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Contents

	Page
Outcome of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection: Presentation and discussion	3
Resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection	19

Friday, 16 June 2023, 11.10 a.m.

President: Mr bin Samikh Al Marri

Outcome of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection: Presentation and discussion

The President

We will now proceed with the presentation and discussion of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection. The text of the proposed resolution, which contains the Committee's conclusions, is contained in [Record of Proceedings No. 6A\(Rev.\)](#). The report on the Committee's proceedings is contained in [Record of Proceedings No. 6B](#).

I am pleased to welcome the Officers of the Committee and its Reporter, namely: Mr Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium), President; Mr Ricci Muadi (Guatemala), Employer Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Norddahl (Iceland), Worker Vice-Chairperson; as well as Ms Ditengou (Gabon), Reporter.

I now give the floor to Ms Ditengou, so that she may present to us the outcome of the Committee's work. The Officers of the Committee will then take the floor.

Ms Ditengou

Reporter of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection (Original French)

It is an honour for me to present to the Conference, for adoption, the outcome of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection, and more specifically the proposed resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection. As the conclusions emphasize, this recurrent discussion took place in a context of transformative changes in the world of work, which bring new opportunities as well as challenges, at a time when the world is experiencing multiple geopolitical, health, climate and economic crises, all of which have a significant impact on labour protection. Our Committee has reviewed the progress made and the challenges facing the various elements covered by the vast scope of labour protection, namely working time, wages, occupational safety and health, including the right to be free from violence and harassment, maternity protection, employment protection, as well as the protection of workers' personal data, which is gaining prominence with the digitalization of the economy.

Our conclusions highlight that labour protection is at the heart of the mandate of the ILO and that all workers should enjoy inclusive, adequate and effective protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda. They also highlight the crucial role of sustainable enterprises in labour protection. These conclusions also set out a framework for action, define the way forward for inclusive, adequate and effective protection for all workers and call for the mobilization of ILO means of action to this end. The conclusions submitted for adoption are the result of the firm commitment of the tripartite members of our Committee to social justice and decent work, their ability to listen to the concerns of other members and their intense efforts to reach compromise solutions.

In order to achieve this outcome, the Committee held 12 sittings. The first two days were devoted to a general discussion on the three discussion points chosen by the Committee. The drafting group then spent two long days examining tentative conclusions and prepared a set of draft conclusions to be examined by the entire Committee. Only a few points could not be

agreed within the working group, and the corresponding text, or alternative versions thereof, were placed in square brackets. Three days, including night sittings, were then dedicated to examining the 136 proposed amendments to the draft conclusions that had been submitted by the members of the Committee.

We would not have been able to bring our work to a successful conclusion without the diplomatic skills of our Chairperson, Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve of Belgium, and the determination of the Employer Vice-Chairperson, Mr Guido Ricci Muadi of Guatemala, and the Worker Vice-Chairperson, Mr Magnús Norddahl of Iceland, to find compromise solutions, including on issues that were particularly sensitive for them, or without the commitment of the Government members of the Committee to tripartite social dialogue.

Generally speaking, the unwavering determination of all participants to agree on a consensus text played a crucial role in achieving this outcome, which I welcome. I thank all members of the Committee, and in particular the members of the drafting group, who worked tirelessly, sometimes until very late, to reach strong and balanced conclusions.

I also thank the Office for its invaluable support and, in particular, the interpreters, who are vital for allowing us to exchange views while overcoming language barriers. I am convinced that the conclusions adopted by the Committee at the end of its work will be a valuable guide to our Organization, its tripartite constituents and the Office in the years to come, because they were drawn up on the basis of tripartite consensus, and that they will provide a solid basis for the Governing Body to develop an action plan aimed at achieving more inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection.

Lastly, the draft report on the work of our Committee, the final version of which will be published on 23 June, faithfully reflects the discussions that gradually led to consensus-based conclusions. It also provides an overview of the initiatives taken by the Member States in order to move towards inclusive, fair and effective labour protection.

I now have the honour to submit to the International Labour Conference, for adoption, the proposed resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection.

Mr Ricci Muadi

Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection (Original Spanish)

The second recurrent discussion on labour protection provided the opportunity to identify the extent to which the action of the ILO has been effective and successful, based on the experience of both the Office and the constituents, with a view to developing future action. This discussion was particularly timely. Since the first discussion in 2015, the world of work has undergone significant transformations. These changes have brought opportunities and challenges and have had a profound impact on labour protection. The Employers are pleased to see that the conclusions highlight the undeniable progress made from 2015 to date in terms of the fundamental dimensions of labour protection, in particular with respect to wage policies, working time, maternity protection and occupational safety and health. The tripartite recognition of occupational safety and health as a fifth fundamental principle and right at work is a firm commitment and sends a signal in this house highlighting the importance of protecting workers from work-related diseases, illnesses and injuries. The conclusions also recognize the major steps taken by the social partners to contribute to these achievements.

