

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 25 May 2021

▶ Statement by Ms Corinne Vargha, representative of the Secretary-General

I. Preliminary remarks

As the representative of the Secretary-General for your Committee, I would like to welcome you to this unprecedented International Labour Conference which is taking place virtually in the current exceptional circumstances, after having been postponed for a year. The last time this Committee met, the ILO was celebrating its Centenary year in Geneva. Very few, if any, among us could foresee that the transformative changes that were the subject of the Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work were already at our doorstep. The year 2020 propelled the world, including the ILO and its Member States, into the biggest public health crisis in living memory bringing about devastating effects, in terms not only of loss of human lives, but also loss of jobs, enterprises and livelihoods, along with a resurgence of poverty and a marked increase in inequality. It is in this extraordinary context that your Committee is called upon to provide, as an essential pillar of the ILO's supervisory mechanism, its guidance on the way to recovery and reconstruction, reaffirming that international labour standards and rights at work are an essential part of safeguarding social cohesion and universal peace, reinforcing resilience and building back better.

The purpose of my statement is to supplement the information contained in the reports of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (Committee of Experts) that you have before you, and to draw your attention to other recent developments that are relevant to your discussions.¹ But first, I wish to acknowledge Judge Graciela Dixon-Caton, Chairperson of the Committee of Experts, and Professor Evance Kalula, Chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association, who will address your Committee at the opening of the general discussion which has been scheduled on 3 June.

¹ Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, [Report III \(Part A\)](#), ILC, 109th Session, Geneva, 2020 and [Report III/Addendum \(Part A\)](#), Geneva, 2021; General Survey on Promoting Employment and Decent Work in a Changing Landscape, [Report III \(Part B\)](#), ILC, 109th Session, Geneva, 2020 and [Report III/Addendum \(Part B\)](#), Geneva, 2021.

My intervention will cover two main points: (i) the constitutional mandate and work of your Committee; and (ii) the ILO's normative work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Constitutional mandate and work of the Conference Committee

1. Mandate of the Committee

Your Committee is a standing committee of the International Labour Conference. It has met every time the International Labour Conference has been in session since 1926 and its mandate, which lies at the heart of the ILO's action,² consists of examining and bringing to the attention of the Plenary of the Conference:

- (i) the measures taken by Members to give effect to the provisions of Conventions to which they are parties; and
- (ii) the information and reports concerning Conventions and Recommendations communicated by Members in accordance with article 19 of the Constitution. Under the terms of this article, your Committee examines at every session of the Conference, a General Survey on the law and practice of Member States in a specific area.

As you know, following the postponement of the 109th Session of the Conference to June 2021, the Governing Body took the unprecedented decision to invite your Committee to examine in 2021 both reports produced by the Committee of Experts at its 90th and 91st Sessions (November–December 2019 and 2020 respectively). The report released by the Committee of Experts in 2020 was updated on the basis of information received to reflect the developments which took place in the meantime, notably the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The updated information was examined by the Committee of Experts at its 91st Session (November–December 2020) and is reflected in the Committee of Experts' report released in 2021. Your Committee will have an opportunity to have a discussion dedicated to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the application of international labour standards during a special segment of the general discussion which is scheduled on 3 June.

Similarly, the 2020 General Survey entitled *Promoting Employment and Decent Work in a Changing Landscape* was updated through an Addendum released in 2021 in order to take stock of the impact of the pandemic. The General Survey and its Addendum will form the basis of your Committee's discussion scheduled on 4 June and will provide additional opportunities to explore the impact of the pandemic on employment and decent work, including vis-à-vis women, workers in the informal economy, workers on non-standard forms of employment and groups in vulnerable situations such as youth, workers with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

Finally, your Committee will undoubtedly have additional opportunities during this session to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the application of international labour standards during the examination of individual cases which begins on Saturday, 5 June.³ As head of your Secretariat, I look forward to the key messages that your Committee will convey on this defining challenge.

² Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Constitution of the ILO, and article 7 of the Standing Orders of the Conference.

³ [Excerpts of this year's report of the Committee of Experts that focus on the impact of the pandemic](#) on the application of international labour standards can be found on the Committee's website.

2. Work of the Committee

Now, a few words about the work of your Committee. In the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Labour Conference, including your Committee, is meeting virtually and special arrangements had to be introduced to make this possible. Document D.1 details all the adjustments that will allow your Committee to discharge its constitutional obligations within the framework of a virtual session and a reduced number of sittings. These exceptional adjustments reflect the outcome of the informal tripartite consultations on the Committee's working methods which took place on 30 March and 12 and 27 April this year. Detailed information on these consultations is available on the [Committee's website](#). I invite you to read document D.1 carefully in order to facilitate your participation and the proper conduct of the Committee's work.

As provided in document D.1, the Committee will operate on the basis of a compressed working schedule which will result, among other things, in:

- enhanced possibility to provide written inputs to complement the oral debates;
- longer deadlines for the submission of written statements;
- early registration on the speakers list;
- strict time management with some reduced speaking time, and
- specific time allotment for the various items on the Committee's agenda.

The **General Discussion** which is scheduled on 3 June will be organized in two segments of 90 minutes each. One segment will be dedicated to a general discussion on the General Report and, as mentioned already, the second segment will focus on [the application of International Labour Standards in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Given that speaking time will be limited, I invite those delegates who so wish, to communicate written statements to the Office sufficiently in advance so that they can be released on the Committee's website 24 hours before the sitting. These statements will be translated and included in the Committee's report in three languages. Written statements submitted will be clearly differentiated in the Committee's report from oral interventions made during the discussions.

The **discussion of the General Survey** on Promoting Employment and Decent Work in a Changing Landscape and its 2021 Addendum has been scheduled on Friday, 4 June. Following the decisions taken at the informal tripartite consultations of March–April 2021, it is proposed to frame the discussion around three generic questions on the understanding that interventions do not have to be limited to these questions only. The three generic questions are:

- progress made and problems encountered in the implementation of the instruments examined;
- measures to be taken to promote the Conventions and their ratification in the light of good practices and the obstacles identified;
- avenues for the future in terms of normative action and technical assistance.

These generic questions could, to the extent possible, structure your interventions so as to facilitate a discussion conducive to an action-oriented outcome.

In order to organize the **discussion of cases of serious failure to report** this year, the Governments concerned were invited to communicate written information to the

Office by 20 May. Relevant information has been received from five governments. A document compiling this information along with the general remarks of the Employer and Worker spokespersons, will be published in the three languages 24 hours before the sitting of Saturday, 5 June at which cases of serious failure will be discussed. During the sitting, the governments concerned may, if they wish, present information concerning new developments, with a reduced speaking time, before the Employer and Worker spokespersons present their final remarks.

Based on the consensus reached during the informal tripartite consultations of March–April 2021 and on an exceptional basis, the adoption of the final list of **“individual” cases to be discussed by the Committee** has been scheduled at the end of today’s opening session. This year, the Committee will examine 19 cases as indicated in the provisional working schedule (Document D.0), beginning on Saturday, 5 June. The Officers and the Office will introduce reasonable adaptations to the usual practice of planning the discussion of individual cases following an alphabetical order, taking into account the different time zones and the complexity of the cases to be examined.

Pursuant to the informal tripartite consultations on the Committee’s working methods and due to this year’s tight working schedule, all conclusions to the examination of “individual” cases will be adopted in a single dedicated sitting scheduled on Friday, 18 June. As a result, it will not be possible to reflect the conclusions on the examination of “individual” cases in the first part of the report as per the usual practice. The conclusions will nevertheless be integrated in the second part of the report at the end of each individual case to which they relate.

