of work and takes on political, social and cultural overtones. It concerns matters that make up human dignity. It is a transversal injustice that employers, workers and governments must address together. We are very well aware that the reasons for gender discrimination are deeply rooted in our societies and that stereotypes hinder access to education, training, employment and vocational opportunities. These are structural problems, as these stereotypes have an impact on the respective roles assigned to women and men in our societies, on their skills and aspirations in the world of work, and help to perpetuate the decent work and social protection deficits that we suffer as women. It is therefore vital for Member States to endeavour to take effective

measures to eradicate gender stereotypes and bring about profound and lasting cultural and social change to combat gender-based segregation and discriminatory stereotypes.

Member States must accept their responsibility and take an active role in addressing these issues, together with the social partners. There are many good practice initiatives that can be shared.

In Argentina, for example, bipartite framework agreements have been concluded in the highly male-dominated construction sector with the aim of eradicating gender-based violence in the sector, promoting the recruitment of women workers and builders, and reducing such inequality in access to employment in the industry. There are other examples from other sectors that we could cite.

The General Survey identifies many other highly relevant initiatives at the national level that emphasize the vital role that must be played by tripartite social dialogue. The implementation of national equality policies in collaboration with employers' and workers' organizations is crucial in a world of work that is constantly changing. These policies have to introduce profound changes in relation to gender issues, be sensitive to the needs of families and comply with relevant legal instruments. Similarly, as highlighted by the Committee of Experts, employers have a very important role and responsibility in the achievement of gender equality at work and the promotion of social change, starting with a business culture that is more favourable to families. Employers can have a significant impact by adopting specific and proactive measures, including flexible working arrangements and other measures that benefit families, as well as measures to promote equal access to training and promotion.

The issue of the unequal burden of unpaid care and family responsibilities borne by women has also been identified as a key factor that hinders their progress in the world of work. The value of such care corresponds to between 20 and 60 per cent of gross domestic product, depending on the country, which is a considerable figure. Nevertheless, neither governments nor international institutions take the value of this type of work into account. It is of the utmost importance to guarantee the equitable sharing of such unpaid care and family responsibilities through parental leave, the provision of childcare, cash transfers and medical care.

We also believe that it is essential to recall the potential for employment creation in the paid care economy, particularly for women.

When we discussed the General Survey last year, we emphasized that the existing care economy represents a significant source of employment, both now and in the future. It is therefore essential to invest in the sector which, in addition to comprising a high proportion of women, can make a decisive contribution to strengthening their position in the world of work through a more equal sharing of family responsibilities.

The profound changes that will be brought about by climate challenge should also encourage us to take the gender dimension into account in the transition to a green economy. The employment creation potential of these transformations requires us to guarantee that women can benefit equally from investment in green infrastructure, sustainable agriculture and renewable energy.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining are therefore crucial in promoting equality and ensuring that these aspirations become reality.

Employer members – I will start off by giving some introductory remarks and then provide analysis on Part I of the General Survey. I will then give the floor to my colleagues to present our comments on Part II of the General Survey. The Employer members thank the

Committee of Experts and the Office for preparing this General Survey on six ILO instruments related to gender equality at work. The Employer members note that information sent by 114 Governments, as well as 47 workers' organizations and nine employers' organizations, was included in the General Survey. The Employer members also note that the General Survey examines the six selected instruments from the specific perspective of achieving gender equality at work. In doing so, the General Survey does not examine the instruments one by one but considers them together, first under the aspect of the legal and institutional framework for gender equality, and then under the aspect of achieving gender equality at work through labour rights and policies. While this approach may have provided some findings regarding links and synergies between the instruments, it leaves gaps. For one thing, the General Survey ignores the fact that the standards under review also have objectives other than gender equality at work, such as Convention No. 111, but these other objectives are not addressed. Furthermore, the General Survey does not provide assessments of the individual instruments, nor does it identify concrete follow up measures for them. The Employer members question whether this new approach of General Surveys focusing on a theme, rather than on selected ILO instruments or standards, is in line with the purpose of article 19 of the ILO Constitution. This purpose is to get a better idea of the implementation in law and practice and the obstacles encountered for non-ratified Conventions and Recommendations and to define appropriate follow up measures on this basis. The Employer members invite the parties to also reflect and comment on this point. Another general comment concerns the views expressed by the Committee of Experts in the General Survey, in particular the various comments and recommendations highlighted in bold print. The Employer members note that the Committee of Experts tends to make extensive interpretations of the rights and benefits of workers provided for in the instruments, and expresses satisfaction where countries go beyond the requirements of the instruments. It considers the instruments mainly from the point of view of women workers with family responsibilities and work-life balance. On the other hand, the perspective of the employers is hardly taken into account and almost absent in the Committee of Experts' comments and recommendations. This gap significantly depreciates the practical usefulness of the General Survey as a document providing guidance on the examined instruments. The Employer members wish to recall in this context the 2019 ILO Centenary Declaration, which states that international labour standards also need to take into account the needs of sustainable enterprises. The Employer members call upon the Committee of Experts to adopt a more balanced and restrained approach in future General Surveys if these documents are to be widely recognized. After these general remarks, the Employer members would now like to provide more specific comments on the individual chapters of the General Survey.

Regarding the legal and institutional framework for gender equality and non-discrimination in Chapter 1 on the framework for gender equality and non-discrimination in Convention No. 111 and Recommendation No. 111, the Employer members note that, according to the Committee of Experts in paragraph 154, Convention No. 111 does not impose a strict obligation to legislate, but requires Member States to review whether legislation is needed within the framework of the national policy as a whole. This means that, while existing legislation that possibly enables or promotes discrimination must be eliminated, the absence of legislation on discrimination per se is not necessarily an infringement of the Convention, if the objectives of the Convention are achieved by other means. The Employer members consider indeed means other than legislation, such as incentives for equal treatment and the respective removal of disincentives, as well as awareness-raising and affirmative action, can often be more effective in gradually changing attitudes and behaviours. The Employer members also note that the Committee of Experts, in the context of discrimination based on

sex, discusses measures taken to fight discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Employer members consider that such discrimination falls within the scope of Article 1(1)(b) of Convention No. 111. That is as a distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation as may be determined by the Member concerned after consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations. It seems that a number of countries in their national law and practice have recognized these grounds and are therefore bound under Article 1(1)(b) of the Convention to include measures in their policies to eliminate discrimination based on them. However, the Employer members also note that the Committee of Experts, for a number of years now, has considered sexual orientation and gender identity as covered by the ground of sex, under Article 1(1)(a). The Employer members consider this doubtful, as it is arguable that sex is different from sexual orientation and gender identity. Moreover, it also means that ratifying countries are automatically bound by the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, whether they recognize these grounds or not. The Employer members call upon the Committee of Experts to limit its comments on discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to Article 1(1)(b) and to countries where governments, after consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, have recognized these grounds.

Regarding Chapter 2 on the framework for workers and family responsibilities in Convention No. 156 and Recommendation No. 165, the Employer members note in paragraph 172 that, according to the Committee of Experts, Convention No. 156 and Recommendation No. 165 have a dual objective of creating equality of opportunity and treatment in working life between men and women with family responsibilities and, on the other hand, between men and women workers with and without family responsibilities. According to footnote 422, however, there seem to have existed different views about the double objective among participants in the discussion of the instrument. The Employer members consider that this confusion about the purpose of the instruments may have impaired their acceptance, as reflected in the very moderate ratification by only 43 countries over more than 40 years. In the Employer members' view, a reasonable goal should be to enable workers with family responsibilities who wish to do so to participate in working life as much as possible as workers without family responsibilities, with as little burden as possible on their employers. Nevertheless, it should be understood that taking on family responsibilities can also be a personal choice with which the State should not interfere, and that not all inconveniences linked to family responsibilities can be avoided and related costs be passed on to third parties. Convention No. 156 and Recommendation No. 165 should be implemented in this sense. The Employer members also note in paragraph 195 that the Committee of Experts stresses that measures implementing Convention No. 156 should aim to promote a fair distribution of family responsibilities in that both men and women can equally access and engage in employment, to the extent they wish to do so. The Employer members would agree with this and consider that much progress has been achieved in ensuring a fairer distribution of family responsibilities. They would nevertheless point out that the ultimate objective should not just be to distribute family responsibilities, but to improve the work situation for both men and women as far as possible.

Regarding Chapter 3, the Employer members agree with the Committee of Experts when it states in paragraph 234 that maternity protection is fundamental to the achievement of social inclusion and gender equality, as well as addressing inequalities and discrimination in the world of work and beyond. Another question however is whether Convention No. 183 and Recommendation No. 191 are recognized as a useful framework that can encourage and bring about further progress. A total number of 43 ratifications in the last 23 years, the rather

reluctant pace of ratification of the Convention, as well as the fact that 23 of the 41 countries that ratified the ILO Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103), have preferred to remain bound by it, rather than to ratify Convention No. 183, is not convincing evidence that this is the case.

In paragraph 239, the Committee of Experts reports that only one in ten potential mothers is covered by statutory protection against dangerous or unhealthy work globally and that there is no right to paid time off for prenatal medical examinations in 132 countries. The Employer members consider it important that countries implement the Convention and Recommendation with a sense of proportion and an eye for what is feasible for all parties involved in order to achieve genuine progress in maternity protection without causing possible discriminatory effects.

Another Employer member, speaking on behalf of the Employer members – Let me provide our analysis on Part II of the General Survey. Referring to Chapter 5 on protecting against discrimination and ensuring equality at all stages of employment and occupation, the Employer members now read here that, according to Article 9(1) of Convention No. 183, ratifying Member States have to adopt appropriate measures to ensure that maternity does not constitute a source of discrimination in employment, including access to employment.

In paragraph 362, the Committee of Experts seems to understand this to mean that Member States need to fully apply non-discrimination legislation which should be accompanied by compliance and enforcement measures, including penalties for employers, compensation and sanctions. The Employer members do not consider that a primarily repressive approach will work in practice.

As pregnancy and maternity-related costs, if borne by individual employers, can be a significant burden for them, this should be prevented through financing by tax or social security. This should be accompanied by further measures, for instance, a comprehensive and efficient childcare infrastructure and incentives for mothers to return to work as soon as possible. Such measures can, more effectively than penalties, prevent pregnancy and motherhood from being a source of discrimination within the meaning of Article 9(1) of Convention No. 183 and thus can contribute to gender equality.

The Committee of Experts also notes that women can be disadvantaged when it comes to promotions and access to higher-level jobs. According to the Employer members, promoting gender-sensitive recruitment, retention and promotion policies can be an effective remedy in this regard. In contrast, legal provisions requiring high quotas to be reserved for women in management positions in larger companies do not seem appropriate, as they may unduly disadvantage other equally qualified applicants.

In the context of Convention No. 111 and Recommendation No. 111, the General Survey refers to the discrimination of women with regard to remuneration and the gender pay gap. It is stated that the gender pay gap is linked to factors such as occupational gender segregation and differences between women's and men's occupational careers resulting from the difficulty of reconciling work and family responsibilities, rather than direct discrimination between and women carrying out work of the same value. While this may be true, the Employer members would also point to existing societal perceptions as a reason which only generally change over time.

Although there is work yet to be done in this area, it should also be mentioned that, according to OECD data, the gender pay gap has been decreasing in recent years in many industrialized countries. As regards protection against termination of employment, the

Employer members note Article 8(1) of Convention No. 183, according to which termination of employment of a woman is excluded as a rule during pregnancy, maternity leave, leave in case of illness or complications and a period following her return to work to be prescribed by national laws or regulations. The Employer members note that in some countries termination of employment of women is prohibited until the child is 6 years old or for single mothers raising a child until the child is 14 years old, or for a child with a disability until the child is 18 years old.

Considering the constraints that these long protection periods may impose on companies' human resources policies, the Employer members advise that the protection period for mothers after returning to work should not be unduly long. Moreover, unduly long protection periods could result in further undesirable discrimination against women, as employers may be discouraged from hiring young women or women with children.

Regarding Chapter 6 on maternity protection, the Employer members note that, according to Article 3 of Convention No. 183, pregnant or breastfeeding women are not obliged to perform work which has been determined as prejudicial or a significant risk to the health of the mother or the child, implying therefore that pregnant or breastfeeding women retain the right to choose.

The Committee of Experts in paragraph 490 of the General Survey nevertheless seems to accept as compatible with Article 3 bans on performing such types of work where they represent a true danger to the health of these workers. The Employer members find this interpretation difficult to understand because of both the clear wording of Article 3 as well as the clear intention in Convention No. 183 to move away from generalized prohibitions of hazardous work for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The Employer members feel that such lack of clarity of explanations could result in inconsistent implementation and hesitation to ratify the Convention. The Employer members also note the Committee of Experts' extensive interpretation of time off for medical examinations as addressed in Paragraph 6(6) of Recommendation No. 191. In particular, the Committee of Experts has requested the governments concerned to take the necessary measures to ensure that time off for prenatal medical examinations is paid.

The Employer members would first point out that Paragraph 6(6) does not contain any indications in this regard. They would also point out in this context a European Directive which calls for time off without loss of pay only if examinations cannot take place outside working hours. The Employer members note that, according to Article 4(1) of Convention No. 183, women are entitled to a period of maternity leave of not less than 14 weeks. According to Article 4(4), maternity leave should include a period of six weeks' compulsory leave after childbirth unless otherwise agreed at the national level by the government and the representative organizations of employers and workers.

The Employer members note that a number of ratifying countries have made use of the latter possibility and have shortened the period of compulsory leave after childbirth. Such tripartite national agreements do not shorten the leave entitlement of mothers who need six or more weeks after childbirth, but allow those workers who are able and wish to do so to return to work earlier.

As regards the financing of social security benefits, the Employer members note that in 45 countries, employers are directly liable for the cost of maternity cash benefits and, in 20 countries, employers have to provide these benefits together with social protection systems. According to Article 6(8) of Convention No. 183, the direct liability of employers for maternity benefits is permitted if it was provided for in national law or practice in a Member

State prior to the ratification of Convention No. 183, or where this was subsequently agreed at the national level by the government and the representative organizations of employers and workers.