These advances have proved fundamental to maintaining effective labour protection, especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

Following two weeks of intense debate, we have achieved a balanced outcome which recognizes that, first of all, labour protection is key in order to guarantee respect for human dignity and improve productivity and sustainable economic development through the creation of an environment in which enterprises can thrive. The conclusions rightly reaffirm the key role played by sustainable enterprises, without which no labour protection can be effective or sustainable, and the critical connection between the two. As generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work, sustainable enterprises contribute to labour protection, increased productivity and the smooth functioning of a productive economy. Our group welcomes this key acknowledgement in the conclusions.

Second, governments must guarantee that labour protection regulations do not increase employment costs and that they are proportional to the results they aim to achieve. The conclusions indicate the need to facilitate job transitions and promote diversity of work arrangements, instead of limiting them. Our group welcomes the acknowledgement in the conclusions that for sustainable enterprises to thrive, it is necessary to enable macroeconomic policies and regulatory frameworks that take account of the needs and circumstances of enterprises, particularly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and adopt policies that help reskilling and upskilling.

Third, labour protection encompasses various interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions. The final document we have before us rightly highlights that, in order to achieve labour protection for everyone, an integrated policy focus and a coherent framework are required, which calls for a balance between the legitimate needs of both workers and employers.

Fourth, the conclusions also reassert the centrality of the employment relationship as the main gateway to labour and social protection. This does not mean that protection of the traditional employment relationship should be duplicated or transposed as such onto any specific form of employment or organization of work. Labour protection measures must be adequate and flexible, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach with regard to the level of protection. In this respect, we are particularly satisfied that the conclusions call on the Office to foster knowledge development and capacity-building activities on the impact of labour protection measures on employment so that constituents can better understand what combinations of wage, social protection and fiscal policies can be most beneficial and enabling to ensure adequate protection in different labour markets and socio-economic circumstances.

Fifth, in order to achieve adequate labour protection based on social dialogue, coherent policy proposals need to be developed that promote an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, which is essential in order to generate formal and productive jobs, which is the main entry point for guaranteeing labour protection at work. Our group is glad to see that all groups share similar points of view.

Sixth, the conclusions underscore the importance of tackling the root causes of exclusion from labour protection, in particular informality and poor governance. These remain significant obstacles to achieving inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection. For workers, informality means a lack of social and labour protection, rights at work and decent working conditions. For enterprises, particularly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, it means low productivity and a lack of access to finance. Drawing on its mandate, its tripartite structure and its experience, the Office has a major responsibility and the opportunity to tackle

problems linked to the informal economy through a global focus that includes labour protection.

Seventh, the final outcome recognizes that we must take advantage of the opportunities provided by digitalization, acknowledging the key positive role of technology, which has facilitated greater flexibility in the organization of work and work-life balance. It preserved jobs and labour protection in many countries during the pandemic. However, we are concerned about the proliferation of requests for meetings of experts or technical meetings, particularly with regard to working time and artificial intelligence and algorithmic management. The Conference should consider carefully how to allocate the limited resources available efficiently without duplication and consult constituents regarding the preparations for these meetings.

Lastly, the conclusions also highlighted the focus of the ILO on the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), with the agreed tripartite concept of adequate minimum wages. Our group welcomes the recognition in the conclusions that the effective implementation of minimum wages remains a key challenge in many countries. With regard to the issue of the living wage, we await with interest the research being carried out by the Office on the different concepts and estimations used in countries. We would like to ensure that the Office adopts a phased approach and consults the constituents during each phase. When the Governing Body considers the tripartite follow-up discussion, we also hope that its main focus will be on wage policies. In order to achieve real labour protection that supports both the rights of workers and the needs of employers to achieve full and productive employment, particular attention must be paid to social dialogue through free, independent, strong and representative employers' and workers' organizations, as acknowledged in the conclusions. We also welcome the fact that our Committee remained focused and committed to the advancement of labour protection, which can lead to decent work, without getting into a general policy debate that would not serve the objective of the recurrent discussions in this Committee.

As a final remark, I would like to highlight that all the policies, trends and priorities linked to labour protection that we have just mentioned are covered by the existing regulatory framework of the ILO. It is crucial for ILO constituents to ensure that they receive adequate technical assistance to fully implement and apply ILO standards in order to respond to dynamic needs and the transformation of the world of work, improve future adaptability and preparation for shocks, and promote economic growth and social justice. It is essential to keep the ILO focused on the key dimensions of labour protection through specific measures.

Mr Norddahl

Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection

I would like first to extend my thanks to the Chairperson of this year's Recurrent Discussion Committee, Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, to my Employer counterpart and Vice-Chairperson, Mr Guido Ricci Muadi, and to all the Governments who share the collective ambition and goodwill with all the members of the Committee in order to find a common ground and a common way forward. Together, we have managed to agree on conclusions that set out a framework for action, both at the country level and for the ILO, on labour protection policies and frameworks for the coming years. I would like to extend my thanks to my fellow members of the Workers' group, as well as the Workers' group secretariat, the Bureau for Workers' Activities and the team from the International Trade Union Confederation. This was really a truly collective effort of our own.

