



Thirteenth plenary sitting

Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| Second report of the Credentials Committee: Submission, noting and approval of the Committee's proposals..... | 1 |
| Report of the Committee on the Application of Standards: Submission, discussion and approval..... | 4 |
| Recommendation on employment and decent work for peace and resilience and abrogation of four and withdrawal of two obsolete Conventions: Signing | 20 |
| Closing statements | 20 |

Thirteenth sitting

Friday, 16 June 2017, 3.25 p.m.

President: Mr Carles Rudy

Second report of the Credentials Committee: Submission, noting and approval of the Committee's proposals

The President

(Original Spanish)

Welcome to the 13th sitting of the 106th Session of the International Labour Conference. This afternoon we shall consider and approve the reports of the Credentials Committee and the Committee on the Application of Standards. We shall also have the honour to hold the official signing ceremony for the authentic texts adopted by the Conference: the Recommendation concerning employment and decent work for peace and resilience, and the resolutions concerning abrogation and withdrawal of obsolete Conventions. Let us begin.

The first item on our agenda this afternoon is the second report of the Credentials Committee, contained in *Provisional Record* No. 5C. The Committee's secretariat has asked me to inform you that the mistake in paragraph 140 of the document has been corrected.

If you permit, I would like to briefly remind you of the composition of the Officers of this Committee, whose members are on the podium: the Chairperson, Mr Hobby (Government, New Zealand); the Employer Vice-Chairperson, Mr Yllanes Martínez (Mexico); and the Worker Vice-Chairperson, Mr Ohrt (Denmark).

I now give the floor to the President of the Credentials Committee, Mr Hobby, to present the two reports of the Committee.

Mr Hobby

Chairperson of the Credentials Committee

I am pleased to present to the Conference the second report of the Credentials Committee, published in *Provisional Record* No. 5C.

I just want to briefly recall the mandate of the Committee. Under the Standing Orders of the Conference, the Credentials Committee examines the credentials of delegates and advisers and any objections challenging those credentials or relating to a government's failure to accredit a complete tripartite delegation to the Conference.

The Committee also examines complaints regarding the non-payment of travel and subsistence expenses for Employers' or Workers' delegates, allegations of serious and manifest imbalance between the tripartite groups in a delegation, and where the delegate or adviser is prevented from attending the Conference through the act or omission of a government.

In addition, we are also authorized to monitor any situation arising from objections or complaints on which the Conference has requested that we report.

Why do we do this? Well, we do this to ensure that Members meet their constitutional obligations so that this Conference functions on the basis of freely chosen, independent tripartite participation by Workers, Employers and Governments. The work of the Committee at the Conference is therefore a concrete expression of the ILO's commitment to this principle.

The second report of the Committee gives an overview of our caseload at this Conference, including a summary of all of the objections and complaints we received and processed.

I can tell you that during the two-week session of this Conference we examined a total of 36 cases and that is an increase from the 19 considered by the Committee in 2016. And, if you look at the report you will see that these cases comprise: three ongoing situations that require continued monitoring as opposed to only one in 2016; 29 objections as opposed to 13 last year, of which four were submitted late; and seven complaints, which was an increase from the five considered in 2016.

Of the other objections received, a large number alleged a lack of consultation or a lack of agreement or both. And, in our report, the Committee emphasizes that member States have the obligation, under the Constitution, to hold consultations with their most representative organizations and to actively facilitate agreement on the nomination of delegations.

Among the objections were also five relating to the accreditation of incomplete delegations to the Conference and three cases were sufficiently serious to recommend to the Conference that the continuation of monitoring measures be requested. And these are Djibouti, Somalia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Committee also received six complaints alleging the government's failure to pay travel and subsistence expenses of Employers' and Workers' advisers and raising the issue of serious and manifest imbalance between the number of Government advisers and Employers' and Workers' advisers.

Again, the Committee wishes to emphasize that the Conference can only work properly if there are a sufficient number of advisers present in the three groups of the Conference and if there is adequate balance between them. Looking at the cases we considered this year, the Committee was deeply concerned at the number of situations in some member States that appear routinely before the Committee for failure to comply with their obligations.

The Committee's mandate is to ensure the application of the principle of tripartism in all aspects of the Committee's work. And for the Conference to integrate this fundamental principle in both its structure and functioning, it is essential that all member States take these responsibilities and obligations under the Constitution very seriously. Full respect for these obligations is a condition of tripartism. It is the only thing that permits the genuine representatives of Governments, Employers and Workers to be brought together and fully participate in the important work of the Conference. And so the Committee is also concerned at the number of incomplete delegations, and discussed in this context whether in future it could be seized automatically of such cases. The general question of how to ensure fuller participation in the Conference and improved compliance by member States with their constitutional obligations also warrants reflection.

Let me provide you with a brief overview of some statistics. According to the information available to the Committee, reflected in its first report, 169 of the ILO's 187 member States were accredited to this year's session of the Conference. In addition, the Committee was pleased to note that the number of participants registered as being in attendance at the Conference, some 6,092, has continued to increase and today is higher than at any session of the Conference in the past ten years.

As for the participation of women in delegations, a total of 984 female delegates and advisers were accredited, which represents 31 per cent of the total delegates accredited to the Conference.

So, overall, this shows a continued uneven distribution of women and men by group and function. And the tripartite constituents have still not reached the target set by the United Nations General Assembly, which called in 1990 for 30 per cent of women in leadership and decision-making positions by 1995 and for equal representation by 2000. We think that the constituents of all ILO member States need to intensify their efforts aimed at increasing the proportion of women in their delegations to future ILO meetings to achieve equal representation at all levels. And, we have indeed had a summit at this very session of the Conference devoted to the role of women at work, and women's role in the Conference also needs to be equivalent to that of males.

So, in closing I want to thank and express my sincere appreciation to my two Vice-Chairpersons – for the Employers, Mr Yllanes Martínez, and for the Workers, Mr Orht – for their immense contribution to the successful completion of the review of the numerous cases presented to the Committee this year. We worked well in a truly tripartite manner and I thank them both very much for their contribution.

I would also like to extend, on behalf of the Committee, our sincere thanks and gratitude to our secretariat, whose members worked tirelessly to support us throughout the duration of the Conference. They did their utmost to facilitate our work and we could not have done it without them.