The Employer members agree with the Committee of Experts that direct liability can place an undue burden on employers, in particular SMEs, and runs counter to the objective of gender equality at work as employers, in view of the maternity cost risk, maybe unwilling to hire women. Furthermore, the employer's direct liability may jeopardize the actual payment of maternity benefits where individual employers are unable to pay. The Employer members trust that countries where direct employer's liability still exists will move to social security or tax-funded systems of maternity benefits. They still consider it a significant deficiency of Convention No. 183 that it does not at least provide for a gradual phasing out of direct employer's liability.

In connection with nursing breaks, the Employer members note that the legislation of certain countries does not foresee breastfeeding breaks because of entitlements to long maternity or parental leave that are meant to provide for the opportunity to breastfeed. Given that excessively long periods of maternity leave can affect women's employment and career opportunities, the Employer members believe that adequate paid breastfeeding breaks should be provided for by law in any case. This would ensure that their absence does not act as a disincentive to the extent that women who would like to end their maternity leave earlier and resume work do not do so. Moreover, in the Employer members' view, breastfeeding breaks and facilities, like all maternity benefits, should be paid from public funds or social security in order to avoid undue burdens on individual employers, especially SMEs.

Government member, Sweden – I speak on behalf of **the European Union (EU) and its Member States**. The candidate countries, **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova**, the EFTA country, **Norway**, and members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement. At the outset, we would like to thank the Committee of Experts for its well-drafted and important report, providing a solid foundation for our discussions in this Committee. It also highlights the legal and institutional framework required to achieve gender equality at work, as well as measures and proposals for future action in promoting gender equality. We would also like to commend the input of constituents into this General Survey, underlining their commitment to supporting and advancing gender equality in the world of work. Despite the report's findings of tremendous advances for gender equality at the workplace over the last century, the General Survey recognizes that progress in closing gender equalities in the world of work has unfortunately stalled in recent decades, with gender gaps that have not narrowed in any significant way. The report underlines that women's progress in the world of work has been hindered in particular by unequal sharing of unpaid care work and family responsibilities, including as a result of pregnancy and motherhood. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also further deepened the traditional gender gaps across many areas, including the labour market, and notably as regards working conditions, work-life balance and overall working time. We are concerned by the lack of progress and recent developments and consider that addressing these obstacles and gaps in a timely and effective manner is critical for advancing a transformative agenda for gender equality, as called for by the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, as well as adapting to a changing world of work and demographic transitions. In light of our rapidly changing world characterized by these societal, demographic and organizational changes, we must ensure and foster equality of treatment and equity of opportunity for gender equality in all areas including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment, equal pay and career progression. Gender

equality at work is of crucial importance for the European Union and its Member States. Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union declares that equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. We acknowledge that obstacles and gaps towards this aim also remain within the EU, and we reiterate our commitment towards eliminating them. Gender equality, equal opportunities and work-life balance are three of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights that guides the EU in its efforts towards a fair and inclusive Europe.

Regarding the factual section of the report on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, we welcome the clear trend towards inclusion in national legislation and policies of additional prohibited grounds of discrimination, including sexual orientation and gender identity, while we also see persistent challenges. Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union allows for action to combat this type of discrimination. The existing inequalities are also reflected and addressed in the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy and several other initiatives, including tackling women's under-representation in the labour market and the gender pay gap with the pay transparency Directive, rules on gender balance on corporate boards, and the implementation of the Directive on work-life balance for working parents.

At the international level, the EU and its Member States reiterate their commitment to equality and non-discrimination and to the entitlement of all persons to enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to the participation of youth, girls and women, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, as well as the protection of those who are in disadvantaged and marginalized situations, including children. The EU will consistently and constructively engage with UN mandates focusing on combating violence and all forms of discrimination and will continue to give strong support to the UN's work, including the ILO, in this regard. We also continue to promote gender equality in the world of work internationally beyond the EU. In this regard, the European Commission has adopted the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III 2021-2025, which was welcomed in the Presidency Conclusions of 16 December 2020.

Here, the ILO plays a unique normative role in promoting gender equality at work, which the EU and its Member States continue to stand ready to support. The full realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work is essential to ensuring gender equality at work for all workers. A few issues stand out in particular:

First, there is a need for action at all levels, as gender equality cannot be achieved without the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. Non-discrimination and equal access to employment of vulnerable groups should be put at the centre of actions to make the labour market more inclusive and promote decent work and opportunities for all. These actions need to include both legislative and non-legislative measures, including the design of necessary legislative frameworks and the construction of an enabling and also gender-responsive environment.

Second, it should be noted that recent changes in the digital economy have created a lot of new opportunities, but can also perpetuate gender segregation. Therefore, it is important for governments to take targeted measures, such as strengthened gender perspectives in all digitalization policies, to ensure equality of opportunity and equal treatment in all aspects of employment and genuine protection against discrimination.

Third, it is crucial to ensure that no workers are excluded from the scope of application of labour and social security legislation. Women work more part-time, are paid less and often still

carry out the bulk of private domestic and care responsibilities. This can hinder their financial independence and progress in the world of work. Taking action is both a social and an economic imperative, and national policy measures, such as maternity protection, that support workers with family responsibilities are an essential pillar of any policy that aims to create effective equity of opportunity and equality of treatment for all workers. Quality and affordable childcare and other care services for dependent family members should be arranged, giving both parents and other workers with family responsibilities the opportunity to work full time, and also taking into account atypical work arrangements.

Fourth, we need to address the origins of gender-specific constraints and structural obstacles. We must all make it a priority to challenge stereotypes and understandings that assign certain roles to people based on their gender or that attribute different and unequal skills or capacities to them. In this case, educational campaigns, awareness-raising and public information are critical in promoting substantive equality and ensuring that cases of inequality and discrimination are identified and properly addressed.

Fifth, considering that achieving gender equality at work is key for sustainable development, it is important to incorporate gender equality into national development strategies, followed by continuous monitoring, assessment and adjustment of national policies. This ensures that the important ILO instruments discussed in the General Survey are fully implemented in order to achieve gender equality at work.

Finally, and very importantly, the EU and its Member States reiterate that social dialogue and tripartism are essential policy tools for the effective realization of gender equality in the world of work. The EU and its Member States will continue to place the achievement of gender equality at work among their priorities and to support the ILO and other constituents in their actions.

Government member, Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Group – We take note of the General Survey on achieving gender equality at work. We remain committed to making steady progress on achieving gender equality at workplaces and reaffirm our commitment to counter discrimination at workplaces on grounds universally agreed and as enshrined in various international labour and human rights Conventions.

Among other things, the General Survey identifies Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) as an emerging ground of discrimination. Description in the General Survey on this account only confirms that this is not a universally accepted ground of discrimination. For the record, we would like to reiterate that international law clearly stipulates grounds for discrimination, and these have been codified in inter-governmentally negotiated human rights and labour covenants. This international legal framework does not recognize SOGI as a ground of discrimination. We underscore that the concepts of any real or perceived emerging ground of discrimination for addition must first be universally agreed upon before an effort is made to weave them into the documents of international organizations.

I conclude by reasserting that we all need to join forces to combat discrimination and promote gender equality at the workplace and must share ways to enhance international cooperation rather than negatively impacting it by imposing a certain value system and world view onto others.

Interpretation from Arabic: **Government member, Bahrain , speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** – At the outset, on behalf of my group, I wish to express our deep thanks to the Committee of Experts for having produced this year's

General Survey, which sheds light on a vital aspect of our current and future working relations in the development of working patterns and use of technology. The choice of Conventions and Recommendations in terms of their overlapping provisions and objectives allows all of us to better understand the social dimension as a fundamental pillar of the issue of non-discrimination, which is the backbone of the work on standards carried out by the ILO and other international bodies.

This survey of law and practice looks at how to maximize measures reconciling work-life balance, balancing responsibilities towards the family and also the requirements of a professional life. We have clearly identified the desire of the Committee of Experts to encourage the diversification of working arrangements and time, so that workers can spend more time on their private lives, especially those with family responsibilities, and also to play an important role in human welfare when it comes to their relatives. A number of different interesting models and practices have been examined when it comes to advancing gender equality and sharing family responsibilities in a number of countries around the world, although the General Survey indicates that these are still far below our ambitions.

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that psychological illnesses caused by work stress and stress, or what is now called “burn-out”, is largely due to the lack of an ideal situation for workers in which they can enjoy a sufficient degree of personal and family time as well as their social responsibilities. This important aspect may not be a priority for the General Survey overall, but it is certainly one of the priorities in the future programme of the Organization’s work.

We wish to launch innovative initiatives on working time and arrangements using modern instruments within the framework of social partnerships involving all stakeholders in any given economic sector, to provide a more social dimension to work and its performance, without considering labour as a form of a commodity. Easing many restrictions on family and motherhood will undoubtedly have a positive and significant impact on the well-being of workers and society as a whole, in several areas in particular, by reducing labour tensions and disputes, and this is what we would like to underline as evidence that has come from independent studies carried out by the ILO.

In this context, we wish to emphasize that the regulation of working hours, particularly in the context of the changes taking place in the world of work, namely digitalization, teleworking and platform work, is subject to many challenges. We must recall the discussions that took place at the last sessions of the Governing Body in November and March, which underline the need to deepen the issue of platform work and also to look at the involvement of the social partners. This General Survey has been very successful in highlighting a number of areas that have either been overlooked or omitted altogether which prevent us from achieving gender equality. Business should not be incompatible with the social requirements of workers, both male and female, especially when it comes to female employment and motherhood, as well as caring for older persons and persons with disabilities. In this regard, we would add that the policies adopted by any country must be as consistent as possible with workers’ family responsibilities, thanks to a series of protective measures.

We, in the GCC states, believe in the central mandate of the ILO in the world of work. On more than one occasion, we have expressed support for its mandate, our States have been engaged in technical cooperation programmes covering all aspects of the working environment. If we want the ILO to continue with its central role in promoting this work environment globally, we must take into account national and regional contexts.

Once again, despite opposition from a number of States and territories expressed on a number of different occasions, the most recent of which was the 347th Session of the Governing Body, the General Survey makes reference to groups in the context of Convention No. 111 on which there is no agreement among the constituent bodies of the Organization.

The continuation of the approach of using controversial concepts that have not received an agreed definition in labour or human rights law could undermine the role of the Organization and international labour standards. We believe that no one must be left devoid of legal protection, but that does not mean issues that have not been raised in discussions between the partners and which have not been internationally accepted. Therefore, we wish to express our opposition to the analysis of the Committee of Experts in including a certain number of groups that are not agreed upon as part of the application of Convention No.111.

Government member, Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) – The GRULAC would like to express its satisfaction at the General Survey, *Achieving gender equality at work*. It is a timely endeavour to address collectively the three selected Conventions and their accompanying Recommendations. The detailed, painstaking and very precise examination undertaken by the Committee of Experts contributes to its comprehensive and complementary vision. The review of both national laws and practices reveals unacceptable deficits in the field of gender equality and structural inequalities and challenges in a good number of Member States to renew their efforts to address the deficit through transformational gender programmes and policies, with a view to making decent work and social justice a reality.

The provision of leave for pregnant and non-pregnant persons with adequate guarantees in terms of employment and income security, combined with the provision of accessible and sufficient maternal health services, are essential. The importance also needs to be emphasized of having a care system that contributes to the achievement of co-responsibility in this work. There can be no gender equality without this equitable sharing of the unpaid work that is currently almost without exception undertaken by women.

It is necessary to address these and other structural gaps faced by women and other groups that are vulnerable to discrimination in the world of work. The ILO and its standards supervisory system have a clear mandate to do so. In this respect, GRULAC takes note of Report III(A)/Addendum (Part A) to the report of the Committee of Experts containing the joint statement with the Chairpersons of United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies.

Finally, the Committee of Experts has once again provided us with a General Survey that can be a formidable tool for Member States to confirm their unshakable commitment to equality at work.

Employer member, Norway – I will return to the Employer members' comments on Part II of the General Survey, and the important Chapter 7 on reconciling work and family responsibilities. The Employer members note the various measures described by the Committee of Experts to help reconcile work with family responsibilities. The Committee of Experts' focus here seems to be on the various types of leave which are addressed in Recommendations Nos 165 and 191, including parental leave, leave in the event of illness of a family member, paternity leave and adoption leave. The Employer members note that the Committee of Experts generally welcomes and advocates an extension of these kinds of leave. While the Employer members recognize that leave can be one element within a set of measures to help workers meet their family responsibilities, they do not consider that it should be the focus. As women are more likely than men to use these leave entitlements, it can reduce their labour market participation, which would be counterproductive to the objective of achieving

gender equality at work. Major leave entitlements to meet family responsibilities can also be a significant burden for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, which account for over 90 per cent of enterprises in all countries and are an important source of wealth and employment. It is also problematic that the Committee of Experts provides views and makes recommendations on long-term leave to care for dependants or paternity leave, although these kinds of leave have no textual basis in the ILO Conventions and Recommendations examined in this General Survey. The Employer members would emphasize that, while the Committee of Experts in the General Survey may explain the provisions of the standards examined and describe their implementation in law and practice, it is not its role to give general policy advice and opinions which are not grounded in ILO standards. In contrast with the Committee of Experts, the Employer members consider the creation and extension of cost-effective facilities and services for the care of children, older people and people with disabilities as the most important way to help workers reconcile work and family responsibilities. The wider availability of such facilities and services would allow both male and female workers with family responsibilities to stay at work as much as possible. More continuous employment participation would promote women's professional development, which would both have a positive impact on gender equality in terms of income and pension rights, and contribute to reducing discrimination. Enabling more continuous employment participation by women with family responsibilities would also help address the skills shortages that exist in many countries and improve the sustainability of social security systems in the face of dramatic demographic change. Comprehensive and effective care facilities could also avoid possible friction for workers' organizations in companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, and thus have positive effects for both workers and employers. All in all, the extension and upgrading of childcare facilities, with prolonged opening hours, as well as the expansion of care facilities for older people and people with disabilities, should be prioritized and promoted. This is in particular a task for governments, but public-private partnerships could also be useful in this area. As a complementary measure, the Employer members would recommend a flexible work arrangement, as far as agreed by workers and employers. Such arrangements, which could include, for instance, flexible working hours, part-time work or telework, could also help reconcile work with family responsibilities and company needs, while at the same time increasing women's participation in employment. In the context of other social security measures to improve the situation of workers with family responsibilities, as mentioned in paragraph 807, the Employer members note that the Committee of Experts expresses disagreement with the cash transfer programmes under which benefits are provided subject to meeting certain requirements, for example school attendance by children or their vaccination. While the Committee of Experts admits that these programmes have a positive impact on the well-being of children, it claims that they may negatively affect women and, as a result, advises against them. The Employer members would not agree with this and would suggest that the overall positive benefits of such programmes can only be assessed in their concrete context. In this connection, encouraging school education and vaccination should not just be seen as beneficial for children, but also as beneficial for overall development. On Chapter 8, the Employer members note the Committee of Experts' considerations regarding effective redress and sanctions in case of gender-related discrimination. In this connection, the Committee of Experts found that in some instances the proportion of cases presented by countries that culminated in the imposition of an actual sanction was small. The Employer members wonder on what basis this assessment is made. Is there a benchmark for a correct ratio between discrimination cases and sanctions imposed. The Employer members would point out that neither Convention No. 111 nor Recommendation No. 111 refer to sanctions, but rather to "measures to foster public understanding and acceptance of the principles of

non-discrimination". To conclude, the Employer members would stress that gender-related discrimination often relates to societal perceptions based on historical attitudes and stereotypes which sometimes require a long period of adaptation. While sanctions may be one possible means, the focus should rather be on the erasing and removal of incentives for discrimination.