In the beginning of the Committee's work, I spoke of the necessity for governments and the ILO to better ensure adequate, inclusive and effective labour protection for all workers, without discrimination, and including through tackling insecure forms of work. The Workers' group knows well that such forms of work have proliferated in recent years, exacerbating inequalities, poverty and vulnerability.

On working time, we are happy to see that this message is well reflected in the adopted conclusions. First of all, we are pleased that they reaffirm that inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection needs to be grounded in the fundamental principles and rights at work and that social dialogue, including collective bargaining, should be placed at the centre of the design and implementation of such inclusive labour protection measures. Member States are called on to extend access to labour protection and social security to all workers, especially those most at risk of inadequate or no protection, including workers in specific occupations, sectors and work arrangements and workers in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

The conclusions reaffirm the role of the international labour standards on wages, working time, maternity protection, employment protection, labour inspection and occupational safety and health in providing a clear guiding framework for the development of such inclusive labour protection for all workers, and they call on the ILO to promote the ratification and effective implementation of all these standards. The conclusions also emphasize the need to address the transition from insecure to secure forms of work, as a condition for the design and implementation of inclusive labour protection strategies for all workers.

On working time, the conclusions call on Member States to design and implement policies and strategies to limit working hours and overtime, preserve work-life balance and protect workers' disconnection. This is an important action to take, taking into account the fact that workers across the globe remain increasingly subject to exploitative, irregular and unpredictable working-time arrangements, while whole categories of workers are excluded from working-time regulations.

The impacts of new forms of work organization were also addressed, and we secured agreement that the ILO will support Member States in enhancing their capacity to respond to psychosocial risks and work-related stress that may result from such forms, including in workplaces with high use of information and communication technologies.

On wages, the conclusions recognize that the lack of adequacy and effective implementation of minimum wages remain a challenge in many countries, and that workers' share of the gains from economic activity has kept declining, as wage growth has lagged behind productivity developments, contributing to growing working poverty and income inequality. We are happy to see that the conclusions call on Member States to ensure adequate minimum wages, statutory or negotiated, that are regularly updated. They also call on the Organization to provide support to Members in working towards wage adequacy and the improvement of wage-setting systems.

The issue of improving conditions in supply chains was also specifically addressed. The conclusions affirm that the Organization should intensify knowledge development and capacity-building activities in relation to ways to strengthen labour protection and the respect, promotion and realization of fundamental principles and rights at work in supply chains, in the framework of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, and to help enforce labour provisions in trade and investment agreements and in public procurement.

The conclusions also call on Member States to protect migrant workers' rights at the national level and engage in bilateral and regional cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination to guarantee migrant workers' rights, wage protection, occupational safety and health protection, social security and cross-border portability of benefits, access to labour protection information, access to justice and access to effective remedies and dispute settlements, and also to address discrimination and to implement fair recruitment policies and practices.

The conclusions also recognize that informality remains a major obstacle to achieving labour protection for all workers, with 2 billion workers worldwide making their living in the informal economy with no protection at all. The conclusions call on Member States to accelerate efforts to support the transition to formality in accordance with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204).

We are mindful that all of these conclusions will have an impact on the direction of the ILO's future work. The guidance reflected here should serve as an important reference for future ILO decisions. And, of course, these conclusions need to be translated into a plan of action and reflected in the Office's programme and budget to ensure that adequate human and financial resources are allocated to them.

In this respect, we want to take a moment to speak specifically about some key actions that were decided in terms of the Office's work which the Workers' group particularly welcomes, and where we have high expectations.

First, we reaffirmed the agreement that the Office will work on living wages. One hundred years ago, the ILO Constitution outlined the importance of a living wage. And the Declaration of Philadelphia outlined the solemn obligation of the ILO to advance minimum living wages to all employed and in need of such protection. We need more initiatives developed in this area if we are to live up to the ambition of our predecessors.

We reaffirmed that the Office will undertake research and provide support to Member States on definitions and estimations of a living wage, in order to contribute to a better understanding of what living wages actually mean at the international level. We also agreed that the Governing Body will be requested to consider a tripartite follow-up discussion on wage policies, including living wages.

Furthermore, we agreed that the Organization should undertake research on how public procurement rules can foster adherence to labour rights and support increased labour protection, taking into account the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94).

The ILO should also elaborate a strategy giving effect to the transformative agenda for gender equality.

Moreover, the Office should assess the impact and awareness of the challenges and opportunities of digitalization, including artificial intelligence and algorithmic management, for labour protection, including emerging occupational safety and health risks. The Organization should also invite the Governing Body to examine the issue of artificial intelligence and algorithmic management and evaluate the need for further discussion on this topic. We want to have a human in control.