Lastly, I would also like to thank our translators and interpreters, without whose assistance, again, we would not have been able to manage to complete our work within the deadlines set for us.

So I finish by commending the Committee's report to you.

The President
(*Original Spanish*)

The Credentials Committee has adopted its report unanimously. The Conference is called upon to take note of the report and to approve the proposals contained in paragraphs 10, 20 and 27 of *Provisional Record* No. 5C concerning Djibouti, Somalia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, respectively.

In accordance with article 26bis(7) and article 26quater of the Standing Orders of the Conference, the proposals are to be approved without discussion.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference takes notes of the report and approves the three proposals?

(The report is noted and the proposals are approved.)

Before moving on, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Officers of the Credentials Committee for their excellent work and to say a few words to the hard-working secretariat of the Committee.

I understand that the Committee's workload this year has been particularly heavy with 29 objections received. The tripartite structure of the ILO is the cornerstone of our institution. The important work that the Committee has done at this session of the Conference helps to safeguard the integrity of this tripartism, which is the hallmark of our Organization.

Report of the Committee on the Application of Standards: Submission, discussion and approval

The President (Original Spanish)

The next item that we have before us is the submission, discussion and approval of the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards, contained in *Provisional Records* Nos 15-1 and 15-2.

I invite the Officers of the Committee – Mr González Nina, Chairperson; Ms Regenbogen, Employer Vice-Chairperson; Mr Leemans, Worker Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Khan, Reporter – to take their places on the podium.

I now give the floor to the Reporter, Mr Khan, who is going to present this report.

Mr Khan Reporter for the Committee on the Application of Standards

It is a pleasure and honour to present to the plenary the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards. The Committee is a standing body of the International Labour Conference, empowered under article 7 of its Standing Orders to examine the measures taken by States to implement the Conventions that they have voluntarily ratified. It also examines the manner in which States fulfil their reporting and other standards-related obligations as provided for under the ILO Constitution. The Committee is a unique tripartite forum at the international level because it brings together actors from the real economy, drawn from all regions of the world. Everyone worked very hard in order to ensure that the Committee could carry out its work successfully.

Before presenting the report of the Committee, I would like to acknowledge that the informal tripartite consultations on the working methods of the Committee that have been held periodically since March 2016 are making a substantial contribution to the smooth operation of the Committee during the two weeks of the Conference. The measures agreed upon during these consultations, for instance to improve time management and the use of information technology, or to simplify the working methods of the secretariat, helped the Committee to carry out its work in a very effective and harmonious manner. I am therefore happy to be in a position to report that the Committee was able at this session to conclude its work successfully.

The report before the plenary is divided into two parts. The first part contains the General Report of the Committee, which includes a record of its general discussion and discussion of the General Survey of the Committee of Experts. The second part consists of a detailed record of the discussion of individual cases examined by the Committee on compliance with ratified Conventions and the related conclusions adopted for each of these cases.

I will recall the salient features of the Committee's discussions in respect of those questions.

The general discussion of this year emphasized again the fruitful dialogue between the Committee on the Application of Standards and the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. It is now an established practice for both Committees to have direct exchanges on matters of common interest. Accordingly, the Vice-Chairpersons of the Committee held an exchange of views on standards-related matters and

the operation of the ILO supervisory system with the members of the Committee of Experts at its last session in November–December 2016.

The Conference Committee also had the pleasure of welcoming the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts, Mr Koroma, who attended the first day of its session as an observer, with an opportunity to address the Committee. I retain from his statement the commitment of the Committee of Experts to maintain interaction between the two Committees, as well as its openness to take into account any proposal made in the framework of the informal tripartite consultations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the supervisory system that might be brought to its attention.

This year, as a result of discussions on working methods, the Committee benefited from the reports of the secretariat on the technical assistance provided by the Office, as well as the follow-up to the Committee's conclusions of last year, and on initiatives proposed by the Office to member States to ensure better respect of their constitutional obligations in relation to standards-related matters. The new practice was well received.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to discuss vital issues of occupational safety and health (OSH). In its examination of the General Survey on the OSH instruments concerning the promotional framework, construction, mining and agriculture, it reaffirmed its commitment to protecting workers from occupational accidents and diseases and called for a reinvigoration of efforts in that respect. The Committee recalled that the promotion of a safe and healthy working environment for all was a core element of the ILO's founding mission, reflected in the ILO Constitution and reaffirmed in the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia (1944), and constituted a key component of the Decent Work Agenda. Moreover, it recalled the opportunity provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal 8 and target 8.8.

The Committee recognized the importance of the promotional framework for OSH and encouraged the Office to undertake a campaign for ratification and implementation of the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187). The Committee expected the Office to provide the technical support requested by member States and reinforce its technical assistance on OSH, including for the implementation of the instruments concerned.

The General Survey, together with the ensuing discussion and outcome adopted, will offer a fundamental contribution to relevant ILO work, particularly in the context of outcome 7 of the Programme and Budget 2018–19 on promoting safe work and workplace compliance including in global supply chains. The Committee also noted that the General Survey and its discussion could contribute to the work of the Standards Review Mechanism and its Tripartite Working Group, particularly its consideration of the standards policy with a view to ensuring institutional coherence on OSH.

Lastly, the Committee was able to adopt a list of 24 individual cases for discussion this year. In doing so, it pursued its efforts towards achieving the balance sought between the fundamental, governance, and technical Conventions, as well as geographical balance and balance between developed and developing countries. Although challenged by time constraints, the Committee was able to examine those 24 cases and adopt conclusions with respect to all of them. The governments concerned were given the opportunity to express their views thereon, and their statements have been duly noted in the Committee's report. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to observe the full engagement of all parties in the process.

In closing, I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr González Nina, for his able skill in running the meetings and his effective time management, which helped the Committee complete its important work. I would also like to thank the Employer Vice-

Chairperson, Ms Regenbogen, and the Worker Vice-Chairperson, Mr Leemans, for their expertise and the collaborative spirit in which they approached the work of the Committee. I recommend that the Conference approve the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

Mr Leemans

Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Committee
on the Application of Standards
(Original French)

In this room, the task of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards is a fundamental one. In monitoring application of the international labour standards, our Committee is part of the founding mission of promoting social justice, which is the goal that the ILO set for itself at its inception. The quest for social justice is never-ending. Social justice is a fundamental value that workers, employers and governments must strive together to craft with their own hands, with willpower and a deep conviction that universal and lasting peace can only exist if founded on social justice. To speak of a never-ending quest for social justice implies that we must remain constantly aware of the social injustices that already exist or seem likely to emerge, identify the root causes and work together to resolve and prevent them.