Government member, Pakistan – We take note of the General Survey. Pakistan is proud of its long-standing tradition of women's active participation in all walks of life. In this context, I am privileged to pay tribute to Bégum Ra'âna Liaquat Ali Khan, who served on the Committee of Experts from 1954 to 1977. In keeping up with these rich traditions, women parliamentarians in Pakistan have steadily gained more significance in their role of advocating and working towards achieving progress in legislation at both the national and provincial levels. Pakistan's legal architecture and policies are aligned with its obligations under international labour and human rights laws. Articles 25(3) and 26(2) of the Constitution of Pakistan bind the State to take proactive measures to protect women and promote their active and meaningful participation in public affairs. We are pleased to have made good progress in this connection. One of the many examples is the amendment of the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act in 2022, passed by our Parliament, which has further strengthened the protections available for women against harassment. Provincial assemblies have also enacted legislation to criminalize various forms of gender-based violence. These laws established an effective system of protection, relief and rehabilitation for women, children, elders and any other persons against domestic violence. In order to improve women's representation, there are 20 per cent of reserved seats for women in Parliament and provincial assemblies. The current level of women's representation in Pakistan's national and provincial legislatures is among the top in the region.

Pakistan has 4.4 million home-based workers, of whom 3.6 million are women. The participation of women in our overall labour market is on the rise. Pakistan is working with international partners to support increased women's participation in the world of work. In recent years, our efforts have led to the adoption of ten laws by the country's provincial assemblies. The new laws are intended to extend informal homebased workers' access to social security and fair wages; to improve, for women workers, access to childcare, separate toilets and transportation; to achieve equal pay and end discrimination. These measures aim at easing women's access to the labour force and lifting constraints for them, and have improved Pakistan's score in the World Bank's 2022 Women, Business and the Law indicators. We are committed to staying on this path. The Government continues to take initiatives with a view to enhancing social mobility and empowering women. We also launched a National Gender Policy Framework in 2022. There are several social security schemes to protect workers and support women. They include the Benazir Income Support Programme, which provides unconditional cash transfers to eligible families. The Programme helped families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially women. The Prime Minister's youth programme, which has been running for the last ten years, also has various programmes, including skills development, access to capital for entrepreneurship and distribution of laptops, as enabling devices with a special quota for women. All of these initiatives act as enablers for women to enter the workforce. Recently, the Government has approved a project worth 400 million rupees for the provision of motorbikes at a subsidized rate to working women and students, initially in the capital territory. I would like to reiterate our commitment to the obligations under the ILO's labour standards and to continue to take affirmative steps to protect worker's rights, especially of our female workers.

Finally, I would pay tribute to Mr Zaki Ahmed Khan and Mr Zegir Mhatran, two senior members of the Pakistan Employer's delegation to the ILC, who passed away a few days ago. Their deaths represent a loss, but their legacy will endure.

Worker member, Philippines – The right to freely participate in society as equals, without any discrimination, harassment or violence, must be constantly asserted across our societies. In this effort, we must recognize that patriarchy is a system that continues to negatively shape our lives – at home, in our workplaces, communities, as well as government policies. Globally, gender inequality remains one of the greatest forms of inequality. Worldwide and in the Philippines, the gender pay gap remains 20 per cent. Meanwhile, women spend on average 4.25 hours a day performing unpaid care work, compared to 1.23 hours for men.

In the General Survey, we note some of the action needed: ensuring the use of objective criteria for recruitment and promotion that do not perpetuate gender inequalities and discrimination, as well as promoting gender equality in organization and workplace cultures; addressing discrimination in terms of conditions of work, particularly with regard to remuneration, social security and conditions for termination of employment; creating and maintaining an enabling environment for gender equality; regular monitoring and reviewing of policy measures, as well as enforcement of non-discrimination legislation; adopting a comprehensive system of leave policies as a transformative tool to enhance gender equality at work; improving the availability of affordable, accessible and good quality childcare and long-term services and facilities to ease pressure on workers with family responsibilities; and the need to address the gaps in the legal and effective coverage of women by maternity protection.

All these are important elements in our vision of realizing gender equality. We in the trade unions, together with our allies in the legislative bodies in the Philippines, pushed hard to improve our maternity leave benefits from 60–78 days to 105 days in 2019. Now, we are working jointly with other stakeholders to provide maternity leave benefits for women workers in the informal economy. This, again, is not an easy battle, but it is an important one. The point is clear, maternity protection is a joint responsibility of government and society, as highlighted in the General Survey.

We have many things to do. We need to push for a robust public employment programme with a clear gender quota. We need to invest in our care economy. We need to make sure that our efforts and proposed programmes have clear financial resources, staffing and mechanisms. We in the Philippine trade unions continue to campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 to be able to review and improve existing policies concerning violence and harassment in the world of work.

Finally, the efforts of trade unions in developing women leaders are a must. We need to ensure that women are participating at all levels of decision-making. It is what would make other policies – like paid leave, working conditions, equal pay, hiring – actually work for women. Together with general consciousness raising, our fight is not just economic and political, but also cultural. Therefore, holding gender sensitivity training for both women and men members is imperative. We need to break away from the culture of machismo to advance equality.

Employer member, Belgium – Like the International Organization of Employers (IOE), we consider that this General Survey addresses equality between men and women at work, which is a broader subject than the intended examination of the implementation of a selection of ILO standards in the law and practice of Member States. In principle, Belgian employers support gender equality and the prohibition of all discrimination in employment. It is essential to take into account the diversity of talent if our countries are to be able to face climate, digitalization, demographic and budgetary challenges, among others.

However, diversity is not always easy to implement. The legal, institutional and cultural environment often leads couples to take decisions that are not conducive to the sustainable inclusion of women in employment. We therefore need to change the environment to make it easier for couples and families to make choices that are more favourable to equality between women and men. The authorities accordingly need to ensure a change in attitudes and invest more in childcare facilities and long-term care for the elderly. This is a shared responsibility.

As for employers, it is up to them to put in place measures that are compatible with the requirements of the organization of work. A predictable legal framework can enable enterprises, if necessary, to develop affirmative action in favour of certain groups of people without legal risk. It would be unjust and ineffective to place the obligation to foster work-life balance solely on enterprises. Moreover, Convention No. 156 does not take sufficiently into account the relevant economic realities, such as the needs of enterprises and fluctuations in labour market conditions. Nor does it take into account the benefits that can be drawn by workers with family responsibilities from the existence of different working arrangements, such as overtime, part-time work, night work and shift work. It is therefore important to remain vigilant in applying Convention No. 156.

In relation to Belgium, the General Survey highlights a very large number of good practices in the implementation of the three Conventions, such as the practical guide to promote diversity and equality in recruitment. This guide was developed in 2020 by the social partners. It is a tool intended for employers and workers to use in recruitment and selection policies with a view to guaranteeing equality of opportunity for applicants. Since the drafting of the General Survey, the Act promoting gender equality has been strengthened and the Belgian social partners have concluded two new collective labour agreements. These agreements aim to foster social dialogue within the enterprise to find solutions that balance the needs of enterprises with those of workers with family responsibilities and to improve the predictability of working hours in a realistic way. Regulation and practice in Belgium are leading to exceptional results in terms of the gender pay gap. In 2022, this gap amounted to 1.2 per cent. This is the smallest gap among all the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Belgian employers' organizations have made a firm commitment to diversity in practice with the Inter-federal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia). Their cooperation agreement aims to develop awareness-raising action and practical support for willing enterprises. Rather than creating a climate of suspicion and the risk of legal disputes, it is important in practice to encourage enterprises to embrace diversity in all human resources processes and to promote negotiated social agreements.

Finally, guaranteeing equality of opportunity at school has a considerable impact on the professional future of young people. Public authorities must therefore focus on preventing discrimination, starting with education.

Government member, Cuba – We note the General Survey, on which excellent comments have been made. The Government of Cuba recognizes the need to continue making progress towards gender equality at work and the relevance of deeper analysis of the ILO Conventions and Recommendations proposed to the Committee. For Cuba, gender equality at work has been a seminal issue in the transformations of our society since 1 January 1959, not only at the legislative level, but also through the active participation of women in the world of work based on an inclusive vision of the broadening of rights for the achievement of high levels of participation in the socio-economic and political life of the country. Women today account for 55.74 per cent of the members of the National Assembly of the People's Power, the legislative and supreme body of State authority. It represents the people as a whole and expresses their sovereign will. The national programme for the promotion of women is designed to promote

progress by women and equality of rights, opportunities and possibilities based on the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, and to review in greater depth the objective and subjective factors that persist in Cuban society and which are impeding better results for women in the economic, political, social and family contexts with a view to their elimination.

Over recent years, Cuba has developed a broad range of legislation guaranteeing the legal protection of women and guarantees for the exercise of individual rights. Gender equality remains an important element in the recognition and exercise of these rights. The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba of 10 April 1992 provides that workers shall participate in the processes for the planning, regulation, management and control of the economy. Article 42 of the Constitution provides that all persons shall be equal before the law, receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities without discrimination on grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and that they shall also receive equal wages for equal work without any discrimination whatsoever. The violation of the principle of equality is prohibited and is punishable by law. Article 43 also provides that women and men have equal rights and responsibilities in economic, political, cultural, labour, social, family and all other areas. The State guarantees that both are afforded the same opportunities and possibilities: the basic law also provides that maternity and paternity shall be protected by the State and that mothers and fathers have essential responsibilities and functions in the overall education and upbringing of new generations. With reference to moral and ethical-civic values in relation to life and society, Legislative Decree No. 56 on maternity of women workers and family responsibilities, of 13 October 2021, applies to mothers, fathers, grandparents and other family members, workers in the State and non-State sector, and provides for each to take shared responsibility in the family for the care and upbringing of children, which facilitates the participation of women in employment and society. Progress is also being made in designing and approving the basis for the comprehensive system of overall care throughout life, which includes self-care from the gender, rights and lifestyle perspectives as a viable alternative in light of the impact of the ageing of the population, with the provision of broad-based services, assets and infrastructure for personal care and to strengthen the well-being and protection of carers and persons receiving care.

The issues under examination today are of a transversal nature with rights and functions in other United Nations treaty bodies and are guaranteed to all citizens by the Government of Cuba. Cuba will continue its productive cooperation with the ILO and maintains its unwavering commitment to continue making progress in the development of a society in line with the Organization's standards.

Worker member, Republic of Korea – The Republic of Korea has ratified two Conventions out of the three under examination, namely Convention No. 111 and Convention No. 156. However, the statistics and data suggest that achieving gender equality at work is still a long way off. The gender pay gap in the Republic of Korea is 31.9 per cent, while the global gender pay gap is around 19 per cent. The employment rate gap between men and women has been narrowed over the past 20 years, but is still high – 71.5 per cent for men and 52.9 per cent for women. A total of 47.4 per cent of women wage workers are in non-regular employment, 16.4 per cent higher than men. In the Republic of Korea, employment overwhelmingly reflects individual demographic characteristics, such as age, gender and parental status, rather than skills and tertiary education. Fathers are considerably more likely to be employed than men without children, while mothers are considerably less likely to be employed than women without children. Very high rates of Korean women tend to leave the labour force following childbirth and regular employment opportunities are hard to find for “mother returners”, for

whom low-paid and non-regular jobs are the only opportunities available. This adverse outcome can be explained by a couple of elements mentioned in the General Survey. First, the misaligned goals and direction of the legal and political framework. In 2008, when the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was revised to become the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act, the focus was moved from “realisation of substantive equality in employment between men and women” to “resolving the low birth rate by supporting work-family balance for women”. Since then, the goal of achieving gender equality at work has become secondary and gender roles and stereotypes in family and society have been enhanced, while the discriminatory employment structure remains unchallenged. Second, the gap and lack of coverage in applying the Conventions. In the Republic of Korea, most of the rights and protections provided in the six instruments examined are being applied through the national legislation, which is based on the employment relationship and the narrow definition of worker in the Labour Standards Act. In this situation, women workers in non-standard and precarious forms of employment and self-employed women hardly enjoy these rights and provisions. So, as the Committee of Experts points out, the measures on maternity protection and reconciliation of work and family responsibilities should be an integral part of the comprehensive national policy on gender equality and these measures should not in practice reflect an assumption that the main responsibility for family care lies with women. I also call on Member States to take the necessary measures to extend to all workers the protections offered by the relevant laws and policies on gender equality and non-discrimination, maternity protection and family-friendly measures. Lastly, the General Survey refers to the case of the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions as an example that shows how trade unions’ engagement can address occupational segregation. The unions in the construction sector have extended access to the male-dominated occupation for women workers by providing vocational training to build the skills needed in the sector. At the same time, through a persistent campaign to organize precarious workers and build a collective bargaining system, the unions have improved working conditions so that women can work without discrimination and sexual harassment. However, under the targeted crackdown against trade unions launched by the Government, the unions’ activities, especially collective bargaining, have become a crime of collective coercion, and the outcome of collective bargaining is used as evidence of collective racketeering. So far, 19 construction union officers are in jail for such criminal charges and one union officer took his life in resistance. Moreover, all the achievements the unions have made, including gender equality at work have been totally nullified.