Finally, I would also like to say a word about the role of the ILO in the multilateral system. The ILO clearly has a leadership role to play on labour protection, given its tripartite structure, its role in setting and overseeing the implementation of international labour standards, and

the fact that it is constitutionally mandated to promote labour protection and raise living standards. We are happy to see in the conclusions a reaffirmation of this leadership role, and call on the Organization to continue reinforcing international cooperation, policy coherence and partnerships on labour protection, including with the World Trade Organization and international financial institutions, by leading the Global Coalition for Social Justice and in the context of efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

These conclusions have one purpose, and only one purpose. And that is to work towards social peace and peace among nations. It is our solemn duty to do all that we can to make progress so that in a secure world, no worker has to live in poverty, all workers enjoy adequate labour protection and social security, and all workers are able to live a dignified life as human beings.

Mr Pecsteen de Buytswerve

Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection (Original French)

My colleagues have already presented the work of our Committee. For my part, I would simply like to draw your attention to a few important points.

The transformative changes in the world of work and the multiple crises we are experiencing have engendered new challenges and opportunities for guaranteeing the protection of all workers. This second recurrent discussion on worker protection was therefore most timely. We have discussed progress and challenges in the different aspects of worker protection since 2015 and how these have been influenced by changing circumstances, including technological change and new working arrangements. We have had constructive discussions on some of the urgent issues that must be addressed in order to ensure adequate, inclusive and effective labour protection, including the proper classification of workers, working time, new and traditional occupational safety and health challenges, including psychosocial risks, work-life balance and protection for workers' disconnection and, lastly, adequate wages.

During the discussion, it emerged clearly that the Organization and its Members must continue to promote transition from the informal to the formal economy and to combat discrimination against workers and groups of workers in vulnerable situations or in specific occupations, sectors and working arrangements.

I would like to emphasize the important results achieved by the Committee thanks to collective effort, in a spirit of dialogue and compromise. The conclusions that we adopted reflect these productive discussions and constitute an important and substantial step forward in the work of the ILO and its tripartite constituents. We reaffirmed the close links between the various elements of labour protection and between labour protection and the other strategic objectives of the ILO and the Decent Work Agenda. In so doing, we signalled clearly that labour protection is essential to contributing to social justice and reducing inequalities. We identified specific priorities for action which include the continued promotion, ratification and effective implementation of all of the core labour Conventions, as well as the relevant international labour standards, and the need to foster tripartite and bipartite social dialogue, including collective bargaining, as a key mechanism to promote labour protection.

We also called on the ILO to intensify knowledge and capacity-building in relation to impact assessment and awareness-raising on the challenges and opportunities of digitalization, including algorithmic management, for labour protection, the concepts and estimations of living wages and the impact of labour protection measures on employment. The

need to elaborate a strategy giving effect to the transformative agenda for gender equality is one of the priorities for action, as is the need to enhance the capacity to respond to any psychosocial risks and work-related stress that may result from new forms of work organization.

These are but a few of the conclusions proposed; I urge you to read them and disseminate them widely. They are important issues for every country.

Lastly, I would particularly like to congratulate the Office on the meticulous preparation of our work. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to chair this important Committee, particularly in these difficult times. I wholeheartedly recommend the adoption of the resolution and conclusions put before you today. Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the Committee and the secretariat for their invaluable support.

The President

I now declare open the discussion on the outcome of the work of the Committee.

Mr Tulfo

Government (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group

The Philippines is honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG). Allow us to commend Belgium for the remarkable chairing of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection. Your skills enabled us to reach consensus on issues where we seemed unable to meet halfway. We also thank the social partners for their valuable contributions in crafting the document being presented to us today for our approval. Likewise, we express appreciation for the efforts of other Governments and groups to articulate our challenges and opportunities in promoting labour protection. We thank the Office for their excellent secretariat support.

During the ASPAG ministerial meeting held this week on the sidelines of this Conference, we acknowledged that promoting social justice has become even more urgent in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic, along with the global recession occasioned by political crises in some parts of the world, aggravated the existing challenges in regional and national labour market situations caused by climate change and persistent natural disasters, digitalization and demographic shifts, among others. In the Singapore Statement, adopted in December 2022 during the Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting, ASPAG resoundingly declared that ensuring labour protection for all was a priority to advance decent work.

The Asia and the Pacific region is home to over 4.6 billion people, or more or less 60 per cent of the world's population. More than 60 per cent of the global labour force comes from ASPAG. Even if we produce more than half of global wealth, we have the highest levels of wealth inequality in the world, high levels of income inequality and inequality of opportunities. Many of our countries are among the world's least developed. Clearly, we suffer from decent work deficits. Clearly, social justice is an aspiration we embrace.

ASPAG believes that the core of decent work is inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection.

Inclusive labour protection takes into consideration the diversity of the world of work, the various forms of contractual arrangements and the challenges and opportunities relating to the digital transformation of work, such as teleworking or platform work, and other forms of informal work. Thus, we support the appropriate classification of workers and the need to address the persistent, inadequate or lack of protection from discrimination faced by people

in specific occupation sectors and work arrangements. Addressing gender inequalities is a function of labour protection. We are happy to note that in this Conference we agreed that social dialogue can reverse these inequalities.