We must be aware of the challenges raised by the current state of the world, including climate change, armed conflict, globalization and the rise of populism. In order to address them, we must focus on the need to promote and implement a universal system of international labour standards that will strengthen universal human rights and regulate the social, economic, environmental and democratic aspects of globalization.

The role of our Committee is to ensure that international labour standards are respected by the member States that have ratified them. Ensuring strict adherence to these standards must be part of the broader and more ambitious goal of establishing a global legal and social order so that everyone can enjoy truly humane working conditions.

Promoting and defending the universality of labour standards is one of the main ways in which our Organization can respond to the dismantling of social protection. Respect for international labour standards is the first line of defence against discontent arising from injustice, poverty and deprivation caused by violation of the rights enshrined in these instruments. The Committee plays a pivotal role in maintaining social peace by calling to order member States that are said to have violated international labour standards that they have ratified. These standards are – and continue to be – based on the hope of a significant percentage of the world's people for better living conditions. By promoting and developing these standards, we will be able to achieve the goal of establishing truly humane working conditions.

Throughout its work, the Workers' group of the Committee has been mindful of the goal of universal international labour standards and the common aspirations enshrined therein. This task is difficult in an increasingly divided world. The worldwide rise of populism is proof of these divisions. Globalized competition and the economic crisis have led to a resurgence of populist discourse and cultural isolationism. This rise in identity politics and populist discourse overshadows the very socio-economic causes of social injustice. It is these causes that we must address. These observations prompt us to renew the call for cooperation between States in order to promote social progress, raise standards of living and improve the health, education and well-being of all peoples. The ILO's constituents made that wish clear by appending the Declaration of Philadelphia to the Organization's Constitution in 1944.

Turning to the work of our Committee, needless to say we considered a list of individual cases, which are selected on the basis of the report submitted by the Committee of Experts. The procedure for drawing up this list does not seem to be fully understood, or even recognized, by some member States even though it is explained in document D.1 of our Committee and an informal meeting for the governments is organized immediately following the adoption of the list of individual cases. This meeting is, moreover, attended by the Committee's Worker and Employer spokespersons, who can thus provide useful information.

In order to monitor strict adherence to international labour standards, we need an overview of their implementation by member States. That is the sole purpose of the report of the Committee of Experts to which I have just referred. This report is mainly based on the observations that member States are required to submit pursuant to the Constitution of our Organization, supplemented by observations from employers' and workers' organizations. Last year, workers' organizations made a crucial contribution by submitting no less than 846 observations. We would like to thank them and encourage them to continue with this colossal task.

Each year, our Committee holds a special sitting on what is known as "cases of serious failure to fulfil reporting obligations". At this year's meeting, we noted that, once again, too many member States are disregarding these constitutional reporting obligations; this is a major impediment to the supervisory role of the Committee of Experts, and therefore to that of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

This year, the list contained no cases of progress. While the Workers' group has always been in favour of discussing a case of progress, we believe that this case of progress should not be included in the list of 24 cases, which is already quite short in view of the numerous cases of serious violations of the Conventions. Moreover, following the adoption of the list of cases, we said that the Workers' group would have liked to examine a number of additional cases of particular concern, but unfortunately the list is restricted to 24 cases.

Among the cases that we would have liked to examine are those of the Philippines, Indonesia, Colombia and Honduras, where violations of workers' fundamental rights are of particular concern. The increasing use of violence and intimidation has also been identified as a cause of deep concern within the Workers' group. The 2017 International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Global Rights Index, published three days ago, shows evidence of this disturbing trend. Such recourse to violence and intimidation against peaceful fundamental civil and trade union rights movements must be strongly condemned by the international community.

The Workers' group of the Committee wished to emphasize that one case, in particular, was missing from the list: that of Brazil. The Brazilian Senate is currently considering a bill designed to undermine the right to collective bargaining. This attack on fundamental labour rights comes at a time when the country is facing a severe political crisis that raises many serious issues. The changes introduced through this bill will expose millions of workers to exploitation and abuse. Unfortunately, the voices of those who will suffer its catastrophic consequences were not heard; there were no consultations with trade union organizations and the armed forces were deployed to break up demonstrations. This kind of behaviour is not worthy of the modern democracy for which the people of Brazil have fought so hard. The Workers' group of the Committee has said that it was extremely disappointed to have been unable to discuss the case this year. Clearly, this does not mean that the Workers will stand idly by while fundamental rights and democratic institutions in Brazil are destroyed; they will use all available means, including those of the ILO, to halt the decline in social progress that we have seen over the past 20 years.

Having adopted the list, the Workers' group has always been mindful of the very serious situations that were not included. We hope that these cases can be dealt with and resolved as soon as possible within the framework of other ILO supervisory mechanisms. Nevertheless, the consensus approach that has been in place since 2015 has enabled us to adopt conclusions in all of the cases that the Committee had before it. We succeeded in overcoming our differences of opinion and in adopting strong, operational consensus conclusions that will enable the member States that undertake to implement them to bring their legislation and practice into line with the Conventions.

I would like to reiterate, and to stress, that these conclusions are consensus-based. But I would also like to make specific mention of an individual case dealt with in our Committee, that of Bangladesh concerning the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). The Workers' group expressed the desire to include a special paragraph on the Bangladeshi case, but the consensus conclusion adopted does not contain such a paragraph. I want to stress that this does not mean that the Bangladeshi workers who have been deprived of their fundamental rights have lost our support; on the contrary, the Government of Bangladesh must report on the substance of the conclusion adopted before the next session of the Committee of Experts, to be held in November 2017. The Workers' group will carefully read the experts' remarks in order to take stock of developments, and let us hope that these will be positive.