I would like to reiterate that freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are enabling rights for achieving gender equality and I call on all Member States to promote, not repress, the trade unions’ role in achieving this goal.

Government member, Australia – Australia welcomes the comprehensive General Survey on gender equality, which highlights significant global action, but also global challenges, in the implementation of these important ILO instruments. The Australian Government is committed to upholding universal human rights and advancing gender equality. Since Australia’s response to the survey in 2022, we have had a change of government, with the incoming Government making significant reforms to enhance gender equality. This includes measures to help improve pay and conditions in low paid feminized workforces and improve the equitable sharing of work and care responsibilities in families. Since responding to the survey, Australia has: embedded the principles of job security and gender equality into the decision-making processes of the national workplace relations tribunal, the Fair Work Commission, by making job security and gender equality objects of Australia’s workplace relations legislation; introduced a statutory Equal Remuneration

Principle to help guide the way the Fair Work Commission considers pay equity cases and addresses gender-based undervaluation of work; established new expert panels in the Fair Work Commission for pay equity and the care and community sector, with a dedicated research unit, which will ensure that the Commission has the expertise needed to decide cases dealing with pay and conditions in low-paid feminized workforces; prohibited pay secrecy clauses and enabled our Workplace Gender Equality Agency to publish gender pay gaps at the employer level; improved the government Paid Parental Leave scheme, and strengthened the right to request flexible working arrangements and an extension of unpaid parental leave to help families balance and share work and caring responsibilities; introduced ten days' paid family and domestic violence leave as a national minimum standard; and expressly prohibited sexual harassment in the Fair Work Act to ensure that all workers, especially women, are safe and respected at work. We will shortly be ratifying Convention No. 190 to complement these efforts.

The Government is committed to preventing discrimination against all people in vulnerable situations to ensure equality of opportunity for all in the world of work. In December, changes were made to our national workplace relations law to update its protections against discrimination and bring it into line with our other anti-discrimination laws. As a result, employees who experience discrimination in the workplace because of gender identity, intersex status or breastfeeding can now pursue complaints through the Fair Work Commission.

But we know more can be done, and we will continue to take action. Starting from 1 July 2024, and subject to the passage of the legislation, the Australian Government will increase the government Paid Parental Leave scheme to 26 weeks by 2026. This builds on paid parental leave reforms taking effect this year that will help encourage more men and partners to take leave. This includes making paid parental leave more flexible and giving men and partners access to more leave. We are complementing this with changes to unpaid parental leave that give families more choice in how they take that leave and help them better share work and caring responsibilities.

Australia appreciates the extensive work of the Committee of Experts and expresses its support for sustained action to achieve gender equality across the globe.

Worker member, Spain – The participation of women in the Spanish labour market is characterized by their gradual inclusion, rising from an activity rate of 42 per cent in 2002 to 53 per cent in 2022, with significant segregation. On the one hand, at the sectoral level, 73 per cent of women's employment is concentrated in seven sectors and, on the other, there is vertical segregation by occupation. Two of every three women work in low-paid occupations, compared with only one of every three men. Women are concentrated in occupations considered to be "feminine", which have historically been given lower value and, consequently, lower wages.

In Spain there have been legislative developments with the objective of achieving equality between women and men in the various spheres: personal, social and labour. The Spanish Constitution sets out the right to equality and non-discrimination on grounds of sex, in accordance with Article 1 of Convention No. 111. Basic Act No. 3/2007 on equality between women and men defines the basic concepts and legal categories in relation to equality, such as direct and indirect discrimination. Its adoption constituted unprecedented progress in equality policy in all areas of life. The Act makes reference to the participation and representation of women in the world of work, sport, communication media, the armed forces and State security forces and bodies, and provides for statutory leave for the care of children

under eight years of age and dependent persons, and extends maternal, paternal and nursing leave. The latter types of leave, which are consonant with Conventions Nos 156 and 183, have been updated through subsequent legislation.

From 1 January 2021, leave for the birth and care of a child amounts to 16 weeks for each parent. Nursing leave is paid and both parents are entitled to it for children up to nine months of age. The reduction of working hours for care purposes allows workers to decrease their daily hours of work by various amounts for the direct care of children under 12 years of age, persons with disabilities who are not in paid work, family members up to the second rank or kinship who, by reason of age, accidents or illness cannot care for themselves and are not engaged in paid work, and dependent minors suffering from cancer or any other serious disease, who are hospitalized or receiving long-term continuous care and require direct, continuous and permanent care. There is also extended leave to care for children, which is voluntary leave that can be taken up to three years following childbirth, and extended leave for the care of family members, under which workers can request the temporary and voluntary suspension of the employment contract to care for family members up to the second rank. The period covered by both types of extended leave is taken into account for purposes of seniority and social security contributions.

Act No. 3/2007 introduces equality plans as an instrument for collective bargaining intended to achieve equality in enterprises with 50 or more workers. It establishes the requirement for the participation of the legal representatives of workers in the committee that negotiates the plan, thereby guaranteeing negotiation throughout the process. The principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value covers all enterprises irrespective of the number of workers. Two instruments have been agreed for that purpose: on the one hand, the tool of pay records, which make it possible to detect the existence of wage gaps in enterprises with a view to correcting existing gaps and, and on the other, a procedure for the evaluation of jobs from a gender perspective, the objective of which is the correction of any gender bias that exists in jobs occupied by women.

Finally, the labour reform adopted in 2021 had the objective of reducing precarious and temporary employment, two variables that are characteristic of women's employment. Since its entry into force, the permanent employment of women has risen to the detriment of temporary employment, which shows the success of the labour reform. With reference to the care sector, my organization, the Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commissions, is calling for a comprehensive State agreement which covers the sector in the broad sense, including child care, long-term care and indirect care.

Worker member, Botswana – We recognize that, over the years, the ILO has adopted a number of resolutions and declarations reaffirming the goal of achieving gender equality, including most recently: the 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work; the Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis; the Resolution concerning inequalities and the world of work; the Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security); and the Resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment, which all call for a transformative agenda for gender equality. These are just some of the efforts that we believe have been put forward to ensure gender equality and end discrimination to achieve this critical objective.

Recent engagements at the African continental level indicate that there has been a regression in the progress made prior to the COVID-19 period in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The major goals affected by the regression are in particular SDG 1 on "no poverty", SDG 3 on good health and

well-being, SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. These challenges have led to the widening of the gender equality gap in workplaces and clearly mean that there is a need for renewed and strong commitment by ILO constituents towards the realization of the gender equality objective under the SDGs as we continue to find our way post COVID-19, and in the midst of the effects of the Russian Federation–Ukraine conflict.

Botswana has been reviewing its labour laws to address the recommendations of the Committee of Experts and the conclusions adopted by this Committee. The review has been done by the tripartite constituents in an effort to align with ILO standards, and some of the key agreements by the Labour Law Review Committee are on maternity promotion and recognition that there is need for family-friendly measures that assist both men and women in reconciling work and family responsibilities. In addition, the Botswana Decent Work Country Programme (BDWCP) was signed in 2020. The goal of the BDWCP 2020–24 is to contribute to Botswana's progress towards the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all. To realize this goal, the constituents identified the following top three priorities: sustainable employment creation, particularly for young women and men; improved quality social protection and conditions of work for all; and effective labour market governance institutions and practices.

In Botswana, any discrimination based on gender, sex, sexual orientation or marital status is automatically unfair, as stated in section 23(d) of the Employment Act. The above provisions and instruments when used together with the necessary protection and monitoring illustrate the interconnection of the six ILO instruments examined and how they are conducive to social and economic development, including their high significance for the promotion and fulfilment of the ILO decent work and social justice agenda.

However, there is still a lot to be done in Botswana to achieve gender equality. Culture is still used to oppose gender equality and exacerbate the dual burden of women. Also, informal sector workers have no maternity protection, which is a precondition of gender equality. The concept of indirect discrimination does not appear to be clear and recognized in our laws and job insecurity, as well as unemployment, continue to escalate cases of the exploitation of workers.

In conclusion, we want to support the Committee of Experts' findings and determinations and to call on Member States to strengthen their national legal and policy framework to combat gender discrimination. We highlight the complementarity of Conventions Nos 111 and 190 in addressing sexual harassment, which should be envisaged within the broader objective of the elimination of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. We recall that the ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 are a pivotal piece of any strategy to achieve gender equality and we call on Member States to adopt and implement effective and comprehensive policies and responses to gender-based abuse, harassment and violence at work. The ILO should also encourage such action through technical assistance.

Government member, Norway – I would like to thank the Committee of Experts for their comprehensive General Survey on this important topic. Norway is strongly committed to working towards achieving gender equality at work and has ratified all three Conventions examined in the General Survey.

Women around the world still face hurdles to access employment and decision-making positions and jobs in certain sectors. Women should have the right to pursue freely any job or profession of their own wish. Access to affordable childcare is important in increasing women's labour force participation, while maternity protection is a vital element in realizing equality

between men and women at work. Norway considers it essential that women and men have equal responsibilities towards their children and other members of their family. Maternity and paternity leave and accessible and affordable childcare have been key factors in the work to achieve equality in Norway. As the General Survey reports, there are also established initiatives to achieve less gender-divided education.

In our view, it is of great importance for the legislation protecting against discrimination to prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Norwegian Government has bolstered efforts for gender and sexual diversity in a new Action Plan launched earlier this year. Sexual harassment is still widespread, even in a gender equal country such as Norway. Norway is currently taking legislative measures to prevent sexual harassment in employment and occupation, together with information and awareness-raising campaigns.

There are still systemic differences that affect the opportunities available to men and women in Norway. Continuous action is required to address discrimination and inequality in employment and occupation. Women in Norway still undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. Closely related to this, women in Norway are over-represented in part-time jobs, despite both legislative regulations and awareness-raising campaigns. Further, the proportion of women in leading positions in private business is still low. The proportion of women in the executive committees of the 200 largest companies has increased somewhat in recent years. However, men still account for 81 per cent of operational positions with responsibility for profit and loss. On the other hand, at the top level in the state sector in Norway, the majority of managers are women.

Norway will continue the important work to overcome the remaining gender equality challenges. The Government will intensify its efforts through a strategy for equality between women and men. This will be the first gender equality strategy launched by a Norwegian Government. We would strongly encourage all other Member States to address the important issues highlighted in the General Survey and to ensure equal opportunities and gender equality in work life. Norway considers the three Conventions discussed in the General Survey as important tools for achieving gender equality at work.

Worker member, France – Regarding the application in practice of Convention No. 111, equality at work has visibly been a top social priority for the French Government for years and measures began to be put in place in 2019, such as transparency on pay gaps, compulsory bargaining in enterprises on professional equality between women and men and the establishment by a 2018 Act of a professional equality index in enterprises. However, there is clearly a very significant gap between stated ambitions and reality. Two-thirds of the gender pay gap is linked to jobs which, in the great majority of cases, are undervalued. This is the case in service occupations which, unlike technical and industrial occupations, are assumed to be less based on vocational skills, capacities and responsibilities. There is a great deal of confusion between professional expectations, the skills required and the qualities supposedly inherent to each of the sexes. It is believed that women are naturally and in essence more attentive and “ready to serve” and that these qualities, which are not recognized as skills, do not need to be recognized because they are innate.

Moreover, women and men in the same sector do not do the same jobs and women and men do not have access to the same positions in enterprises. This vocational segregation between the sexes is compounded by hierarchical inequalities. In total, 23 per cent of jobs held by men were at the managerial level in 2018, in comparison with 17.5 per cent for women. For men, three of the 20 most frequent occupations corresponded to managerial roles, compared

to only one for women. A woman has a 30 per cent likelihood of obtaining one of the best paid jobs, and a 55 per cent lower likelihood than a man of having one of the 1 per cent of best paid jobs.

Yet laws do exist in France. Indeed, a professional equality index has been progressively implemented for private enterprises with at least 1,000 employees as of 1 March 2019, then for enterprises with at least 250 employees as of 1 September 2019. All enterprises with at least 50 employees were included as of 1 March 2020. The question that may be raised is whether this professional equality index is enough to drive progress in enterprises. According to the Public Policy Institute, an independent research institute, the results so far are very mixed due to the complexity of the calculations used. Worse still, the professional equality index is reported to have had no effect on reducing gender inequality. The main criticisms of the index relate to the lack of transparency and readability of this tool, which is run entirely by the management of enterprises. As a result, employers may be tempted to measure what suits them in order to achieve the minimum score. Trade unions in France believe that equality between women and men is essential to overcome the crisis and we are taking this opportunity to point out that the existing professional equality index needs to be corrected on four points: the calculation method for the wage score, which underestimates inequalities; greater transparency; the financial resources to catch up; and the extension of the results requirement to the public service, as the index currently only covers private enterprises.

Government member, Belgium – Belgium aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and its Member States.

Belgium is happy that the ILO has decided to study Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183 and their Recommendations from a gender equality perspective. Indeed, these instruments are essential to give effect to the fundamental principle of equality of treatment for all, and to remedy the main forms of gender inequality in the world of work.

As indicated in the General Survey, despite the considerable progress made in relation to gender equality at the workplace over the last century, the elimination of inequalities in the world of work has unfortunately stagnated over recent decades and the gender gap has not narrowed significantly. Moreover, the unequal sharing of unpaid work and family responsibilities continues to hinder women's progress in the world of work. The same negative conclusion applies to pregnancy and maternity. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities.

