

**XVIII Congress of the
Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL)**

Message of Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General, International Labour Organization

Bari, Italy, 21-25 January 2019

Dear General Secretary,
Dear delegates,
Dear friends,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to transmit my warm greetings to all of you on the occasion of the XVIII Congress of the CGIL.

I would have very much liked to be with you today to express my appreciation of the work done by the CGIL over the past years and to hear about your priorities for the future.

This Congress happens at a time of profound changes in the world of work, which was already hard hit by a severe economic and jobs crisis. Compared to the past, these changes happen at a faster pace, a deeper and much larger scale than before. They are truly global transformative changes that are driven not only by technology - on which there is a tendency to put most emphasis - but also by demographic factors, globalization and climate change and their impact on labour.

More than ever, trade unions must engage in collective bargaining and in social dialogue with governments and employers' organizations in order to reap the benefits and minimize the risks related to these transformative changes.

Since the beginning of the last century, the CGIL has been at the forefront of key achievements in terms of workers' rights and democracy that have given dignity and freedom to Italian workers. Indeed, it has played a key role in overcoming economic and political challenges, in managing transitions and in driving social progress.

I have followed the important work of the CGIL over the past few years and I have seen what has been done to nurture these achievements and the continuous effort to ensure that workers enjoy rights at work. The National Labour and Employment Plan and its Special Plan for youth and for women's employment are clear examples of visionary projects to improve both quantity and quality of work and advance social justice.

I would also like to single out the vanguard work of CGIL in the development of the Charter of Universal Labour Rights that addresses the changes that have taken place in the world of work through a strategy that affirms fundamental rights and equality for all workers, irrespective of the type of employment relationship they are in.

The Charter assigns centrality to decent work in society. There are several parts that call for freedom, equity, security and human dignity as indispensable conditions to realize decent work. This accords with the ILO's mandate.

Another important principle is the universality of rights and the participation and representation of all workers - irrespective of their engagement in public or private enterprises, large or small-sized, and standard or atypical work.

Equally important is the principle of inclusive bargaining that aims to reduce differences in working conditions on the basis of workers' status – whether temporary or permanent, with a contract or subcontracted. This is a very progressive approach that could reduce the dualism between protected and less protected workers, workers who perform the same work but enjoy different rights and entitlements, which is a reality in many countries.

Finally, I would like to highlight the innovative approach that has been followed by the CGIL in mobilizing support for the Charter to be converted into a law. The Charter received the endorsement by millions of CGIL members through a democratic process that gave the power of decision to each and every trade union member. This is a good practice for those unions around the world that are redefining their role, mandate and means of action to carry on with the realization of decent work and social justice.

We should not fall into the dangerous temptation to believe that work in future will be imposed on us by external factors. As always the future will be what we make it and, as you did for the Charter, we must continue to mobilize workers so that they can say which future of work they want. We must continue to work together to define priorities that are based on our values and on workers' interests, to design policies that are inclusive and result in more and better quality jobs. We must also strengthen institutions such as collective bargaining to manage change and deliver decent work.

Rest assured that the ILO remains committed to working with the CGIL and other constituents with the objective of meeting the needs and decent work aspirations of all Italian workers through tangible results.

I wish you the best success and look forward to learning about the outcome of your Congress.