The consensus-based approach should not be allowed to conceal our persistent and sometimes-significant differences of opinion. The right to strike is a case in point. While reiterating that the Workers' group will not fail in its commitment to respect the common position agreed in 2015 and reaffirmed in 2017, we recall that this position does not, of course, mean that we are abandoning our firm position on the right to strike. We have affirmed, we reaffirm and we will always strongly reaffirm that the right to strike is, of necessity, included in Convention No. 87. In today's world, a world characterized by repeated and sometimes violent attacks against social protection for all citizens, fundamental workers' rights, freedom of association and the right to organize, the right to strike is the fundamental right that allows workers to ensure that their voices, too often ignored by governments and employers, are heard.

In addition to examining individual cases, we also looked at the General Survey, which this year focused on the promotion of a safe and healthy working environment with a focus on three industries: construction, mines and agriculture. The General Surveys carried out by the Committee of Experts have always been particularly important for us because they also shed light on the laws and practices of member States that have not ratified the Conventions and Recommendations reviewed, and thus on prospects for the ratification and development of international labour standards.

The subject of this year's General Survey, health and safety, is an issue that has been raised consistently by trade union movements. It is no exaggeration to say that this concern for safeguarding workers' health and, more importantly, their lives has been the source of many social movements throughout history. Occupational safety and health is a key issue that has been discussed through the ages and remains relevant today. We need only look at the statistics provided in the introduction to the General Survey: every day, some 6,300 workers die from occupational accidents or work-related diseases, amounting to more than 2.3 million deaths a year, i.e. one death every 15 seconds. There is clearly a need to act. We welcome the outcome of the Committee's discussion of the General Survey, which the Committee approved and which calls on the Office to undertake a campaign for the ratification of the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187). The Workers' group of the Committee also encourages member States to ratify the sectoral Conventions given the very high accident rates in these sectors.

The Workers' group was also informed about the outcome of the work in the Committee for fundamental principles and rights at work. We therefore welcomed and, moreover, commended in our closing statement to the Committee on the Application of Standards the suggestion by the European Union that we "explore the suitability and feasibility of integrating occupational safety and health (OSH) into [fundamental principles and rights at work] as they related to the life, health and dignity of workers". We attach great importance to this suggestion and hope that the Organization will follow up on it.

In order to undertake this substantive work, our Committee needs to develop effective, efficient working methods given that the Conference has been reduced to two weeks. Our Committee routinely considers its working methods at the outset of its work and a number of technical improvements have been made in order to manage time more efficiently. Nevertheless, reducing the Conference from three to two weeks means an extremely heavy schedule and tight discipline in terms of time management. The main concern of the Workers' group is to maintain the quality of its substantive work. The importance and seriousness of the matters dealt with by the Committee and, more broadly, by the Conference requires fruitful, substantive discussion that allows all Members to share their views and experience in order to enrich the work of the Conference, thereby giving our own work a broader impact.

Tripartism, the hallmark of the ILO, is clearly an ongoing challenge from this point of view. Discussions on the Committee's working methods also dealt with issues relating to cooperation between our Committee and the Committee of Experts, which are in fact two distinct but intrinsically linked pillars of the ILO standards-monitoring system. This issue of cooperation is of paramount importance. In recent years, we have seen increasing cooperation between these two pillars of the monitoring mechanism. The two bodies are independent of one another and must remain so, but without necessarily having to work in isolation. Their independence is essential to the quality of the analyses produced; independent interpretation of the legal scope, content and meaning of the provisions of the Conventions by the experts is vital so that they can analyse the specific situations brought to their attention. This independence must be respected, which of course does not prevent our Committee from providing its own analysis of these situations.

Many initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of our Organization's supervisory mechanisms are under way. The Workers' group of the Committee considers it essential to bear in mind the need to maintain the independence of the various supervisory bodies as a prerequisite for achievement of the ILO's constitutional objectives. The Committee's work can only be a resounding success and make a real contribution to the promotion of social justice if all of the tripartite constituents are fully engaged in this discussion.

The Workers' group also wished to share its concern about the general attitude of the Government group to the work of the Committee. At the opening sitting, we appealed to that group to make a real contribution to the Committee's work, but we were sorry to see that there was a disturbing lack of commitment. Of course, we are not talking about Governments taking the floor in support of countries that are brought before the Committee – clearly, they are fully entitled to support any governments that they choose – but we have seen that in many cases, the governments are not themselves known for respecting the fundamental international labour standards.

These are what we are tempted to call "failures of diplomacy". We hope that these failures, of which we have recently seen frequent examples in the Government group of the Committee, will in future be replaced by a diplomacy that respects and promotes international labour standards and strengthens the tripartism that is the hallmark of the Organization.

The Government group must be convinced of the decisive role that it can play in our Committee's work by endeavouring to promote and respect international labour standards. We have seen moves in this direction by some governments and groups of governments and encourage them to make further efforts in the future.

We nevertheless welcome the constructive work that the Committee has managed to carry out since 2015. The common position adopted in 2015 and reaffirmed in 2017 has made it possible to put the ILO standards supervisory mechanisms back on track, and we hope to be able to further strengthen them in the future.

We would like to conclude by recalling the fundamental mission of our Committee: to protect and promote the application of international labour standards by member States. All of the tripartite constituents in our Committee must be mindful of this fundamental need in order to achieve our Organization's constitutional objectives. In any event, the Workers' group will remain firmly committed to this goal.

One last word: our Committee's success would have been impossible without everyone's participation. I would like to thank, in particular, its Chairperson and Reporter, as well as Ms Regenbogen, the Employer Vice-Chairperson. I think we can safely say that we have achieved outstanding work and a satisfactory outcome.

Ms Regenbogen

Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Committee
on the Application of Standards

On behalf of the Employers' group, I commend the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards and recommend its approval. The work of the Committee took place this year once again in a constructive and open atmosphere. The Committee demonstrated its ability to lead a meaningful and results-oriented tripartite dialogue. It continues to reaffirm its central role in the ILO regular standards supervisory system. In particular, it provides the only opportunity for tripartite constituents from ILO member States to discuss with Governments, Workers, and Employers issues concerning the application of ratified Conventions, as well as concrete steps for achieving improved and sustainable compliance on the basis of the Committee of Experts' technical preparatory work.