In this context, the General Survey is a very valuable tool. It sets out the legal and institutional framework required to achieve gender equality, and describes in great detail the law and practice in Member States. It explains the way to promote gender equality at work, in light of the main difficulties and opportunities encountered by Member States. It is a very useful tool for political decision-makers at both the national and international levels.

Belgium has ratified and implemented Convention No. 111 and Convention No. 156. Preparatory steps have been taken for the ratification of Convention No. 183. In this light, Belgium fully supports the content of the General Survey and the recommendations made by the Committee of Experts. Like the Committee of Experts, Belgium hopes that this General Survey will contribute to the development and effective implementation of measures to guarantee gender equality at work. Belgium hopes that the General Survey and our discussions in the Committee will encourage ILO Member States to ratify Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183 as widely as possible.

Worker member, Brazil – For Brazilian workers, it is important at this political moment in the country to envisage the ratification of Convention No. 156, which the Brazilian Government has put forward and which the General Survey describes as central to decent work and gender equality.

In Brazil, an inter-ministerial committee has been set up to develop a national care system, the next steps of which will be the preparation of draft legislation for submission to the National Congress on the basis of discussions with civil society and the leaders of working-class trade union organizations through public hearings.

Brazil could be a successful example if we manage to include in this process a clear interpretation of care as a human right and its link to the redistribution of family care responsibilities between men and women workers in future, as indicated by the Committee of Experts, challenging the gender risks which perpetuate the inequality of occupational segregation, family status and the disproportionate impact on production borne by women.

In Brazil we can also address key issues such as the working day and working hours to adapt them to the right to care, and the provision of a care infrastructure and services in the world of work. Today's discussion and the recommendations that this Committee will make to the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference offer an invaluable opportunity.

I therefore confirm that Brazilian workers commend the views of the Committee of Experts, especially as they coincide with the process that we are following, both in terms of the integration of interdisciplinary government action demonstrating the political will of the State and Government, and the essential value of the redistribution of care work between families and the State (through public services) to shift the burden of care work from families, and the role played by national care systems in that regard.

In light of the above, I call on the Committee to highlight the indivisible link between the application of Convention No. 156 and existing, emerging and future national care systems.

Government member, United States of America – The Government of the United States thanks the Committee of Experts for this General Survey, which for the first time examines together the topics of gender discrimination, maternity protection and workers with family responsibilities. We commend the Committee of Experts for the comprehensive overview of the steps being taken, and the challenges we face, in realizing gender equality in the world of work today.

Across the world, women continue to face significant disadvantages in the labour market. This is clearly conveyed by the persistent and unfair gender pay gap. According to the United Nations, women earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. Closing this gap at the current rate of progress would take a full 257 years, which is ten years longer than my country has existed. And it is unacceptably long. Clearly, we need to address the defining challenge of gender equality with greater urgency and resolve. This means that women must be a central focus of our efforts to advance all aspects of decent work. While Convention No. 111 is a focus of the General Survey, we know that the fundamental principles and rights at work are mutually reinforcing and together comprise the foundation for gender equality and women's economic security.

I would like to highlight in particular the essential role of freedom of association and collective bargaining in realizing gender equality and narrowing the gender pay gap. There is extensive evidence that women who are members of unions experience smaller gender pay gaps, improved protection from discrimination, and better employment-related benefits. The rights to organize and bargain collectively are a central focus for the United States in our efforts

to advance women's labour rights and gender equality, including through the creation of the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment in 2021. This task force is mobilizing the federal Government to empower workers and increase awareness, particularly among women workers, of their federally protected rights to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. At the international level, the United States Government has recently launched a Global Women's Economic Security Strategy which, among other priorities, recognizes that freedom of association and collective bargaining are foundational rights for women to secure vital protections and benefits at work. Through the Multilateral Partnership for Organizing, Worker Empowerment and Rights or M-POWER, the United States Government is partnering with other governments here today, global and national labour organizations, and civil society and others to uphold and advance workers' rights, again with emphasis on the rights of women at work.

I would like to close by welcoming the focus in the General Survey on the growing efforts by countries to address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In the United States, we are making strides to provide equal employment opportunity for LGBTQI+ workers, including through the Executive Order on Advancing Equality for LGBTQI+ individuals, which was signed by President Biden on 15 July 2022. In addition, and as noted in the General Survey, the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark decision in June of 2020, which held that the prohibition against sex discrimination in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also includes employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or transgender status. The United States encourages the Office and ILO constituents to pursue policies and initiatives to protect the rights of LGBTQI+ persons within the framework of Convention No. 111 in order to give full effect to the elimination of discrimination based on sex. Taking measures to ensure that all workers – no matter their sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation – participate fully and equitably in the world of work is essential to realizing our common goal of gender equality, social justice and decent work for all.

Worker member, Kenya – Despite the ratification of Convention No. 111 by the Government of Kenya in May 2001 and positive legislative developments towards gender equality, women in Kenya continue to face significant obstacles to enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation. Women in Kenya continue to suffer discrimination based on gender stereotypes, which prevents them from entering and remaining in the labour market and reaching their full potential at work. Women have been disadvantaged in taking up positions equal to those of men at work due to a variety of factors, including lower educational level, family responsibilities and gender specific roles and discrimination. Legislation has not been fruitful in achieving pay parity for women. In 2019, a study found that on average women earn 32 per cent less than their male counterparts. According to UN Women, only 66.7 per cent of legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality under the SDG indicators are in place in Kenya. Kenya should develop more comprehensive legislation guaranteeing equality of opportunity and treatment, and also of outcomes for women. Furthermore, the Government should reinforce the establishment and implementation of measures to implement the 2019 National Policy on Gender and Development to combat gender stereotypes in training, employment and occupation.

The informal economy in Kenya is a significant employer of women, with 87 per cent being employed within it, with no social security or other benefits. A recent study has illustrated the gender gap in the ownership of informal enterprises, with males owning the more productive small and medium-sized enterprises, while females own the less viable micro-enterprises. More effort should be made by the Government to prohibit gender-based discrimination in access to credit and allow women to register a business in the same way as a man.

As of December, 2020, only 41.8 per cent of the indicators needed to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective were available, with gaps in key areas, in particular: unpaid care and domestic work, and key labour market indicators, such as the gender pay gap and information and communications technology skills ([UN Women](#)). The Government should continue its efforts to collect and provide gender disaggregated statistics, enabling the Government and the social partners to develop gender responsive action for the full implementation of Convention No. 111.

In Kenya, women in formal employment are entitled to three months maternity leave with full pay through employer liability. However, this only covers about 6 per cent of women, leaving the rest without any protection against income loss after giving birth, and their premature return to work puts their health and that of their children at risk. Furthermore, in Kenya, women and girls are spending a disproportionate amount of time providing unpaid care work in their households and communities. A survey was carried out in 2019 by [Oxfam](#) in five urban informal settlements. The results indicate that women report 11.1 hours per day for any care compared to 2.9 hours per day for men. In contrast, men spent almost double the time that women spent on paid work (10.5 versus 5.3 hours per day, respectively). The Government of Kenya therefore should ratify Convention No. 183, as well as Convention No. 156, which are critical to achieving gender equality at work for women. This is a call for all Member States.

Last but not least, there cannot be gender equality if women continue to face gender-based violence and harassment. Gender-based violence and harassment is prevalent in Kenya, including domestic violence. Government statistics from the [Kenya Demographic and Health Survey \(KDHS\)](#), indicate that over 40 per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime. It is therefore urgent for Member States to ratify and implement effectively Convention No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation. This is a pivotal piece of any strategy to achieve gender equality.

Government member, Türkiye – I would like to thank the Committee of Experts for their comprehensive and updated General Survey.

As we all know, gender equality has become the heart of the ILO's mandate and its normative action through its Conventions, Recommendations, declarations and resolutions, as well as its reports examined since its establishment in 1919. In this historical process, all governments and social partners are called upon to actively contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination in the labour market and to promote gender equality between men and women. Türkiye was one of the countries that heeded this call in the very early stages. Türkiye has ratified various UN and ILO Conventions related to gender equality and reflects them in its national legislation. The Turkish Constitution, as the basic text, along with the Turkish Civil Code, Labour Act and Penal Code, regulate all issues relating to gender equality and oblige decision-makers to implement them accordingly. The principles of equality before the law and non-discrimination, as well as the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, are introduced in these documents. They uphold equality between women and men, put an end to discrimination based on sex, render women equal to men in both family and society, and value women's work.

Gender equality goals can only be achieved by means of an integrated combination of a supportive legal system, improved awareness, more effective sanctions and proper enforcement. However, before elaborating on how to achieve gender equality in education, participation in the labour market, and politics, and in all spheres of life, the fundamental question that needs to be addressed is how to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence

against women. The Law on the Protection of Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women has become an important step in Türkiye and has brought substantial improvements to the protection system for victims.

Türkiye is continuing its efforts to increase the participation of girls in education and to remove sexist language, pictures and expressions which perpetuate gender stereotypes from textbooks. Besides the application of active labour programmes and the provision of social security incentives to companies, the Government has taken the necessary measures to ensure better working conditions, equal pay for work of equal value, lifelong learning, flexible work schemes, and a fair balance between family life and work to increase women's participation in the labour market. Despite an increase in the ratio of women in decision-making processes, we still have a long way to go to achieve the desired level of political representation of women in Türkiye. We are confident that the ILO's continuous efforts and commitment on this issue will contribute substantially to building the transformative agenda for gender equality that is urgently needed in the world of work and will guide constituents in effectively bringing about this transformation.

Worker member, Netherlands – The Netherlands is one of the very few ILO Member States that has ratified all three Conventions covered by this General Survey. By doing so, our country has shown its commitment to the realization of gender equality and to a comprehensive approach to addressing any gaps and barriers. And this is of course very laudable.

However, in practice, discrimination persists against women, and particularly against pregnant women and mothers, despite the legislation in place to prohibit such discrimination.

According to the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, 43 per cent of pregnant women experience some form of discrimination. Women working on temporary contracts are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and to losing their employment. In an increasing flexible labour market, this makes women and pregnant women all the more vulnerable.

The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) and the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions (CNV) acknowledge the Government's efforts in the Pregnancy Discrimination Action Plan of 2017. However, we remain sceptical as to the lack of sanctions imposed on employers. Women are the focus of the action plan, even though they are the "victim", not the perpetrator. The second pillar of the Action Plan focuses on raising awareness of the rights of pregnant women and the third pillar focuses on getting women to report incidences.

Even though both are necessary, FNV and CNV stress that employers should assume their responsibility and should be sanctioned when they break the law.

As reaffirmed by the Committee of Experts in the General Survey, we also recall that employers and their organizations have an important role and responsibility for the realization of gender equality at work. There needs to be greater commitment by employers to promoting societal change, starting with more family-friendly enterprise cultures. The State should support such changes at the enterprise level through incentives and sanctions.

Finally, we want to recall that maternity protection is a precondition for gender equality and that both maternity protection and the protection of workers with family responsibilities are essential to promote gender equality and close the gender pay gap.

Therefore, it is of key importance to ensure that broader national policies on gender equality systematically include measures for maternity protection and for workers with family responsibilities.

Government member, Saudi Arabia – We would like to commend the role of the Committee of Experts in selecting the topics of the General Survey and we stress the importance of the instruments that have been covered by the General Survey this year, as they have a significant impact on achieving the basic principle of equal opportunities and treatment between men and women in the world of work. We also thank the Committee for its continuous support to Member States in promoting compliance with international labour standards.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ratified Convention No. 111 in 1978. We conducted a fundamental reform at the legal and institutional levels in order to promote equal opportunities between women and men in all fields, including the field of work. The Government of Saudi Arabia issued in early 2023 a national policy to encourage equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and occupation. The policy was adopted following a series of deliberations and efforts made in coordination with the social partners and with technical support provided by the ILO under the cooperation programme signed in 2018. This was preceded in 2020 by the abolition of restrictions on women's work in the Saudi Labour Code with regard to professions in which it was forbidden to employ women and for them to work at night. The Government has set a national target to include women's participation in the labour market to reach 30 per cent by 2025, yet we have succeeded in exceeding this target already reaching 37 per cent in the third quarter of 2022. It also encourages continuous learning and training opportunities with values, initiatives and projects within the human capacity development programme, which is included in the Kingdom's vision for 2030. We have launched a package of training products aimed at workers and jobseekers, both women and men. The Government is also working to encourage all nationals to be pioneers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM disciplines) as a part of its national policy on the digital economy. The Kingdom has also issued unified regulations on the work environment, defining the main criteria that must prevail in the work environment for all women and men alike. This regulation prohibits discrimination in wages between women and men for work of equal value. It provides for the right to a healthy and safe environment for all without discrimination.

My country is aware of the urgent need to ensure the protection of everyone from violence and harassment, especially in the world of work. In 2018, the Government issued a law to combat harassment and adopted regulations for the protection against behavioural abuse at work, as well as a national policy on occupational health and safety. The Government has taken concrete measures to protect motherhood, starting with providing paid maternity leave in the Labour Code and prohibiting the dismissal of women during this leave and during pregnancy. It has also introduced the national programme called Qurrah to provide care for the children of working women. The Kingdom's laws also include provisions regulating maternity and paternity leave.

In conclusion, the Government stresses the importance of international labour standards in light of the challenges and renewed developments in the world of work and also within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for decent work and gender equality. We commend the efforts of Member States in achieving these goals. I reiterate my thanks to the Committee and the Committee of Experts for their key roles in following up compliance by Member States with international labour standards.

Government member, Canada – Canada would like to begin by warmly thanking the Committee of Experts for its meticulous and diligent work in producing this important General Survey on gender equality at work.

Canada is firmly committed to the values of equality and equity at work and constantly strives to promote and implement programmes and policies aimed at achieving real equality in the world of work for all Canadians. Canada is even more committed to promoting gender equality on the international stage and in the ILO, in the knowledge that, without such equality, there can be no true social justice and universal and lasting peace. The General Survey sheds light on the global framework governing gender equality in the world of work, as well as the various understandings of discrimination, which are an evolving phenomenon. These different understandings remind us of the need to define precisely what is meant by discrimination and to establish a comprehensive regime of prohibitions in order to combat effectively all forms and grounds of discrimination at work. It is also necessary to reassess legislation, policies, programmes and the means of measuring their effectiveness on an ongoing basis in order to adapt them to the changing circumstances of the world of work. In this vein, the General Survey highlights various programmes, policies and initiatives that are being implemented by ILO Members at the national level to combat the different forms of discrimination at work. These initiatives can inspire other Members of the Organization, which demonstrates the importance of the General Survey.