In addition to this year’s special arrangements, allow me to recall the many improvements made to the methods of work of your Committee since 2006 which are reported in detail in Document D.1.⁴

I would like to recall in particular that governments on the long list of individual cases are able to submit, on a purely voluntary basis, written information to the Committee on recent developments not yet examined by the Committee of Experts. This year, twenty-four governments have taken advantage of this opportunity and have provided information which is available on the web page of your Committee. If a case is included in the final list of cases to be discussed at the Committee, any additional written information that governments may wish to communicate should reach the Office at least two days before their case is discussed so that it can be translated and posted on the Committee’s website 24 hours before the discussion.

Furthermore, following the practice introduced in the Committee’s previous session, the discussions of your Committee will be reproduced in extenso in verbatim transcripts. The Chairperson will provide you with fuller information on this subject.

The first part of the Committee’s report will consist of a consolidated document in three working languages which will be presented for adoption to your Committee’s final sitting on Friday, 18 June.⁵ Both Parts One and Two of your report will be submitted to

⁴ Document D.1 has been available for consultation on the website of the Committee since 10 May 2019.

⁵ This year, due to the special arrangements which had to be introduced for this session, the first part of the report will contain:

- a verbatim report of the general discussion;
- the outcome of the discussion of the General Survey;
- the conclusions adopted at the end of the examination of the “automatic” cases;
- the verbatim record of the discussion concerning the adoption of the report and the concluding remarks.

the Plenary sitting of the International Labour Conference for adoption on Saturday, 19 June. The full report translated into the three languages will be made available online 30 days after its adoption by the International Labour Conference.

As this Conference is organized virtually, all documents will be produced in electronic format only and released on the Committee's web page which will be our means of sharing important documents and complementing the oral proceedings of the Committee.

III. The ILO's normative work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

In the second part of my intervention, I wish to refer to the standards mandate of our Organization and its continuing relevance in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Context of the COVID-19 pandemic

As this is the first session of your Committee since the International Labour Conference adopted the [Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#), I should recall that the Conference in 2019 declared that the setting, promotion, ratification and supervision of international labour standards is of fundamental importance to the ILO, playing a central role in further developing its human-centered approach to the future of work.

And in the context of today's crisis, the ILO's normative system and the human-centered approach of the Centenary Declaration are more relevant than ever. The ILO's normative system rests on the premise that respect for the rule of law is not suspended in situations of crisis. Quite the contrary, respect for the fundamental guarantees set out in international labour standards is even more important in times of crisis, as an effective response and recovery can only succeed if the right institutions are put in place to make this possible. A Global Response for a Human-Centred Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis will be the central focus of the Conference discussion this year.

2. Ratifications of international labour standards

As a result of the Centenary Ratification Campaign, a total of 70 new ratifications were registered in 2019. In addition, 26 new ratifications were registered in 2020 while 29 ratifications were registered in just the first five months of 2021. These developments serve to confirm the continuing will of Member States to engage in a multilateral system of cooperation based on international labour standards in pursuit of social justice, including in times of crisis.

The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), will enter into force on 25 June 2021, two years after its adoption by the International Labour Conference, having received to date six ratifications.

A landmark development has been the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), achieved in June 2020. In a general observation on Convention No. 182 released in its 2021 report, the Committee of Experts notes that as we are celebrating this first ever universal ratification of an ILO Convention, we must not lose sight of the fact that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic could reverse a generation of progress against child labour and its worst forms with 66 million children falling into extreme poverty since the pandemic's outbreak. New cases of bonded child labour, such as domestic servitude, as well as commercial sexual exploitation, hazardous

work in mining and agriculture and a range of sweatshop activities are on the rise. These alarming developments put at risk progress toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 which is pursued in this International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour by Alliance 8.7.

In the case of child labour, as in other cases where the most vulnerable are left behind, it is the common responsibility of all Member States to demonstrate the solidarity needed at national and international levels to generate “a tide that lifts all the boats” and prevent any retrograde measures that may strip large sections of the population of the protection of the law.