Our region also deploys 40 per cent of the world's migrant workers. The protection of these workers, especially those in vulnerable situations such as domestic workers, is crucial to us. We are of the view that bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation between and among countries of origin, transit and destination can guarantee migrant workers' rights, wage protections, occupational safety and health, social protection, access to relevant labour protection information, access to justice, access to effective remedies and dispute settlement.

Adequacy of labour protection is the enjoyment of protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda, guided by the fundamental principles and rights at work laid out in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022 and international labour standards, taking into account different national conditions and circumstances. We reaffirm our declaration in the Singapore Statement that labour protection requires the promotion of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining throughout the regions, including for workers in vulnerable situations and workers in the informal economy as enabling rights for decent work.

We note with regret that the increasing cost of living, including food and energy prices, is eroding real incomes and threatening the sustainability of enterprises. There are still concerns involving the increasing number of climate change induced hazards that destroy lives, jobs and livelihoods. In this light, we require a better understanding of the living wage, including its impact on gender pay gaps. We note the role of social insurance, including for housing, pension and credit facilities, to rebuild homes and livelihoods in the wake of climate change induced and natural disasters. We support the cooperation between and among countries and with the ILO in the sharing of best practices to explore the benefits of decent living wages and social insurance.

Also, we support the development of policies and regulations to help promote occupational safety and health strategies for zero work-related deaths and severe work-related injuries or illnesses, including access to relevant social security benefits and effective occupational safety and health management systems.

Effective labour protection requires serious enforcement and compliance with labour protection laws, regulations and collective agreements. For effective implementation, regulations need to take into account the diversity of the world of work, including the particular challenges that small and medium-sized enterprises may face, and should address concerns of workers in the informal economy, where compliance is weak. We note that informality is generally a dominant characteristic, especially of the developing countries in our region. But, as always, we are challenged to explore ways to extend sustainable labour protection.

At the heart of effective labour protection is the promotion of the application of the *Guidelines on general principles of labour inspection*, 2022. We acknowledge the need for the constant strengthening and updating of labour inspection measures to address emerging/existing labour issues, and for conducting effective monitoring and inspection in the informal economy. ASPAG believes that the ILO's mandate to promote social justice to decent work does not take a rest; it has only become more demanding. It is for this reason that the approval of the ILO Programme and Budget for 2024–25 came as a huge relief. We cannot effectively promote decent work without an ILO budget.

ASPAG once more expresses its support for the formation of the Global Coalition for Social Justice through decent work, as envisioned by Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo, because it holds promise for our region. As we have often said, as a region we contribute much to global wealth; we deserve a fair share of it.

With this statement, we support the resolution and conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection.

Ms Rodríguez

Government (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries
(Original Spanish)

The group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) commends the work done in the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection and welcomes the agreement reached on a consensual resolution in the second recurrent discussion. This significant milestone reflects our collective dedication to addressing urgent challenges to labour protection and promoting the rights of workers worldwide. The spirit of collaboration and mutual understanding that characterized our discussions attests to our commitment to decent work and social justice.

GRULAC is grateful to the representatives of the Workers, Employers and Governments for their constructive engagement, open dialogue and tireless efforts to achieve this consensus. In so doing, we have reasserted the importance and strength of multilateralism and the potential of cooperation to drive positive change in the world of work.

This consensus resolution lays the foundation for transformative action to improve labour protection mechanisms and reaffirms our commitment to the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the International Labour Organization and to the rights of all workers. This is proof of our collective determination to create a future in which labour protection is inclusive, appropriate and effective.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean will carry this initiative forward and replicate it in our region. This resolution should serve as a guide in our efforts to promote and safeguard the rights of all workers, thus recognizing the importance of sustainable enterprise development in our quest to achieve social justice and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Once again, we salute and acknowledge the commitment and dedication of all the representatives in reaching these important conclusions.

Mr Mangongo

Government (Gabon), speaking on behalf of the Africa group
(Original French)

Gabon takes the floor on behalf of the Africa group and would like to thank the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, as well as all the Officers of the Committee, for the work accomplished. For the Africa group, labour protection is as fundamental today as it was when the International Labour Organization was first established. Indeed, there can be no social justice or decent work without labour protection.

This is why the Africa group welcomes the conclusions reached by the tripartite constituents of the Committee in the context of this second recurrent discussion. These

conclusions will orient the future actions of the Office with a view to inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection for all workers.

The Africa group strongly encourages the ILO to support Member States with the introduction of national health and social security policies. In this regard, the Africa group invites the Director-General to prepare a plan of action giving effect to the conclusions of the Committee for consideration by the Governing Body at its forthcoming sessions. It also calls for these conclusions to be taken into account when allocating resources within the existing programme and budget, preparing future programme and budget proposals, and mobilizing extrabudgetary resources.

In the light of the above, the Africa group supports the adoption of the resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection.