As those engaged in labour relations or international relations on an ongoing basis will know, it is possible to have a divergence of views among the social partners. While divergences continue to exist within our Committee on issues concerning the interpretation of Conventions, they were voiced in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. The Committee worked effectively and efficiently, concluding a very heavy workload on time thanks to excellent time management by the Chairperson and the full cooperation of the delegates. Assistance also came from certain technical innovations, and this progress, in our opinion, is evidence of the value and contributions of the working party on working methods. We would welcome additional opportunities for this group to meet and continue its efforts to improve the efficiency of the work of the Committee.

At this session of the Conference the Committee began by discussing the general section of the Committee of Experts' report, with the Employers' group taking the opportunity to highlight a number of positive elements and to propose improvements to the work of the Committee of Experts, the Office, and the overall supervisory system.

Among the recommendations we put forward were some aimed at making the Committee of Experts' report more reader-friendly, easily understandable, transparent and relevant. We also made recommendations regarding the text of submissions concerning individual cases made by workers' and employers' organizations to be made available by

hyperlink in the electronic version of the Committee of Experts' report and on the NORMLEX website, for those organizations that wish to have their comments made public. The Employers also recommended the publication in NORMLEX of either the mission reports issued as follow-up to the conclusions of the Committee, or summaries of mission results containing only non-confidential information.

The Employers also took the opportunity in the general discussion to express three main concerns. First, the increase in serious cases involving member States' failure to meet their reporting obligations. Second, the increased workload of the Committee of Experts and its consequences for their ability to examine all governments' reports in a timely manner, a situation which undermines the effectiveness of the supervisory system. Third, the continued divergence of views on the interpretation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the link that the Committee of Experts has drawn between Convention No. 87 and the right to strike, as well as the extensive interpretation developed by the Committee of Experts on that basis.

In the 2017 report of the Committee of Experts, with respect to Convention No. 87, a total of 45 of the 64 observations and 51 of the 62 direct requests deal in one way or another with the right to strike; 22 direct requests deal exclusively with the right to strike. The Employers remain troubled that, despite disagreement between the tripartite constituents as to whether the right to strike is included in Convention No. 87 – in the Employers' view it is not – the right to strike has remained a major issue in the Experts' supervision of Convention No. 87 and its application by member States. We note that, owing to the lack of consensus, the conclusions of the Committee do not include direction to member States on this matter.

The Employers' group is of the view that matters concerning the right to strike or the regulation of industrial action can be legitimately addressed by governments at the national level. We trust and hope that the Experts, in their next report, will provide an effective basis for meaningful discussion of the issues that fall within the scope of the Conventions and, importantly, that they will facilitate further consensus in our group and not encourage additional divergence.

The Employers suggest that further opportunities for dialogue between the members of the Conference Committee and the members of the Committee of Experts would be welcomed and could help to overcome some of our disagreements in this respect.

We then discussed the General Survey in the Committee's work. The General Survey, as you have heard from the previous speaker, offered an opportunity to highlight both the need to continue improving safety and health at work and the positive effect this has on working conditions, productivity, and economic and social development. We were also able to highlight the fact that OSH is a priority for ILO constituents and should be given clear priority in the ILO's activities, including standards-related activities.

We also discussed whether the ILO could increase its technical assistance to member States on OSH-related issues, in particular for the collection of data, making risk assessments and focusing labour inspection resources on high-risk sectors. A preventive approach to OSH, involving awareness raising, information, advice and incentives, should always be given priority over systems that create penalties or other repressive approaches. The Employers' group took the view that the ILO could help build the capacity of both employers' and workers' organizations on OSH matters, as these organizations play an indispensable role in the promotion of an OSH culture and the implementation of ILO systems and OSH programmes.

To achieve effective OSH management in the workplace, it is important that employers and workers commit to their responsibilities and duties and work together to promote a preventive OSH culture.

While OSH regulation and institutions are very important, the Employers submit that, to be effective, the former must be simple and clear, and the latter not unduly burdened with bureaucracy. The Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), is a modern and flexible ILO instrument. The Employers' group strongly supports the promotion of its ratification and implementation by member States. In order to be effective, national programmes and strategies should be built from a position of tripartite joint ownership. On the other hand, the Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167), the Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176), and the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184), do not seem to have found great acceptance from member States and this is important to take into account. In the medium term, ILO standards on OSH must be consolidated to maintain their relevance as orientation and reference points. Pending their consolidation, reporting and supervision relating to OSH Conventions should focus on the crucial provisions.

I will turn now to the Committee's discussion of individual cases, which, in my view, constitutes the heart and soul of our consideration and discussion of the application of ratified Conventions by member States. The previous speaker spent some time discussing the adoption of both the preliminary and the final list. I wish to lend my support to the adoption of the final list of 24 cases. We believe this is a real achievement constituting a balanced list of cases (16 relating to fundamental Conventions, five to priority Conventions and three to technical Conventions) negotiated in good faith and delivered by the proposed deadline. We made every effort to give due consideration to regional balance, the balance of the Conventions considered, and the level of development of member States whose cases were being considered. We think it is also notable that the Committee on the Application of Standards this year, as last year, adopted short, clear and straightforward conclusions which identify what is expected from the governments in order to apply ratified Conventions in a clear and unambiguous way, and which reflect concrete steps to address compliance issues. Conclusions are not the place to repeat elements of the discussion or information or declarations from a government. This of course will be reproduced in the *Record of Proceedings* so that the reader can gain a full and balanced understanding of the case. Conclusions should be short, clear and straightforward, concern measures within the scope of the Convention being examined, and be based on consensus. Thus, if Employers, Workers or Governments have expressed divergent views, this has been reflected in the Committee's *Record of Proceedings*, not in the conclusions. Divergent views are also presented in Part 1 and Part 2 of the Committee's report (the General Report and the discussion of individual cases, respectively). The Employers believe that the Committee as a whole should be very proud of the active and constructive engagement of the social partners in the preparation of the conclusions.

Concerning follow-up to the Committee's conclusions, we emphasize that this is an important issue and a key facet of tripartite governance within the supervisory system, and without doubt a fundamental element of the ILO's work in relation to the application of member States' obligations under ratified Conventions. We believe that it would be helpful if the Office's technical assistance and follow-up missions focused on the areas where consensus was achieved. The text of the conclusions is a mandate for the Office which should not be unilaterally enlarged without the consensus agreement of the Committee. We encourage the International Labour Standards Department to include a specialist from ACT/EMP and a specialist from ACTRAV in the preparation and implementation of the conclusions. This is consistent with the ILO's tripartite structure and mandate, and ensures that the work of the supervisory system is balanced, transparent, consistent and credible.