3. Anniversaries of ILO Conventions and the Committee on Freedom of Association

This year, we celebrate the anniversaries of international labour Conventions that continue to shape some of the institutions of our world of work, embodying a human-centered approach to the future of work:

- the centenary of the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14), which has now become our oldest confirmed up-to-date instrument, addressing one of the longest standing concerns of workers worldwide yet still only ratified by 120 Member States worldwide;
- the 70th anniversary of the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), a fundamental Convention underpinning the transformative gender equality agenda envisaged in the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work;
- the 50th anniversary of the Workers’ Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), a key instrument in realizing social dialogue and in particular the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- the 40th anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the first general framework Convention promoting safe and healthy working conditions setting up-to-date standards currently considered by the Governing Body in the context of proposals for including safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. The year of 1981 was a particularly prolific standard-setting year as the Conference also adopted the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), which will be the subject of the General Survey your Committee will discuss in 2023;
- the 20th anniversary of the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) which itself marked the 80th anniversary of the first ever standards adopted for the protection of rural workers;
- the 10th anniversary of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), again the subject of a General Survey which your Committee will discuss next year.

This year, we are also celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Committee on Freedom of Association. The Committee was established in 1951 to examine complaints of violations of freedom of association principles, whether or not the country concerned has ratified the relevant ILO Conventions. This Committee of the Governing Body continues to be the lead body within the UN system promoting respect for the fundamental freedom of association rights of workers and employers. Professor Kalula,

Chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association will present the [Annual Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association](#) ⁶ on 3 June.

4. Standards Review Mechanism

Work is continuing with a view to reinforcing the standards work of the ILO in its second century based on a body of standards that is robust, clear and up to date, and a system of supervising the application of these standards that is authoritative and transparent, based on strengthened tripartite consensus. Of the 235 international labour standards covered by the initial programme of work of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (SRM), 75 instruments remain to be examined.

At its fifth meeting in September 2019, the SRM Tripartite Working Group completed its in-depth examination of all the instruments on employment policy and employment promotion. The pandemic caused the work of the SRM Tripartite Working Group to be temporarily postponed. The Tripartite Working Group will resume work with a review of social security instruments at its sixth meeting which is set to take place virtually in September 2021.

Similarly, at its fourth meeting held in April this year, the Special Tripartite Committee (STC) of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006) made recommendations concerning the status of more than 30 maritime labour standards concerning seafarers, which were referred to it by the SRM Tripartite Working Group, as many of these instruments have been revised by the MLC, 2006. By 2030 the majority of those standards should be abrogated by the International Labour Conference, leaving the MLC, 2006, as the up-to-date ILO instrument in the maritime field.

At its 341st Session (March 2021), the Governing Body undertook the second evaluation of the functioning of the SRM, and expressed its gratitude to the Tripartite Working Group's ongoing work while stressing the need for follow-up by Member States, social partners as well as by the Office to its recommendations as adopted by the Governing Body. The Governing Body will undertake a further evaluation no later than March 2022. ⁷

With a view to ensuring the follow-up to the recommendations of the SRM Tripartite Working Group, the Office has been actively supporting the development of tripartite national plans of action on international labour standards, inter alia, in the framework of Outcome 2 of the Programme and Budget. The Office will report on results achieved in the framework of the Programme and Budget Implementation Report, which will be submitted to the Governing Body in March 2022 and to the next session of the International Labour Conference.

The work of the SRM Tripartite Working Group has thus far resulted in the placing of two standard-setting items on the agenda of future sessions of the International Labour Conference. Next year, the Conference will hold its first standard-setting discussion on a framework for quality apprenticeships stemming from the review of instruments concerning employment policy and employment promotion. Here again, the COVID-19 pandemic had a temporary disruptive effect, as the first Conference discussion on this standard-setting item had to be deferred by one year due to the

⁶ GB.341/INS/12/1(Add.1).