The General Survey also reminds us that some workers are more likely to find themselves in a situation of vulnerability in the work environment, due to their personal situation or their membership of a group that has historically suffered discrimination. This includes members of the LGBTQI+ communities, who are discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is therefore important to continue working to ensure the integration of all these workers in the labour market on an equal footing with other members of society, and to adopt proactive measures for their professional development. Moreover, the pandemic exacerbated an already existing phenomenon, that is that girls and women generally take on more family-related responsibilities. It is more important than ever to implement practical measures to remove the obstacles that prevent women and girls from entering and progressing in the labour market on an equal footing. These include access to continuing education and training, leave for parents and those providing care, access to care and to childcare services, health and safety at work for pregnant women, various working arrangements and social protection for women and carers, and the need for equal pay for men and women.

Similarly, the General Survey shows that achieving real gender equality necessarily implies greater protection for members of LGBTQI+ communities, who are disproportionately discriminated against throughout the employment cycle, from access to education to access to the world of work. It is therefore imperative to take the necessary measures to remove all the structural barriers that prevent them from gaining equal access to training and apprenticeships, as well as the labour market, including of course their development, promotion and development on the labour market, and to combat all forms of violence and sexual and psychological harassment against them. States have the duty to combat the socio-cultural prejudices that fuel the barriers, marginalization and exclusion of members of LGBTQI+ communities within their societies.

Finally, the General Survey reminds us that action to combat discrimination is an ongoing challenge and that there is always room for improvement. The fight against all forms of discrimination, whatever the grounds, is an ongoing battle that requires constant vigilance to ensure that no one is left behind, and that workers have a working environment in which they

can flourish and achieve their full potential. Action to combat all forms of discrimination, irrespective of the form it takes, is at the heart of the ILO's mandate to protect and defend the most vulnerable and marginalized, and Canada is more determined than ever to support it unreservedly.

Government member, Republic of Korea – First of all, I would like to thank the Office for publishing this General Survey. We are pleased to observe the relevant policies in each and every country and to be able to reflect them in designing our country's policy to build a world of work where male and female workers are equally respected.

The main cause of the gender wage gap is the issue of career discontinuity during childbirth and childcare and, to address this, the Korean Government is strengthening support for pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. For example, maternity leave benefits have increased by 30 per cent since 2018. The age requirement of eligible children has been extended and the duration and benefits have been extended in relation to fertility treatment leave and reduced working hours. After childbirth, we are extending workplace childcare centres not only in large companies, but also in small and medium-sized companies.

In addition, to reduce discrimination between genders within the workplace, the Equal Opportunity and Work-Life Balance Assistance Act stipulates affirmative action. And we analyse and compile the status of male and female employees and managers at workplaces with 500 or more employees, as well as all those in the public sector, and publish a list of companies that do not meet the relevant standards.

The Korean Government has also been operating the Correction System for Gender Discrimination in Employment since May 2022, which allows the Government to order companies to stop discrimination, improve working conditions and compensate for it, including punitive damages.

Furthermore, we are supporting women to enter high-quality jobs by expanding vocational education and training in promising fields, such as IT and bio-industry. As a result, the gender wage gap has been reduced since 2017, as the above policies have been effective. And even in the challenging situation of COVID-19, the employment rate of women increased in both 2021 and 2022.

Lastly, I would like to request corrections to the General Survey. There are some parts of the General Survey regarding the Republic of Korea that need to be updated. Paragraph 672 of the General Survey states that "the duration of parental leave for families was increased in 2019 in the Republic of Korea from 52 days to 104 days". However, the relevant laws in the Republic of Korea grants one year, or 52 weeks, of parental leave to each parent, for a total of 104 weeks of parental leave. Second, paragraph 686 of the General Survey states that the average rate of earnings replacement for the parental leave period in the Republic of Korea has increased from 40 per cent to 58 per cent. However, following the amendment of the relevant Act in 2022, 80 per cent of the ordinary monthly wage is provided to those on parental leave.

The Korean Government will continue to make various efforts to ensure gender equality at workplaces.

Government member, Brazil – On behalf of the Government of Brazil, I would like to start by expressing our thanks for the General Survey prepared by the Office, which examines the application of Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183 and their respective Recommendations through the lens of gender equality, addressing the issues of non-discrimination on the ground of gender, maternity protection and workers with family responsibilities. We also commend

the General Survey's conclusion, which draws attention to the interrelation between the issues addressed and the six instruments analysed.

Following a period of regression in terms of gender in our country, I am pleased to report the action taken recently by its democratically elected Government, which respects all women. In March 2023, the Government of Brazil submitted to the National Congress a set of proposals on gender equality in the world of work, including in relation to ILO Convention No. 156 and Convention No. 190, as well as a bill providing for wage equality for women and men in the same work.

In line with the Conventions examined by the Committee of Experts, the Bill recently adopted by our National Congress establishes equal wages and remuneration for women and men for work of equal value, or with the same functions, and emphatically prohibits distinctions based on sex, race, ethnicity, origin or age. It provides for fines for non-compliance and transparency measures to monitor compliance, as well as requiring companies to present plans to reduce wage inequality.

In accordance with the new legislation and the Convention, and with the aim of implementing and regulating the measure, an interministerial working group has been established to draw up a national policy for wage and employment equality for women and men. The national wage equality policy has been further strengthened by the country's recent accession to the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), a joint initiative by this Organization, UN Women and the OECD.

Brazil has protected maternity and children from the outset of the consolidation of its labour laws, and more recently, in 2018, this protection was extended to adoptive parents and adopted children, in addition to the introduction of other specific policies to extend maternity and paternity leave. However, we know how much care weighs in the work life of workers, and more specifically and disproportionately on women, and accordingly in March this year another working group was created to design a national care policy and programme. This working group will propose comprehensive policies to guarantee the right to care of all persons who require it, as well as decent work for workers in the care sector. It will also value, redistribute and reduce care work, thereby alleviating the burden of unpaid domestic work and care that falls mainly on women, allowing them to free up their time so that they can exercise their rights in other areas and in their lives.

In accordance with Convention No. 156, the national care policy that is to be developed will aim to articulate family and work responsibilities and the equitable distribution of household responsibilities. Therefore, as suggested by the Committee of Experts, the working group's activities include dialogue with civil society representatives.

Another issue highlighted by the Committee of Experts in relation to Convention No. 111 is the persistence of occupational gender segregation. In line with the suggestion of the Committee of Experts that specific scholarships and courses should be introduced for the vocational training of women in areas dominated by men, the Government of Brazil signed a decree establishing a national policy for the inclusion, retention and promotion of girls and women in science, technology and innovation. It has also reactivated a vocational and technological training programme to accompany an increase in school attendance by socially vulnerable women.

The measures being implemented in Brazil demonstrate the country's return to its role on the international stage as a pioneer of gender equality and social justice in general. They also

reflect its resumption of its role as a partner and advocate of the ILO, the Organization's values and its mission to advance social justice and promote decent work for all.

We believe that the measures adopted have set us on the course of equality, based on recognition by the State and society of the rights of all persons involved in the world of work, because workers are vital to building an equalitarian and just society.

Government member, Côte d'Ivoire – The Government of Côte d'Ivoire commends the Office on the quality of the General Survey, which addresses gender equality through six international labour instruments. The provisions of these instruments, whether ratified or not, contain solid guidance to help all Member States achieve gender equality at work. Indeed, gender equality is no longer optional. Rather, it is a collective commitment and a major challenge for all the tripartite constituents in view of its cross-cutting nature and the concerns that it raises. We have to show the sustained and total will to achieve it. For this reason, since the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work in 2019, which has become a priority, our country has spared no effort in implementing and accelerating measures to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5 and 8 by 2030.

With reference to discrimination in employment and occupation, for which the respective Convention has been ratified by our country, the judicial and institutional framework prohibits discrimination in this respect. Protection against discrimination and the promotion of equality are enshrined in the following non-exhaustive provisions of laws and regulations: Act No. 92-570 of 11 September 1992 issuing the General Public Service Regulations, which is currently being reformed; section 4 of Act No. 2015-532 of 20 July 2015 issuing the Labour Code; Act No. 2019-574 of 26 June 2019 issuing the Criminal Code, as amended by the Act of 21 December 2021, which punishes all forms of discrimination, particularly in section 227; and Decree No. 2018-456 of 9 May 2018 on the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector.

The implementation of these provisions required the recruitment, by way of exception, of 2,100 workers with disabilities in the public service between 1997 and 2022, the establishment of a 30 per cent quota for women in elected assemblies, the creation of technical guidance and occupational reclassification committees in the private sector and the public service and the readjustment of the guaranteed interoccupational minimum wage and, subsequently, of minimum wages by category irrespective of gender. Measures have also been adopted to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, including changes to grant additional paid leave and the introduction of teleworking through a 2021 ordinance amending the Labour Code. Teleworking offers the parties the possibility to make the employment relationship more flexible and to combine the demands of work and the family in a manner that suits them. Moreover, the various social protection mechanisms established by the Government (the Social Protection Institute (IPS), the National Social Welfare Fund (CNPS) with the scheme for self-employed workers and the National Health Insurance Fund) offer workers greater well-being so that they are able to fulfil their family responsibilities adequately. The Government is also particularly attentive to decent work, which seeks to protect the safety and health of workers in general, and of pregnant women in particular. The legal framework in this regard was reformed and has been strengthened by Decree No. 2021-919 of 22 December 2021 on the protection of pregnant women at work, which has been added to the provisions of the Labour Code on maternity leave and nursing breaks.

The challenge that we have set ourselves is to improve the working and living conditions of workers, and the action and measures developed for that purpose have been formulated through the inclusive tripartite social dialogue introduced in Côte d'Ivoire. Mature social dialogue takes place in bipartite and tripartite structures, such as the Standing Independent

Dialogue Committee (CIPC), the Labour Advisory Commission (CCT) and the Tripartite Advisory Committee on International Labour Standards (CCTNIT), and offers the means of evaluating the impact of the measures adopted, identifying their shortcomings and developing appropriate corrective measures. However, further effort is required for ratification in view of the low number of States that have ratified the three Conventions examined in this General Survey, that is 20 countries out of 187. In the movement towards ratification, which has served to pave the way for greater commitment and action, Côte d'Ivoire has adopted many measures, strategies and programmes to resolve inequalities of all kinds. This constant challenge is always central to our reflection.

Government member, Senegal – The Government of Senegal commends the quality of the General Survey produced by the Committee of Experts, the theme of which is gender equality at work, which is a major concern of the ILO. Indeed, achieving gender equality at work is one of the commitments made by the ILO in the 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

The Government of Senegal reiterates its commitment to achieving gender equality at work. This highly relevant commitment is reflected in the adoption of a number of measures aimed in particular at ensuring equality in employment and occupation in order to combat discrimination at work more effectively. Hence measures inspired by the Conventions on non-discrimination at work, on the one hand, and maternity protection, on the other, have been adopted, in the form of two laws. One is concerned with providing protection for pregnant women; the other is about non-discrimination at work. With regard to protection for pregnant women, Act No. 2022-02 of 14 April 2022 issuing the Labour Code has introduced a major innovation. From now on, it is prohibited to dismiss a woman worker on the grounds of pregnancy. With regard to non-discrimination at work, Act No. 2022-03 of 14 April 2022, amending and supplementing certain provisions of the Labour Code, defines the different forms of discrimination at work, describes their manifestations, lays down the obligations and responsibilities of employers in this area, penalizes persons who commit infringements in terms of discrimination at work, and provides for the establishment of a National Observatory of Discrimination at Work (ONDT). Furthermore, Decree No. 2021-1469 of 3 November 2021 concerning the work of pregnant women has removed all restrictions on work for women. Hence there are no longer types of work which are prohibited for women. Now women can freely choose the jobs which they wish to do.

In addition, the Government, with the support of the ILO Country Office, has set up a national tripartite committee on follow-up action to the ratification of Convention No. 190. The tripartite committee has carried out a number of activities, including a study on violence and harassment in the world of work and another comparing national laws and regulations with Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206. In other words, the Government of Senegal is firmly committed to ratifying Convention No. 190. Indeed, all the technical measures for the ratification of this instrument have been adopted.

Lastly, with regard to the Government's objective to achieve gender equity and equality, in accordance with the National Gender Equity and Equality Strategy (SNEEG), the Ministry of Labour has drawn up a Gender Strategy 2022–26, outcome 4 of which is to develop initiatives promoting the reduction of gender inequalities in the sector, with the particular aim of installing creches in enterprises. This important document will result in the institutionalization and mainstreaming of gender in organizational mechanisms and procedures and in instruments for action, such as development policies and programmes in all sectors of political, economic and social life. It is worth mentioning that, at the institutional and legal levels,

remarkable efforts are being made to reduce gender inequalities, and also to reduce exclusion and marginalization.

The Government remains open to any proposal aimed at improving the national legislation in order to ensure better conditions for workers with family responsibilities and the principles of gender equality at work.

Government member, Colombia – We support the statement by GRULAC. The Government of Colombia thanks the Committee of Experts for the preparation and presentation of the General Survey. The relevance of the instruments examined for current discussions on the promotion of equality at work and the equitable distribution of care responsibilities offer a valuable opportunity to study the potential of these instruments for the promotion of effective measures and the rectification of shortcomings.

The images that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated the importance of recognizing care work in macroeconomic structures and in economic systems and analysis. However, this subject remains a challenge.

Even though Colombia has ratified Convention No. 111, the Committee of Experts has indicated a number of actions that we must take regarding legislation to bridge the gaps in relation to the Conventions we have ratified. In this regard, and since our Government considers the recommendations made by the ILO supervisory bodies to be of vital importance to make progress in delivering on the commitments that we have entered into as a country, the Government of change has presented two structural reforms which respond to the ILO's requests.