In addition, the Employers encourage the International Labour Standards Department to consult the Employers' and Workers' secretariats at the national level to ensure that the most representative employers' and workers' organizations are well prepared to contribute to the success of the respective missions. Lastly, with respect to follow-up work, reports on technical assistance provided and missions undertaken should be made available within a reasonable period, so that the Committee has the latest information available for consideration.

Regarding the cases of greatest concern to the Employers' group this year, the first involves the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its application of the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122). This case centres on the absence of an active employment policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment in consultation with the most representative employers' organization, FEDECAMARAS, and workers' organizations, including the CTV, UNETE, the CGT and CODESA. We will follow this case closely and are very hopeful of progress in the coming months.

We are also deeply concerned at the application of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), by El Salvador. This case revolves around a lack of consultation and autonomy, with workers' and employers' organizations unable to select representatives to tripartite bodies, and also interference by the Government, which has prevented the Higher Labour Council from meeting over the past four years.

We also note with concern the case of Kazakhstan and its application of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). This involves, among other issues, serious infringements of employers' freedom to associate, following the adoption of a law enabling the Government to establish a national chamber of commerce of entrepreneurs. We will monitor this case very closely and encourage the Government to achieve progress.

We regret that we were not able to consider certain cases on the preliminary list, and in this regard I should mention specifically the case of the Plurinational State of Bolivia's application of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131). This is a very serious case involving lack of consultation with the most representative employers' organization between 2006 and 2016 with regard to the fixing of minimum wages. We will keep a close eye on this case and encourage the Government to come into full compliance with its obligations under Convention No. 131 without delay.

Lastly, we would be remiss if we did not mention our concern over the Government of Uruguay. Two agreements were signed in 2015 and 2016, with no result. We are concerned about the Government's failure to implement the conclusions of the Committee, and we hope that, with support from the Office, the Government will move forward to amend the law so that it comes into compliance with the Committee's conclusions.

In closing, the Employers' group commends the Committee on its work this year, including holding rich discussions, reaching consensus when possible, and highlighting a divergence of views when needed. We commend the Committee on its work in the adoption of short, clear and concrete conclusions. The Employers' group takes this opportunity to restate its deep commitment to the ILO supervisory system and to further collaboration aimed at making it more effective, credible, transparent and sustainable.

I must conclude with words of thanks and appreciation. First for Ms Vargha, Director of the International Labour Standards Department, and her team. They worked tirelessly, and without their unfailing dedication to the task we would not have been able to complete our work in such an efficient manner. Also a special thank you to our Chairperson, Mr González Nina for the fair parliamentary running of the Committee's meetings this year,

and the most effective time management. We further thank our Reporter, Mr Khan, who this year ensured that the Committee's work was properly kept on record. Please allow me also to thank the entire Employers' group for their support and dedication, with long hours, lots of reading and lots of work this year. We would especially like to thank Mr Kloosterman, Mr Mackay, Ms Hellebuyck, Ms Al Sulaiman, Mr Echavarría, Mr Mailhos, Mr Ricci, Mr Lukhele, Mr Roch, Mr Etala and Mr de Meester for the help they gave in preparing and presenting individual cases.

Finally, I would also like to conclude by thanking Ms Anzorreguy, Ms Assenza and Ms Pirlor of the IOE secretariat, as well as Mr Hess of ACT/EMP. Their deep knowledge of standards is, as always, extremely helpful to the entire group. Without them, we would certainly be lost.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr Leemans and his team for working together in a spirit of collaboration and mutual understanding and respect. This is not as easy as we make it look, and without Mr Leemans and his constructive approach it would be even more difficult.

Mr González Nina

Chairperson of the Committee
on the Application of Standards
(*Original Spanish*)

It is an honour for me to make a few comments on the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards which it has been my privilege to chair.

First, I should like to thank the Governments for the trust that they placed in me in nominating me to be Chairperson of the Committee. I have been pleased to see the enormous amount of interest that the constituents of this Organization have shown in the work of the Committee, which is a cornerstone of the ILO supervisory system.

This Committee is a tripartite body in which the Organization is able to discuss the application of international labour standards and the operation of the supervisory system. The conclusions adopted by the Committee and the technical work done by the Committee of Experts, together with the recommendations of the Committee on the Freedom of Association and technical assistance from the Office are essential tools for the application of international labour standards by member States.

The Committee has repeatedly shown its usefulness in terms of social dialogue and supporting the tripartite constituents in complying with international labour standards. An outstanding example is the consideration of the General Survey prepared by the Committee of Experts concerning certain instruments relating to OSH.

The Committee requested the Office to take into account the General Survey on Occupational Safety and Health, and the conclusions of its discussion of the General Survey, in the relevant ILO activities, especially with regard to outcome 7 of the Programme and Budget for 2018–19, on promoting safe work and workplace compliance including in global supply chains.

With regard to the individual cases considered, the positive point has been made that a list of 24 cases was adopted at the beginning of the Committee's work within the established deadlines and this enabled all the cases to be discussed thoroughly. The selected cases dealt with the application of fundamental Conventions and Conventions of a technical and promotional nature, and also reflected a regional balance.

The active participation of the Governments and social partners in the Committee's discussions clearly demonstrates their solid commitment to the ILO and its supervisory system. I trust that those countries whose cases were considered were able to find in the discussions the necessary guidance to resolve all the issues raised, and that those countries which find it necessary will avail themselves of ILO technical assistance under this exercise.

I should like to thank Judge Koroma, the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts, who once again attended the sessions of the Conference Committee. The presence of the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts during the Committee's work is an indication of the strong relationship between the two Committees based on a spirit of mutual respect, cooperation, and responsibility.

I would like to convey special thanks to the President and Vice-Presidents of the Conference for visiting the Committee. It was a pleasure to be able to welcome them. I would also like to thank the Reporter for our Committee, Mr Khan, who did not participate in drafting the conclusions, for his extremely effective work. Thanks also to the Employer Vice-Chairperson, Ms Regenbogen, and the Worker Vice-Chairperson, Mr Leemans, and to their teams for the cooperation and courtesy which they showed me as Chairperson.