⁷ GB.341/LILS/5.

deferral of the 109th Session of the Conference. The Governing Body decided accordingly to extend until 31 March 2021 the deadline for submitting replies or supplementary information to the questionnaire for the first discussion so as to capture recent developments that might have had an impact on the law and practice in Member States.⁸

Furthermore, at its 341st Session (March 2021), the Governing Body decided to place on the agenda of the 112th and 113th Sessions (2024–25) of the Conference an item related to occupational safety and health protection against biological hazards. This item stems from the review of occupational safety and health instruments carried out by the SRM Tripartite Working Group at its fourth meeting.⁹

5. Strengthening of the ILO supervisory system

The follow-up to the Centenary Standards Initiative includes the strengthening of the ILO supervisory system.

In the framework of the implementation of the work plan on the strengthening of the supervisory system, the Governing Body is continuing its consideration of further steps to ensure legal certainty and the follow-up to other action points.¹⁰ In order to give effect to the decision taken by the Governing Body at its 331st Session (October–November 2017), the Office, in cooperation with the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, has just released the initial web-based version of the Guide on Established Practices of the ILO Supervisory System (*ILO supervisory system: A Guide for Constituents*) in English. The French and Spanish versions will follow soon, along with a fully customized application for tablets and smartphones. In line with the Governing Body decisions, the purpose of the Guide is to bring together useful information in a user-friendly way in order to ensure a level playing field of knowledge on the supervisory system among ILO constituents. I hope the Guide will facilitate the reporting on ratified and unratified standards and the further engagement of governments and social partners with the ILO supervisory system.

The various supervisory bodies have continued to discuss their working methods and to introduce innovations wherever necessary. At its 341st Session, the Governing Body took note of information provided by the Office on the procedure for the appointment of members of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations and requested the Office to prepare a document for its 343rd Session (November 2021) taking into account the discussion held.¹¹

⁸ GB.338/PV(Rev.5), paras 350–353.

⁹ GB.341/INS/3/1(Rev.2)/Decision.

¹⁰ GB.341/INS/INF/1. At its 331st Session (October–November 2017), the Governing Body had approved the development of “a user-friendly and clear guide for the supervisory system, bringing together useful information and ensuring a level playing field of knowledge. In practical terms, such a guide would build on existing descriptions of the supervisory system and its procedures (GB.329/INS/5, para. 15). Moreover, at its 335th Session (March 2019), the Governing Body “with respect to the proposal for codification of the article 26 procedure, recalled the decision to consider the steps to be taken after the guide to the supervisory system was available to constituents, and requested the Office to provide it with further information in that regard in March 2020” (GB.335/INS/5).

¹¹ GB.341/LILS/6.

6. Technical Assistance on International Labour Standards

Allow me to turn now to the important question of Office technical assistance focused on the achievement of tangible progress in the implementation of standards at the national level, guided by the comments of the ILO supervisory bodies.

In line with previous decisions taken in the framework of informal tripartite consultations on the Committee's working methods, the Office regularly places on your Committee's web page information on the measures taken by the Office to give effect to the recommendations of your Committee. As can be seen from this information, in view of the travel restrictions adopted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office had to adapt its methods for following up on your Committee's conclusions. As an alternative to missions, and in order to provide much-needed technical assistance in the current exceptional circumstances, the Office sought innovative ways to respond to the needs of the constituents, notably by delivering advisory services and capacity-building activities either at a distance or through local presence.

Furthermore, the Office provided reinforced assistance in cases of serious failings by Member States to comply with their reporting obligations. Several countries, notably in Africa, have benefited from such assistance including Djibouti, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Somalia. Some of these Member States have since fulfilled their reporting obligations, at least in part.¹²

A partnership with the European Commission has been consolidated through the Trade for Decent Work Project which as of this year covers 11 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas with a view to promoting the ratification, application and reporting on fundamental and related governance and technical Conventions.