Ms Del Sante

Government (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Iceland, Norway and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

We warmly thank the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection, as well as the Office, for their tireless work over the last two weeks. We would also like to thank the interpreters and translators for the excellent effort in facilitating our work.

We wish to convey our appreciation to the social partners, and our fellow Governments, for their constructive and engaged participation in this global dialogue, working towards achieving consensus on these conclusions.

Since the last recurrent discussion on labour protection in 2015, the transformation in the world of work has gained momentum, with new forms of employment giving rise to new opportunities on the labour market but also presenting new challenges, including for secure and inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection for all workers.

We believe that the conclusions and resolution adopted by the Recurrent Discussion Committee represent an important step in advancing the work of the ILO and its tripartite constituents, taking into account the transformative changes in the world of work.

It is important that any policies on labour protection are framed in the context of the promotion and full and effective implementation of fundamental principles and rights at work and in light of the relevant international labour standards.

We welcome the fact that the importance of equal sharing of care and family responsibilities and equal pay for work of equal value has been reaffirmed, as well as that the importance of occupational safety and health protection for pregnant and nursing women has been acknowledged. We highly appreciate that a transformative agenda for gender equality in the context of labour protection has been recognized, as well as the adaptation of policies, among others those that help reskilling and upskilling, which facilitate job transitions benefiting from inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection.

In the context of the transformative changes impacting the world of work, it is of utmost importance to tackle mental and psychosocial risks, along with other occupational safety and health concerns.

Furthermore, we are looking forward to the ILO's work on building knowledge and capacity on the impact of digitalization, artificial intelligence and algorithmic management on labour protection, which we believe will contribute to the constituents' better understanding of these developments.

We hope that the adoption of these conclusions in the plenary serves to underscore the fundamental importance of developing and constantly adapting inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection systems and to allow for the achievement of decent work conditions, a safe and healthy working environment, and dignity for all workers.

We look forward to continuing our joint work in following up the conclusions.

Mr Chowdhury
Government (Bangladesh)

Bangladesh thanks the Drafting Committee for the consensus-based proposed conclusions on labour protection. It highly appreciates the global efforts being made to address challenges in the field of temporary employment and hybrid forms of work, as well as uneven protection for migrant workers, women and disadvantaged people, which need to be addressed more comprehensively.

In Bangladesh, social safety net programmes have been expanded significantly over the years. The present allocation for social safety net programmes has reached 16.75 per cent of the total budget and 2.5 per cent of the gross domestic product. A universal pension scheme was recently introduced. In addition, workers and their family members in the formal and the informal sectors can obtain benefits from the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation in the case of death due to accident or in the case of permanent disability, treatment for acute diseases or maternity; a stipend is also available for the education of children. Workers in export-oriented industries sectors and their family members are provided with financial support from the Central Fund. In line with the ILO's Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 [Schedule I amended in 1980] (No. 121), with the support of brands and buyers, an employment injury scheme for workers in the export-oriented garment sector was launched in June 2022, on a pilot basis. Unemployed workers in the export-oriented garment, leather goods and footwear industries who were unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic are being provided unemployment allowances. We request the Office to enhance measures for global partnership and steps to realize the goal of effective and quality labour protection for all. Bangladesh supports the proposed resolution.

Mr Gómez Ruiloba
Government (Panama)
(Original Spanish)

First and foremost, we welcome and associate ourselves with the statement made by Argentina on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Our country is pleased with the outcome of the work of this important Committee; it is one more tool to be added to existing ILO instruments and will serve as a guide for the further improvement of occupational safety and health models in our country. However, we hope that this instrument will also bring us closer to developing an instrument, such as the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, which will consolidate all our Recommendations, Conventions and declarations related to occupational safety and health, some focused on products and substances, others on types of industries. Our dream and aspiration is that one day, we will have one major, overarching Convention on occupational safety and health in the world.

Ms Janahi
Employer (Bahrain)

Expansion of support and protection to all is necessary to have a sustainable economy. Employers, specifically owners of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), today represent over 90 per cent of the private sector community; they need support and protection. At a time when the world is going through major turbulence, their success means the success of the team, who make the organization function, and the success of the Government, through the value added to the economy, if not economies. The Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection showed the true spirit of collaboration between all tripartite members, regardless of certain challenges faced, which resulted in unified agreements with a focus on a common goal: protection for all, which is the essence of this Committee and essential for the sustainability of society.

In Bahrain, our labour protection system, established in 1991, aims to provide protection for all, with a focus on social insurance coverage for individuals against risks associated with ageing, disability, death, work-related injuries and unemployment, in both the public and private sectors. Private sector employers can also register for social protection, as can nationals working outside Bahrain. Monthly contributions are made to the Social Insurance Organization, and any defaults in payment result in severe penalties and blockage of the company's access to many public services and grants. In 2021, a royal decree was issued on indemnities for non-national employees, whereby a worker is entitled to receive their leaving indemnity for the period spent in the employer's service. This law was put in place specifically after the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that, should MSMEs not be sustainable, all employees, nationals and non-nationals are protected. During the pandemic, the Social Insurance Organization in Bahrain paid private sector salaries for nine months using the Unemployment Fund, which had a surplus, and supported the initiative effectively. The total pay-out was close to US\$3 billion. As a board member of the Bahrain Social Insurance Organization, I can strongly confirm the need to have sustainable labour protection; it is key, not only for workers but also because it promotes sustainable enterprises, which fund the system. Without the funds from the private sector, labour protection would be at risk.