I would like to pay a very special tribute to the representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Vargha, whose professionalism, dedication and cooperation were essential to the effective work of the Committee. I would also like to thank the other members of the secretariat for their commitment and for the complex tasks that they accomplished. I would like to compliment the interpreters on their excellent work. It only remains for me to invite you to approve the Committee's report.

The President
(Original Spanish)

I declare open the discussion of the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

Mr Gómez Ruiloba
Government, Panama, speaking on behalf of GRULAC
(Original Spanish)

Congratulations to the Officers of this Committee, which is so important for our region, and particularly to the Deputy Minister of Labour of the Dominican Republic, Mr González Nina, who was an excellent representative for our region. The group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) appreciates the leadership that he showed during the Committee's work and would also like to thank the Office and its entire team for their work throughout the Committee, as well as the representatives of the social partners and the participating Governments.

GRULAC reiterates its commitment to the ILO supervisory system, of which the Committee on the Application of Standards is a key component. We have been closely following the various individual cases, participating and expressing views constructively.

However, GRULAC would like to raise a few concerns relating to procedures which have an impact on the governance of the ILO itself, in the spirit of constant improvement which characterizes this honourable Organization.

Firstly, it is important to reinforce both the tripartite and technical nature of the discussions, so that the debate is more closely aligned to the comments of the Committee of Experts and to the Convention under examination. Furthermore, it is important to consider under equal conditions the reports submitted by governments.

We need to review current practices so that the final list of countries whose cases are to be examined is decided further in advance and is based on the seriousness of the cases.

We think that the Committee must have transparent and predictable procedures which avoid the duplication of work by the supervisory mechanisms on the same cases. This is an issue which our region has been highlighting in all forums where it has had the opportunity to do so. The Committee is by definition a tripartite body and that is why we hope to be able to promote greater and more appropriate participation by the governments. As things stand at the moment, the governments do not have a chance to see even slightly in advance the conclusions relating to the individual cases. The governments should have the opportunity to state their views, their support and their objections before the adoption of the conclusions, and those comments should be reflected in the record of the meeting.

GRULAC is fully committed, as always, to working on improving the working methods of the Committee in the context of strengthening the supervisory system. As always, we will participate in the work of the informal tripartite group on this issue, which should be integrated into the strengthening process referred to in the Standards Initiative.

Our regional group fully recognizes the importance of the spirit of cooperation between the Workers and the Employers for the smooth functioning of this long-standing body. However, for the sake of achieving the correct balance and taking the governments into due consideration in order to increase the effectiveness of the Committee, GRULAC considers it essential to review the current working methods.

We trust that our comments will be taken into account with a view to strengthening tripartism, which lies at the heart of this honourable Organization.

Mr Ramadan
Government, Egypt
(*Original Arabic*)

The delegation of Egypt has requested the floor to review a number of important matters with regard to the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards that has just been submitted. We would also like to comment on the interventions we have just heard with regard to the discussion of the case of Egypt, as well as the other individual cases we have discussed over the past two weeks.

Despite the overall positive atmosphere in discussing the case of Egypt and the developments that were laid out by the Government in terms of applying the new Trade Unions Law, the Egyptian delegation was surprised to find that the conclusions prepared by the social partners went against the content of the discussions. It seems as if these conclusions were prepared in advance, regardless of the discussions. In this connection, we would like to present the following points to the Conference so that they can be duly acted upon in the future and so that the clear gap that has appeared in the work of the Committee can be avoided.

First, it is clear from the selection process for the list of individual cases that there were no clear criteria or clearly set procedures for the selection of that list. The list was not equally selected on a geographical basis or with respect to the diversity of countries and this cast a shadow of politicization and lack of transparency on that process.

Second, the social partners, in their teams of Workers and Employers, are alone concerned with the selection of the preliminary list and the final list, without any involvement of the Governments or without the countries concerned being able to hear the deliberations in relation to the Committee of Experts' report. This undermines one of the basic principles of this Organization, which is tripartite dialogue and tripartite participation

in decision making. We find that it is highly important to set out clear procedures for tripartite selection of the preliminary list of countries and the final list of cases. We need to guarantee the participation of everyone concerned and this does not go against the independence of the supervisory mechanism.

Third, the standing orders of the Conference do not explain the methods for selecting the cases and document D.2(Rev.) does not set out any specific procedures in this regard. We need to set up rules of procedure without any ambiguity, rather than relying on past practices that do not have any basis in the regulations.

Fourth, the conclusions of the Committee are not distributed and not shared with the States concerned before being presented in the report. We are always surprised at the conclusions in the report, and this goes against the principles of transparency and clarity that we abide by in our operations here. This view was shared by many delegations and Employer and Worker representatives. It highlighted the need to review this practice that does not serve the interests of the Committee's work.

Fifth, with regard to the presentation of the conclusions, the governments are only given the chance to respond after the conclusions have been adopted and we would like to affirm the inherent right of member States to present their points of view concerning their cases before the conclusions are adopted.

We would like also to follow up on what the spokesperson of the Employers said today with regard to improving the working methods of the Committee. In this regard, it is high time for us to start reviewing the practices that were undermined by the many weaknesses. We would like the Conference to take the necessary steps in this regard and give instructions to establish an open-ended tripartite dialogue under the supervision of the ILO so that any interested Members, not only the members of the Governing Body, can participate and can thoroughly review the Committee's working methods and the procedure for selecting the list of cases on a tripartite basis, while respecting geographical balance in the selection of cases.

Lastly, our cooperation with the ILO is ongoing and we would like to preserve it, as was demonstrated last week through the payment of our financial contribution amounting to US\$500,000.

Mr Wahballah
Worker, Egypt
(Original Arabic)

I take the floor on behalf of the Workers of Egypt. I have followed up the conclusions of the Committee on the Application of Standards and we felt wronged because the Committee has not noted the significant progress that was achieved by Egypt in its labour legislation, including the Trade Unions Law. We were upset to find that the conclusions of the Committee expressed regret at the delay in submitting the new labour legislation to the Committee, which was due in November. Indeed, our legislation is taking some time to be adopted but we, on the Workers' side, were able to accommodate that delay. This is understandable because of the circumstances in the country and the fact that the newly elected Parliament was faced with a large amount of legislation that it had to work on. A joint statement was also issued in this regard by the social partners, including many independent trade unions, concerning a roadmap that would be completed at the latest in October.