The Pension Reform Bill will enable us to strengthen the old-age protection system, making it fairer and more financially sustainable. It is structured around four pillars and, in the case of women, contributes to overcoming gender inequalities.

In the case of Colombia, the ILO has shown that gender bias in the design of the pension system affects the income security of women affiliated to the individual savings scheme.

The greater longevity of women and the fact that gender-differentiated mortality tables are applied to calculate the level of benefits implies that, to be entitled to an old-age pension, women are required to save a significantly greater amount than men.

Hence, the design of the current structure of the system perpetuates the gender inequalities of the labour market, compromising the basic income security of older women.

This situation is addressed in the Pension Reform Bill, which provides for a reduction in the minimum number of weeks required for entitlement to a pension by 50 weeks for each child, up to a maximum of three children, that is a total of 150 weeks in compensation for care work.

Moreover, the draft labour reform has included various initiatives to improve the working situation of women in the country, such as: the prohibition of discrimination against women and LGBTQI persons at work; the prevention, punishment and measures to address gender-based violence and harassment at work; the reduction of the gender wage gap; the formalization of paid domestic work; the provision of maternity and paternity leave on equal terms; the balanced participation of women in representation and negotiation mechanisms in the world of work; and the implementation of flexible working arrangements enabling women to combine their work with childcare and family responsibilities.

These initiatives, which form part of the labour reform, recognize the care burden borne by women, which prevents them from finding and retaining formal jobs.

We are therefore grateful to the ILO for the support it has provided to us for the development of the reforms and we hope that it will continue to support this process until its approval by Congress.

We appeal to the tripartite constituents to ensure that through social dialogue we move towards protection for workers and we firmly hope that Congress will move forward decisively on the proposed reforms and does not miss the historic opportunity to deliver for workers and make the transition towards a country in which the rule of law prevails.

The Ministry of Labour has created an elite group on gender, including women labour inspectors, to promote gender equality. Moreover, Colombian legislation establishes maternity protection for all women without any discrimination.

There are also explicit regulations governing the payment of maternity leave. However, in addition to the labour reform proposals referred to above, and in order to continue with maternity protection, Colombia is making progress towards the ratification of the Convention No. 183.

Lastly, with regard to the integration of women into the labour market over recent decades, the work of caring for dependent young persons and adults, as well as domestic work, continue to be largely the responsibility of women.

In this regard, we would like to announce here with great satisfaction that the law ratifying Convention No. 156 has just been adopted.

Government member, Algeria – The General Survey consists of an in-depth analysis of the difficulties encountered by women in gaining access to decent work, and describes the measures required to ensure them a better future at work, in accordance with the relevant international instruments. It shows that the obstacles that women face exist not only throughout their careers, but also at a much earlier stage. The General Survey questions the apparent disinterest of women, which may explain their particularly low labour market participation in certain countries.

Moreover, inequalities in time allocations in households weigh heavily on the development of professional equality between women and men and are a significant barrier to parity at work. In this respect, the Algerian delegation favours an integrated approach. The ILO is therefore called on to assist Member States in ensuring the coherence of the measures adopted in the framework of family, employment and social protection policies and action to combat all forms of discrimination at work, to enable women to be integrated into professional life and take part in decision-making processes.

Algeria considers that the obstacles lie, first and foremost, in the specific framework of societies as a whole. From this point of view, society, family and school play a major role. Women themselves ultimately accept social constraints, refusing to take responsibility in their lives. To overcome this, the Algerian delegation supports the General Survey's approach of calling for specific objectives, with follow up and evaluation, for working-time arrangements, the development of public childcare services and the adoption of measures and incentives for the sharing of parental work, the improvement of working conditions, and the prevention of and action to combat gender-based violence and harassment. It is also important to achieve a balanced representation of women in decision-making, dialogue and bargaining structures. The significant number of women present in these structures will no doubt contribute to achieving gender equality at work and in cultural, political, economic and social development.

Nevertheless, Algeria considers that issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, as formulated, may come up against certain fundamental principles and values of our societies. In this context, and on this particular issue, my country endorses the positions expressed by the African and Arab groups and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Finally, the Algerian delegation has noted with great interest the conclusions of the General Survey, which should challenge us all to bring national legislation into conformity with international labour standards with a view to correcting the existing imbalance between women and men in terms of their capacity to enjoy equal respect, equal protection and equal promotion of their fundamental rights at work.

Government member, Nigeria – Nigeria welcomes the General Survey of the Committee of Experts and notes that this is the first occasion on which the topics of gender discrimination, maternity protection and the situation of workers with family responsibilities have been considered together in a General Survey.

It is indeed worrying to observe from the General Survey that projections for the closure of gender gaps at work are more than two centuries away.

Nigeria supports the Committee of Experts' call for Member States of the ILO to consider denouncing the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89), and further supports the Committee's call for ratification of the Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171), and the Protocol of 1990 to Convention No. 89.

However, Nigeria cannot align itself with the Committee of Experts' call, in paragraph 97, for Member States of the ILO to address existing legislation regarding certain relationships, such as same-sex relationships, that are not legally, socially or culturally accepted in the country. Nigeria holds the carefully considered view that this does not fall within the spirit and original intent of Convention No. 111, and hereby states that, within the context of the definition of discrimination in the Convention, that is "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation", Nigeria will continue to review its legislation accordingly.

It is Nigeria's carefully considered position that all forms of gender-based discriminatory legislation and family relationships preventing women and men from participating equally in the world of work as a result of societal stereotypes should be reviewed by all ILO Member States.

Maternity discrimination, or the unfair treatment of women due to pregnancy or maternity, is prohibited under several Nigerian laws and policies. However, more work remains to be done. Despite the following legal protections, many women still face discrimination, losing their jobs or suffering adverse treatment due to pregnancy or maternity: (i) the Nigerian Constitution has provisions that prohibit discrimination based on gender, including pregnancy and childbirth; (ii) the Labour Act prohibits the dismissal of female employees during their maternity leave and entitles female employees to take maternity leave without loss of pay; (iii) the National Gender Policy promotes equal opportunities for women and acknowledges that maternity should not be a barrier to career progression; (iv) the Discrimination against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act 2018 prohibits discrimination against women with disabilities, including in relation to pregnancy and childbirth; and (v) although Nigeria has not ratified Convention No. 183, it recognizes the right of female workers to safe and healthy working conditions during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Despite these legal protections, some employers still engage in discriminatory practices against female workers who become pregnant or have children. There is an obvious need for increased awareness, education, and enforcement of these laws and policies to ensure that women are not discriminated against in the workplace due to pregnancy or maternity.

In conclusion, Nigeria further notes the Committee of Experts' observation that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is included within discrimination based on sex by several communications from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) based on the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Nonetheless, Nigeria's position on this is in consensus with its social partners.

Government member, Egypt – The Government welcomes the efforts of the Committee of Experts and the General Survey on gender equality in the workplace. We reaffirm its importance, as well as that of its conclusions, and we welcome its focus on the measures undertaken in countries to put a stop to discrimination and to promote equal pay and integrate technological progress. Egypt has made a great deal of effort in this area. We have a workplan for gender equality and Ministerial Decisions from 2022, which reaffirm the importance of not making women work at night or in certain professions. We also have a National Council for Development Projects which seeks to promote the emancipation of women economically.

We agree with the content of the General Survey, but firmly reject what is said with regard to innovations that are not covered by international law or international humanitarian law. This very much relates to the guidance on gender and we suggest to avoid areas where there are such different views between countries. We would recommend that such language be avoided if there is no global agreement on it. I think this is particularly important in regard to a decision coming from this particular Organization.

Observer, Public Services International (PSI) – PSI, the trade union that gives voice to women public service workers around the world, welcomes the exhaustive analysis in the General Survey of the global and national contexts in terms of positive trends and the effective conditions of gender equality at work. We also commend the thorough description in the General Survey of the efforts made to close gender gaps and its message that all of this is still insufficient. The confirmation by the Committee of Experts is fundamental of the interrelated and interdependent nature of international labour standards, and in order to continue closing gender gaps it is impossible to overlook the indivisible nature of these standards which, in addition to Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183, examined in the General Survey, also include: Convention No. 100 and Convention No. 190; the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), on freedom of association; and the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), which relate specifically to the public sector. We wish to take this opportunity to highlight Convention No. 156 due to our interest in rebuilding the social organization of care, since that Convention addresses the five "Rs" of our care manifesto, that is, recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work, which falls mainly on women, as well as rewarding and representing paid women care workers. The final "R" is also crucial: reclaiming the public nature of care, which is a public good, and highlighting the vital role of the State in funding it and providing comprehensive public care services and systems. We therefore wish to propose two central themes that we hope may be considered in the conclusions of this session. Firstly, the redistribution of family responsibilities between workers must be promoted in tandem with the provision of public services, and joint responsibility for care must be understood as falling under the management and oversight of States. Lastly, we wish to

recall that the General Survey provides an opportunity to promote commitment to increasing the ratification and implementation of Convention No. 156 at the current significant time in the building of national care systems with public workers and decent work.

Observer, Education International (EI) – I am speaking on behalf of the 32 million teachers affiliated to Education International.

The General Survey proposes a set of proactive measures, particularly in and through education, to encourage the presence of women in employment and positions of responsibility. These measures are essential to combat vertical segregation between men and women and create an environment conducive to genuine gender equality in the workplace. Unfortunately, archaic and stereotyped models and social and cultural representations of men's and women's roles and capacities continue to influence educational and professional choices. Barriers to vocational training, and consequently to women's employment, are often based on gender norms and stereotypes related to the social roles attributed to each sex, as well as prejudices and preconceived ideas about competences.

My colleague from Public Services International has just stressed the need for governments to properly fund quality public services, particularly schools and training centres. With regard to positive initiatives, the General Survey refers to several examples of efforts to promote gender equality in education and training. In Australia and Jamaica, for example, information campaigns have been launched to encourage girls' interest in certain fields of study, notably STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and information technology). In Norway, there are initiatives offering less gendered education, by encouraging applications from men for healthcare and girls for technology. In Cabo Verde, teachers have been trained in gender equality, particularly in areas where gender-based violence is widespread. Challenging gender stereotypes in schools and among educational staff is crucial. This helps to transform behaviour, norms and practices. As teachers' unions, we know that parents and educational staff tend to encourage obedience, meticulousness and empathy in girls, while temerity, physical skills and a competitive spirit are valued in boys.

It is essential for vocational guidance and training measures to facilitate the access of women to a wider choice of training courses. Selection criteria and quotas can be adopted, and financial support measures and distance learning services can be put in place to facilitate women's participation. It is also important to develop quality childcare services to support parents and encourage women's participation in education, vocational training and employment. It should be noted that the pandemic, marked by working from home and the closure of many public services, including schools and day-care centres, led to increased levels of stress and malaise, particularly among women. Hence the interest of trade unions in regulating teleworking and periods of disconnection.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a thought for the more than 4 million Afghan girls deprived of secondary and higher education, as well as the more than 20,000 Iranian female pupils who were injured in the gas poisoning phenomenon that began last November at the height of the "Women, Life, Freedom" protests. The poisonings affected 325 schools in 29 of the 31 provinces in the country. Many parents have withdrawn their daughters from school, fearing that they will be targeted by the gas attacks. This withdrawal means that fewer girls are taking their exams at the moment, jeopardizing the continuation of their studies.

Observer, International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) – Occupational segregation along gender lines persists in many industries, including the transport sector. My organization is a dedicated advocate against the myths and stereotypes relating to gender roles and gender bias that dominate patterns of employers' action and inaction, perpetuate

discriminatory national laws and policies, and reinforce an historic and enduring male-dominated transport sector. In 2020, women made up just 1.28 per cent of the overall global seafaring workforce of 1.8 million. Since then, the cruise and ferry industries, which are key sectors for women seafarers, were brought to a halt during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even in public transport, where women represent more than half of passengers, fewer than 15 per cent of public transport workers are women.

The ITF refers to gender-based occupational segregation by what we think is its true name: the systemic exclusion of women workers from decent work. It is not a passive natural circumstance, but the result of decades of state laws and policies actively supporting archaic misinformed stereotypes in relation to gendered capabilities, competencies and potential. They affect women's aspirations and deprive them of opportunities throughout education, training, recruitment, promotion and retention, in contravention of Convention No. 111.

The General Survey notes that structural inequalities that exclude women from decent work apply both horizontally and vertically – that is, both by sector and in the hierarchy of more well-paid, stable and respected roles in an industry, for example in transport, in train driving versus ticket selling. Horizontal segregation is not only about the distribution of roles in one company or industry, but also how they arise, with women often engaged in services on the sidelines of an industry, such as cleaning, catering and ticket inspection. This explains women's over-representation in informal work, with lower job security, lower salaries, fewer social and labour protections, increased risks of automation, and less access to information on workers' rights or opportunities to organize in unions. Occupational segregation is a root cause of gender inequality and a barrier to women's full and equal participation. It is the single largest cause of the gender pay gap, accounting for more than half.

In many industries, women are not welcome, comfortable, provided for or safe. The General Survey reiterates its concern over direct discrimination by States legislating to prohibit women working in particular sectors or at night, by stating that blanket limitations on the basis of sex or gender or based on any stereotypical perceptions about their capabilities and appropriate role in society, are contrary to Convention No. 111. Indeed, these are misguided attempts to protect women from dangerous working conditions, which are hazardous for any worker, regardless of gender. The focus should instead be on measures to offset any scientifically supported gender differences in health risks, and also to avoid indirectly discriminating against women workers. Our experience shows that bringing women into the workplace benefits the occupational health of both men and women workers, through improved conditions and safety records. Where women transport workers have won improved sanitation facilities, for example, men workers also benefit. Sanitation provision, including frequent and prompt access to adequate, clean and safe bathroom facilities, is a human right and a simple dignity, but also an often ignored contributing factor to the systematic exclusion of women.