At its 340th Session (October–November 2020), the Governing Body also welcomed the ILO technical cooperation programme "Strengthening of the National Tripartite Committee on Labour Relations and Freedom of Association in Guatemala for the effective application of international labour standards" and requested the Office to report annually on its implementation for the duration of the three-year programme.¹³

The current phase of the technical cooperation programme in Qatar is ending in July and a report on the results obtained was presented to the Governing Body at its 340th Session (October–November 2020).¹⁴

7. Capacity-building strategy on international labour standards

The pandemic had a marked impact on the Office's capacity-building strategy. The challenge of the pandemic also gave rise to opportunities as new means of communication made it possible to reach a wider audience in a more agile manner.

The Office in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, took immediate measures to transform all capacity-building activities into online courses delivered at a distance. In parallel, the regional focus of capacity-building activities was reinforced in order to ensure more targeted discussions, including the sharing of good practices, among countries with geographical, economic and legal ties. As a result, the first regional International Labour Standards Academy was delivered in 2020 at a

¹² Document D.2 contains more information on this subject which will be discussed on Saturday, 5 June.

¹³ [GB.340/INS/10/decision](#).

¹⁴ [GB.340/INS/11](#).

distance to over 155 participants from Africa including tripartite constituents, judges and law professionals, academics and media professionals. This year's Academy will be delivered to participants from Latin America from 28 June to 30 July 2021. The Turin Centre is also providing tailored training on international labour standards to Members in all regions.

8. Maritime matters and the COVID-19 pandemic

Before I conclude my statement, a special mention should be made of the situation of seafarers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is calling for increased international cooperation between the tripartite constituents with the coordinated support of specialized agencies, namely the ILO, the International Maritime Organization and the UN.

Still to this day, thousands of seafarers remain stranded at sea without the possibility of being repatriated or of accessing medical care and vaccines, while continuing to ensure the undisrupted transportation of 80 per cent of global trade, including vital medical supplies, food and other basic goods that are critical for the COVID-19 response and recovery.

The latest report of the Committee of Experts contains a general observation on the MLC, 2006, which takes stock of the latest developments, including the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on international cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains, adopted on 1 December 2020, and the [Resolution of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office concerning maritime labour issues and the COVID-19 pandemic](#),¹⁵ adopted on 8 December 2020.

Most recently, the [Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC, 2006, held its fourth meeting](#) in April bringing together more than 100 representatives of governments, and organizations of seafarers and shipowners. Through two resolutions,¹⁶ the STC called on governments to treat seafarers as key workers and to cooperate to make vaccines available to them at the earliest opportunity, to allow them to pass through international borders and keep global supply chains moving. The STC also agreed to actions to restore the full respect of seafarers' rights under the MLC, 2006, and called for the convening of a United Nations inter-agency task force to examine the implementation and practical application of the Convention during the pandemic, including its impact on seafarers' fundamental rights and on the shipping industry.

IV. Final observations

Allow me to conclude by recalling, as I did on the occasion of the ILO's Centenary, the parchment placed under the first stone of the former ILO building in Geneva, which reads "If you desire peace, cultivate justice". Humanity in 1919 was faced with the historic responsibility of ensuring peace based on social justice. In the current context, I am sure you will agree with me that the women and men of today bear an equally important responsibility towards the future generations as the ILO's founders did, more than 100 years ago of ensuring a recovery that delivers social justice to all.

¹⁵ [GB.340/Resolution\(Rev.2\)](#).

¹⁶ [Resolution concerning the implementation and practical application of the MLC, 2006 during the COVID-19 pandemic](#); [Resolution concerning COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers](#).

Rest assured that the International Labour Standards Department is determined to maintain the tradition of public service devoted to excellence and is placing its expertise at the service of your Committee to help you play your vital role within the ILO's constitutional framework. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the commitment and professionalism of all my colleagues in the Department, and particularly to Ms Karen Curtis, Chief of the Freedom of Association Branch, and Mr Horacio Guido, Chief of the Application of Standards Branch, who once again this year will accompany me in guiding the Secretariat of your Committee in this unprecedented Conference.

Once again this year, I look forward to working with you all, Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, Reporter, and all the members of the Committee.