By way of conclusion, I would like to thank our Chairperson and the two Vice-Chairpersons, who led with a focused approach and who managed to show the true essence of tripartite collaboration between all members. It is a true honour and pleasure to work with you all.

Mr Dimitrov
Worker (Bulgaria)

The conclusions recognize that workers' share of the gains from economic activity has kept declining, as wage growth has lagged behind productivity developments. The lack of adequacy of minimum wages remains a challenge in many countries and this contributes to the growing working poverty and wage inequality. That challenge is even further negatively developed due to a cost-of-living crisis all over the globe. We all agree in our committee that the ILO should strengthen its support to the constituents to ensure wage adequacy and that improvements to wage-setting systems, including adequate statutory minimum wages or those negotiated through collective bargaining, are regularly updated.

The gender pay gap remains at 22 per cent globally; constituents should step up efforts to reduce it by ensuring equal remuneration for work of equal value.

Lastly, with regard to living wages, we all agreed last year that the ILO should undertake more research on concepts and on estimations concerning the meaning of living wages. Now, as Magnús said, we should take additional steps further to this achievement of last year and, on the basis of this work by the ILO, that the Governing Body should consider, in a tripartite follow-up discussion on wages and living wages, what it is going to do and how it is going to do it.

Some governments have made achievements in that regard, such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Argentina and others. The issue of the difference between adequate and living wages is really the crucial, key issue: how to measure adequacy taking into account the cost of living for workers and their families, how this depends on family size, how many wage earners are in the family, how many dependent family members there are and so on. In this respect, the European Union recently agreed on a directive setting a floor for adequacy, which should take as a starting point 50 per cent of the average and 60 per cent of the median wage.

Mr Dreesen
Employer (Denmark)

The discussions in the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection were important for all constituents. In the discussion, it was essential for the Employers' group that the conclusions recognize the progress that has been achieved since the last discussion in 2015. When you read the 2015 conclusions, you realize the many transformations that the world of work has been subject to, and also that the world of work has absorbed many other challenges.

Enterprises are the main source of jobs, and an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises is of crucial importance. Therefore, an essential point for the Employers' group was a recognition of the key role that enterprises play, also as key providers of labour protection.

Another important point to be recognized was the need to have a balance between the needs of workers and enterprises. Any subject concerning labour protection must be addressed with that balance in mind. It was also essential for the Employers' group that informality in the world of work be addressed as one of the root causes of a deficit of labour protection in many parts of the world. These are difficult topics that are reflected in the conclusions, but in general, I find that the conclusions are sufficiently balanced to function as a reference in the ILO.

Let me use my own country, Denmark, and the COVID-19 crisis as an example of how labour protection should work. In Denmark, the majority of companies kept their employees on when production was closed down. There were, no doubt, many reasons, but it was also to protect the human resources they had invested in. Telework became the new normal for many enterprises and workers. This was only possible because employers, workers and labour authorities were willing, on all levels, to seek and act with a balance between the needs of enterprises and workers in mind. This example refers back to the conclusions before us, reflecting the importance of tripartism and social dialogue at the heart of the ILO.

Mr Oñate Vera
Worker (Mexico)
(Original Spanish)

On behalf of the workers of Mexico and Latin America, where we understand the importance and fundamental role of labour protection, we welcome the adoption of the conclusions reached in the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection. We know that the efforts to reach these conclusions underscore the importance of tripartism and social dialogue as keystones in the continuing efforts to improve working conditions for workers worldwide. Our region is aware of the shortcomings and needs in the area of labour protection. We have suffered inequalities, especially in the most vulnerable sectors such as the rural sector, informal trade, migrant labour and digital platforms, owing to the absence of regulatory frameworks or their inappropriate implementation.

Technological changes have posed challenges that we must address while putting people first, without infringing or transgressing labour rights, as is the case with the right to disconnect or the use of new technologies. Likewise, protection must be inclusive; gender equality must guarantee the elimination of discrimination against women for seeking better jobs or against women domestic and care workers, to mention but a few. The result of the effort put into work is wages; for this reason, there must be a minimum living wage ensuring that the income is commensurate with the established hours and times of work and makes it possible to improve the well-being of workers and their families. If we do not wish to leave anyone behind, it is important to consider all regions and sectors. There is still a lot to be done and perhaps it will never be enough, but we have the obligation to make social justice and decent work a reality through freedom of association and collective bargaining, extending labour protection to all workers of the world.