Discrimination under Convention No. 111 may arise either directly or indirectly. This risks further indirectly discriminating against specific groups of women. Pregnancy directly increases the health risks of a lack of sanitation, with particular impacts extending to post-partum, menstruating and menopausal workers. Women transport workers regularly report losing out on job appraisals on the grounds that, particularly in the case of pregnant workers, they have accumulated too much "lost time" caused by using toilets more frequently or for a longer time. Non-provision of adequate sanitation could amount to maternity discrimination under the Convention as well. Occupational segregation is one of the most insidious aspects of gender inequality in the labour market, since it is accompanied by lower pay and worse working conditions in female dominated occupations. States, employers and even unions, in

terms of the better representation of women in leadership, need to do more to end this terrible phenomenon.

Observer, Confederation of University Workers in the Americas – We would like to begin by highlighting the importance of the General Survey, which provides a comprehensive overview of the Conventions that are examined and their application by Member States.

The perspective that we wish to share with Committee members is based on the cross-cutting nature of the standards examined, which regulate labour rights that have taken on new meaning in the light of the social transformations brought about by successive waves of feminism.

These Conventions give expression to the victories of workers, particularly women workers, which reflect a specific time and context, but which, owing to the dynamic nature of labour relations, which are in a constant state of change and development, require constant updating and review. Standards influence, and are influenced by technological change, but fundamentally they are interrelated with, articulate and feed social and cultural change.

We have learned during this period that the gender perspective needs to be taken into account in standards, their application and interpretation. More recently, we have learned that an intersectional approach is also required to ensure effective protection, taking into account structural inequalities as a starting point.

The gaps are not only economic, but have many other causes that we must address.

We have learned more recently that it was wrong to talk about the care economy, that this perspective was inadequate, and that there is a need to discuss a new social organization of care that breaks away from the patriarchy that continues to burden women.

The General Survey is an important resource that the trade union movement values as a contribution to our intention to insist on the need for this Organization, the home of tripartism, to place a standard-setting discussion on the subject on its agenda.

We have also learned that maternity is not the exclusive result of the life plans of heterosexual couples, and that there are families that are based in diverse relationships and, in many cases, that single people decide to have children with the assistance of medical advances, resulting in new single-parent families. The scope of application of the standards regulating maternity protection has therefore broadened, and we must be able to extend rights to respond to the new cases that are emerging.

We have also learned that standards that regulate human and labour rights, and all standards, must break away from the binary logic of interpreting gender. We must therefore broaden the scope of the Conventions under examination to adapt them to the new circumstances, extending their interpretation so that they cover all persons in need of the warmth of protective rights.

The General Survey encourages us to reconsider what has been written and adopted, to find a new contextual interpretation, and I could say to adopt a feminist perspective when interpreting the standards covered by the General Survey. States, employers, trade unions, judges and academics all have to reinterpret standards.

The Committee of Experts indicates where the path to change lies. It invites us to make progress through the stimulus of institutionalized social dialogue and collective bargaining.

Conventions Nos 98, 151 and 154 are fantastic tools to guarantee and extend rights. The great progress in protection propelled by the ILO since 1919 has materialized through

collective agreements that have extended coverage at the national level through legal provisions and public policies.

While Convention No. 111 was of great importance in its day, it needs to be updated in the light of new discriminatory phenomena, the effects of which are aggravated by current labour practices and new communication media and algorithms. We must be capable of building a new conceptual definition that more fully encompasses discriminatory practices in the world of work.

We want greater protection for maternity and families, of all types. We want to address soon the debate on the new social organization of care. We want to link the General Survey and this discussion to the problems created by wage inequality and the glass ceiling. We want these issues to be prioritized, not only for women in these discussion forums. Ultimately, we want the ILO to be open to the wonderful message of equality of the feminist movement.

Government member, Sweden – Again, I am speaking on behalf of the **European Union and its Member States**.

First, we wish to thank all the constituents who have shared their views on the General Survey of the Committee of Experts. We are compelled to react to some remarks that have been made, and notably, that concepts that are not universally agreed should not be included in ILO documents. We would like to remind the constituents that the report of the Committee of Experts is independent and impartial, based on inputs from Member States' governments and social partners. It is factual and looks, among others, at how countries apply Article 1(1) of Convention of No. 111. We would like to underline, and decisively support the independent mandate and autonomy of the Committee of Experts to monitor and analyse the application in law and practice of any ILO Convention.

Employer members – Before I get to my closing remarks, I would like to just conclude on my earlier remarks and I will start with Chapter 4 of the General Survey, but within the time that you have allocated. In the framework of national policies to promote gender equality and the implementation of Conventions Nos 111 and 156, the Employer members would agree with the Committee of Experts' statement in paragraph 289 that educational measures, awareness-raising and public information are of key importance. The Employer members would highlight that one important element can be awareness-raising and sensitization initiatives aimed at reducing existing inhibition thresholds and the absence of women and girls with regard to technical professions. Such initiatives are not only helping advance gender equality as a societal goal, but can also address the skills shortage in technical professions by unlocking the potential of qualified women. The Employer members would also stress the importance of the role of employers' and workers' organizations in the implementation of Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183. In particular, employers' organizations could advise on innovative implementation options that are compatible with the needs of enterprises and which can also help prevent or reduce discrimination. The Employer members also believe that equal representation of women in decision-making positions in employers' and workers' organizations, as well as in tripartite social dialogue institutions, can serve as a model for promoting gender equality. They would also like to highlight that the ILO and the IOE recently conducted a survey on this topic among 95 Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) worldwide. This survey will form the basis for a new report that will assess the representation of women in governance, leadership and management positions in EBMOs. It will also present the services provided by EBMOs to their members and contribute to improving gender equality and diversity and discuss success stories, as well as challenges, and how they can be overcome. This report will be published later this year.

In my concluding remarks, I shall first address Part III of the General Survey and then talk through the conclusions. In Part III, the Committee of Experts deals with the ratification prospects for Conventions Nos 111, 156 and 183, as well as proposals for related technical assistance and standards-related action. As for the possible further ratifications of these three Conventions, the prospects appear rather slim. Although Convention No. 111, a fundamental Convention, has already been ratified by all but 12 ILO Member States, there have been no concrete announcements or forthcoming ratifications, especially not from big countries such as Japan and the United States. With regard to Convention No. 156, apart from three countries that confirmed that they are considering ratifying the Convention, there are no concrete ratification prospects for this instrument. In terms of ratification obstacles, some countries referred to the broad scope of application of the Convention, which has to be applied to all categories of workers and does not allow for exemptions, as well as Article 8, which stipulates that family responsibilities as such shall not constitute a valid reason for termination of employment. With regard to Article 8, the Committee of Experts refers to its earlier explanations of this provision, but given that these explanations seem to encourage a further extension of protection against dismissal, this may be a reason for the reluctance of countries to ratify Convention No. 156. It should be noted that Convention No. 156 has not received any ratification in the past eight years. The instrument was adopted more than 40 years ago and may no longer be fully reflective of the needs of today. Finally, as regards the ratification prospects for Convention No. 183, the picture is not substantially different. Apart from one country that indicates it is in the process of ratifying the Convention, there are no further concrete announcements of ratification. Ratification obstacles here seem to be related to the length of maternity leave and the right to paid nursing breaks. The absence of information by most countries may also reflect a general lack of interest in ratification, related to hesitation to undergo the procedures and administrative burdens linked to ratification, such as pre-ratification assessments and changes in law and practice, reporting under article 22 of the ILO Constitution, as well as interaction with ILO bodies. The Employer members would invite the Office to get further information from countries and explore the reasons for non-ratification. In this context, the Employer members also call upon the Office to stress to governments the need for proper pre-ratification assessments, as well as comprehensive consultation concerning the envisaged ratification and implementation of Conventions with free, representative and independent employers' and workers' organizations.

In conclusion, the Employer members wish to suggest that overall significant progress has been made in many countries over past decades in the implementation of the six instruments examined in this General Survey. Further progress is nevertheless needed and possible when the right policies and measures are applied. These policies and measures should build, above all, on the common interests of women, mothers and workers with family responsibilities, on the one hand, and employers, on the other, in keeping their employment running as smoothly as possible and avoiding unnecessarily long interruptions to work. Governments have an important role to play in supporting this by providing both an affordable and efficient infrastructure for child and family care and by avoiding undue and unnecessary burdens for individual employers, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises. Employers' organizations will continue to advise their members on what they can do in their own interests, beyond legal requirements, to facilitate the employment of women, mothers and workers with family responsibilities. While flanking measures in other areas of society are also needed, the world of work can in this way play a pioneering role in promoting gender equality.

Worker members – Despite the many initiatives that we have discussed, obstacles to the participation of women in the world of work still have solid roots. This requires us to seek ways

of further reinforcing these initiatives so that we can achieve gender equality in our societies. The legislative framework respecting non-discrimination requires the adoption of a whole range of specific and precise measures in order to guarantee the effective right to equality and non-discrimination. Robust measures are required to remedy the underlying causes of discrimination and inequality. As we have been able to see, there are many reasons for gender discrimination which have their roots in development that has resulted in an approach that includes gender discrimination.

The discussion has shown that there are divergent visions of certain of the concepts addressed in the General Survey. May I recall the need to address issues of discrimination in the most inclusive manner, so that no one is left out. The Worker members are fundamentally convinced that no worker should suffer discrimination for any reason.

As emphasized by the Committee of Experts, policies on matters other than employment and occupation have also proven to be useful in the implementation of the Convention, and particularly in relation to gender equality, such as economic development policies, policies for the independence of women and policies against violence and harassment. With reference to this latter issue, we were able to recall during the discussion the intrinsic link that exists between action to combat discrimination and action to combat violence and harassment at work. The efforts made to promote the ratification of Convention No. 190 and the implementation of Recommendation No. 206 need to be reinforced. Efforts also need to be renewed to ensure the universal ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 111 and to promote the broad ratification and application of Conventions Nos 156 and 183. Maternity protection is an essential prerequisite for gender equality. The protection of workers with family responsibilities is also essential for the promotion of gender equality.

The work of the ILO has shown that the imbalance between women and men in terms of unpaid care work is the main reason why women are staying out of the labour market and the principal obstacle to their progress in the world of work. This imbalance leads to decent work and social protection deficits throughout their lives. It is essential for Member States, in dialogue with the social partners, to take measures for the removal of these deficits, to which mothers are even more exposed. Conventions Nos 156 and 183 are there essential in affording them protection. However, we have to admit that the ratification rates of these Conventions are too low. In contrast with what we have heard, the low ratification rate cannot be seen in any way as an indication of the inadequacy of these Conventions. On the contrary, it is a sign of the need for further initiatives to guide Member States to promote their ratification and implementation. We call on the ILO to reinforce these initiatives and the technical assistance provided to Member States. Specific measures are necessary to bring national legislation into full conformity with Conventions Nos 156 and 183 and their Recommendations, and to ensure that Member States fulfil their international obligations in relation to human rights.

The Committee of Experts has also emphasized that the instruments on workers with family responsibilities do not provide detailed guidance to help Member States formulate leave policies, including in relation to the duration of leave, its distribution between those providing care and the benefits available during their periods of absence. It could be useful for the Office to envisage developing more detailed guidance on this subject.

The protection of maternal health, the safety of the working environment and access to specific working arrangements for nursing mothers promote the health, nutrition and general wellbeing of mothers and children and contribute directly to a decrease in infant and maternal mortality and morbidity. The right to maternity leave, to a replacement income and to security through social protection, and financial protection in access to medical care, are not only an

integral part of decent work, but also play an essential role in preventing and reducing poverty and vulnerability, and in promoting economic growth.

The preparatory work also clearly shows that the instruments cover all workers, whether they work full or part time, are in temporary or permanent work, and irrespective of their employment status. It is fundamental to recall this very broad scope of application of the Conventions in view of the erosion of the traditional employment relationship and the proliferation of precarious forms of employment, often principally affecting women. These precarious forms of work often lead to many deficits in social protection and labour law, which could be corrected through the Conventions under examination.

It is essential to ensure that action to guarantee equality of opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation produces uncontested results. With a view to evaluating these results, it is vital for Member States to undertake the constant evaluation of the policies implemented to combat discrimination. That presupposes the development of statistical tools with a view to collecting data so that, where necessary, the policies that are followed can be adapted on the basis of objective data. In this respect, the technical assistance of the Office can be very useful and we invite Member States to avail themselves of it.

We have also been able to discuss the importance of awareness-raising and education in promoting genuine equality. It is essential to address the attitudes and beliefs of workers, employers, societies and the public in general. It is only through the implementation of such initiatives that the necessary deep-rooted transformations can be achieved. It is important to recall that the promotion and achievement of a world free from discrimination cannot be made subject to economic imperatives. If, as indicated by the Committee of Experts, mechanisms to combat gender discrimination, for which the financing is borne exclusively by employers, can give rise to discrimination in practice, it cannot be inferred that employers should not contribute to their financing. While it may be understood that the financing of such measures should not rest exclusively on employers, it is however fundamental for enterprises, and the organizations representing them, to commit to seeking lasting and sustainable financing for such measures and to making their full contribution to them.

Moreover, it is only by developing practices that are fully in conformity with the fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards, including gender equality, equality of opportunity and treatment of vulnerable groups, that enterprises can be classified as sustainable enterprises. Enterprises therefore have a crucial role to play in the achievement of gender equality at work.

I would like to add that the attacks made on the Committee of Experts do not appear to us to be justified. The Committee of Experts confined itself, in complete independence and in conformity with its mandate, to reflecting the manner in which Member States cover these grounds of discrimination in their law and practice. I would also like to recall that the scope of the General Survey was the result of a tripartite process in the Governing Body. Finally, it is useful to note that the General Survey is based on the observations provided by the social partners. The more they provide, the more their observations are reflected in the General Survey.

Gender discrimination has been and will always be the focus of many initiatives. However, we still have to strengthen these initiatives to obtain tangible results. We have been forced to note that there has been very little progress for many years and that the COVID-19 crisis has even resulted in a backwards step in action to combat gender discrimination. Combating discrimination is a matter for all of us. That is why all the tripartite constituents must be

convinced of the imperious necessity of resolutely committing to achieving genuine gender equality as soon as possible.

Chairperson – This brings us to the conclusion of our discussion on the General Survey. It has been a very rich discussion, with very comprehensive treatment of the various aspects of equality, non-discrimination and so on and so forth.