Ms Desloover
Employer (United States of America)

I want to first express my gratitude to our Vice-Chairperson, Mr Ricci Muadi, for his excellent leadership and vital support during the second recurrent discussion on labour protection. I thank our esteemed committee Chairperson, Mr Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Vice-Chairperson Mr Norddahl and Government spokespersons for their meaningful engagement and the spirit of cooperation that they all fostered during this discussion to find a middle ground and to seek solutions. I also thank the secretariat for its supreme technical support and assistance.

I am so pleased with the thoughtful tripartite outcome achieved by this committee of such distinguished colleagues. This charts the way forward towards more inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection. In order to achieve this, we recognize the key role of sustainable enterprises as promoters of innovation and of decent work. A holistic approach to labour protection is, certainly, about protecting workers. But it is also about the viability and sustainability of those enterprises that financed much of the labour and social protection systems. In the ever-changing world of work, the diversity and needs of enterprises and particular national circumstances continue to be an important condition for the design and implementation of well-tailored and inclusive labour protection strategies. In many cases, the effective application of existing standards can better serve workers, employers and their governments in the introduction of new standards.

Importantly, though, this conclusion is forward-looking to address new opportunities and challenges, especially recent massive technological innovations. Growing information and

communication technologies have allowed for new, diverse working arrangements. These technologies have facilitated greater flexibility for enterprises, preserving jobs and providing labour protection for workers during the pandemic and today. It is critical to harness these developments by expanding our understandings of the possibility that they present. In this vein, we encourage the ILO to provide guidance on access to labour protection to workers in new forms of work, such as platform work and telework.

This conclusion further seizes upon the exciting opportunities presented by new technologies, by encouraging the Organization to provide tools to harness digital technologies for improving working conditions and enhancing workers' occupational safety and health. Inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection continues to require these transformative changes in the world of work to be addressed, by aligning the needs of workers and their families with the needs of enterprises so that they can foster job creation and economic development. The conclusions that we arrived at do just that.

Ms Sahlberg
Worker (Finland)

When adopting these conclusions today, we see that the world is not ready when it comes to labour protection. Workers around the globe still face many outstanding challenges that need to be tackled. Lack of adequacy of minimum wages and problems with implementation contribute to the growing working poverty and income inequality. Also, gender inequalities and discrimination still persist. This can be seen in terms of women's access to labour markets, career progression, skills and earnings, violence and harassment, and women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work and family responsibilities. Globally, the gender pay gap still remains at 22 per cent.

Each and every worker should enjoy inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection. Unfortunately, this is not the reality in today's world of work. As is stated in the conclusions, the risk of exclusion from labour protection or of inadequate labour protection is higher for workers and groups of workers facing discrimination based on gender and other grounds, including different minorities. To tackle these prevailing challenges, more needs to be done. I am glad to say that the conclusions highlight this. For example, that inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection needs to be grounded in the fundamental principles and rights at work, and in particular, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

On behalf of the Finnish Confederation of Professionals, I wholeheartedly hope that, in line with the conclusions, the ILO and its Members will continue to strive to achieve inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection for each and every worker around the world.

Ms Rodríguez
Government (Argentina)
(Original Spanish)

Argentina thanks the representatives of the Workers, Employers and Governments for the debate and discussion that took place during the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection. We appreciate the work of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons of the Committee and their willingness and commitment to dialogue and consensus, and we thank the Office for all its support in the dialogue process.

In a world marked by challenges and changes of different origins and by an international financial structure that negatively affects production systems and restricts the capacity of sovereign countries to adopt the measures and policies that would afford economic security to workers with equal opportunities, Argentina again reiterates that the protection of workers is essential to achieving the much-desired social justice.

Argentina is committed, from its national perspective and experience, to social dialogue so as to ensure appropriate, inclusive and effective labour protection. We are aware that workers in vulnerable situations are the ones most affected by the lack of protection and economic insecurity. Argentina reiterates that to change this situation and ensure that our population has decent conditions, it is necessary to adopt and strengthen policies and measures that, while addressing changes in the world of work, will guarantee protection for all workers and make for a more equal society. To this end, the creation of quality jobs with support for sustainable enterprises, protection of remuneration, the enforcement and strengthening of labour rights, formalization of labour and the informal economy, improved access to social security, protection against arbitrary dismissal, unlimited working hours and discrimination at work, as well as the promotion of equal opportunities, are key elements to ensure the protection of all workers.

We are aware that this is the way to build a fairer and more inclusive society in which all workers have access to decent labour and social conditions. We value the dialogue that was developed during the work of the Committee and trust that the work done will contribute to ensuring real protection for workers.

Resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection

The President

Let us now proceed with the adoption of the proposed resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection, which contains the Committee's conclusions, the text of which is included in Record of Proceedings No. 6A(Rev.).

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts the proposed resolution and the conclusions contained therein?

(The resolution and conclusions are adopted.)

I would like to congratulate the members of the Committee and its secretariat on their commitment and dedication in bringing the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion and completing its work on time. I thank them all for their work.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.30 p.m.)