This statement was shared with the ILO at the outset of the Conference and the conclusions did not point to any progress made in the legislative process, despite the fact that this legislation is now being finalized in the Egyptian Parliament. As a representative of the Workforce Labour Committee in the Egyptian Parliament, I am fully aware that the bill

currently being finalized in Parliament is in conformity with international standards and opens horizons for the workers in Egypt to thrive. The Workers in Egypt consider the conclusions adopted by the Committee to be a source of injustice to us because in any case the new legislation is being adopted and is in full conformity with international labour standards.

As you may well know, there is a strong tradition of cooperation with the ILO, and we have submitted our plan of action to finalize the new legislation which is being executed almost in full, although I should say that there was no reason to send a delegation to Egypt because our legislative process is ongoing and is almost over. We are told that the Government was supposed to let the Committee of Experts know about the standards and that is indeed the case. As a member of Parliament, I can confirm that the fact that trade unions should be free to exercise their rights is currently under consideration by that body.

Concerning the last paragraph of the conclusions, with regard to sending a direct contacts mission, if you allow me, I am an Egyptian worker, I work with my own hands, I am a blue-collar worker, not a white-collar worker, I would like to express my reservation with regard to that paragraph. We have always been welcoming as a trade union and as workers, welcoming the development cooperation missions, and therefore it is unclear to us what the task of this mission is and what is behind it, especially as an ILO delegation visiting Egypt last week was able to see the developments and progress that we have achieved in the legislative process.

We do not know what this mission can achieve and what it can add to the legislation, which, as I have just said, is almost adopted and is now being finalized in the Egyptian Parliament. I would therefore like to express my reservation with regard to this decision but we call upon the ILO to carry on providing technical support in this regard, through the already ongoing development cooperation with the Government and the social partners.

Mr Sanges Ghetti
Government, Brazil

Brazil aligns itself with the GRULAC statement read by Panama and commends the work of our able Chairperson, Mr González Nina, the efforts of the Office and the contributions of governments and the social partners to the Committee on the Application of Standards.

My country has a long-term commitment to this Organization and to its supervisory mechanisms. We have also been actively engaged in the review of the supervisory system that is ongoing in the Governing Body. In a spirit of cooperation and open dialogue, and together with GRULAC, we have advocated a significant review of the supervisory system in order to strengthen it, to render it more effective, transparent, legitimate, and universal, in order to avoid undue duplications and political exploitation. It is clear, given events that took place during the current session of the Committee, that this important standing committee of the Conference should be urgently included in this review process. Discussions relating to the informal tripartite consultations on the Committee's working methods should be expanded to include more governments and be clearly integrated into the general review of the system.

One example of a key and urgent measure to be taken is giving notice to governments of the Committee's conclusions so that they may have time to adequately prepare themselves for the session on the adoption of these conclusions.

I would also like to respond to remarks made by the Worker spokesperson in relation to the list of cases in the Committee on the Application of Standards. We regret that a list decided by consensus among our social partners has been called into question by the Workers' group. This itself raises a question regarding the Committee's working methods.

The modernization of labour laws, most of which date back to 1943 in Brazil, aims to strengthen collective bargaining, making rules clear and objective, and increasing legal certainty and generating employment. Brazil's Federal Constitution, however, enshrines an extensive number of labour rights and sets limits for collective bargaining, particularly with regard to health and safety standards at work and the principle of the non-waiver of rights. The draft legislation does not undermine any constitutional right and includes guarantees against bogus outsourcing practices. It is still going through proceedings in both houses of Parliament. Once approved, it shall go through the process of sanction or veto by the President. Even after promulgation, the legislative changes are still subject to judicial review bodies that could adjust any irregularity and interpret the legislation in light of the Constitution.

Moreover, the Brazilian Federal Constitution has been closely respected during recent political events and all actions of the Government have been under close scrutiny by the courts and the Supreme Federal Court in particular. Brazil remains willing to cooperate with all groups so as to make progress in this specialized and important Organization, bearing in mind the challenges of the future of the world of work and always in pursuit of decent work everywhere.

Mr González Arenas
Government, Uruguay
(*Original Spanish*)

Concerning a comment made by the Employers' group regarding the complaint submitted in relation to the Act on collective bargaining in Uruguay, I would like to inform those present that there is and will continue to be a firm commitment by my Government to pursue negotiations with the social partners in search of a lasting agreement on this issue, with valuable assistance from the ILO for the next stages of this process. We hope that this commitment to achieving an agreement will also be shown by the social partners in our country, especially the employers.

The President
(*Original Spanish*)

We shall now proceed to the approval of the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference approves the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards, as contained in *Provisional Record* No. 15, Parts One and Two?

(The report, as a whole, is approved.)

I would like to congratulate the Committee on the Application of Standards; its work is one of the cornerstones of the ILO's mission to promote social justice. The Committee deals with matters that can be both difficult and complex and the fact that it finds solutions through consensus testifies to the approach of all those involved, and particularly the constituents and the secretariat. Many thanks and warm congratulations to all.

Recommendation on employment and decent work for peace and resilience and abrogation of four and withdrawal of two obsolete Conventions: Signing

The President
(Original Spanish)

I now have a pleasant task in what has almost become an ILO tradition in recent years: the signing, with the Director-General, of newly adopted instruments and, on this occasion, the abrogation and withdrawal of obsolete ones.

I invite the Director-General, Mr Ryder, to join me in signing the new Recommendation on employment and decent work for peace and resilience and the instruments abrogating four and withdrawing two obsolete Conventions.

(Signature of the Recommendation and the instruments abrogating and withdrawing the obsolete Conventions.)

It has been a genuine honour for me to sign these official ILO instruments. The Recommendation will undoubtedly guide member States in the challenging situations for which it is intended, and the abrogation and withdrawal of the Conventions will help to ensure that the body of international labour instruments is up to date and remains the global benchmark on these matters.

Closing statements

The President
(Original Spanish)

The Conference has now come to the end of its business and has achieved its goals, and it is time to begin our closing ceremony. I shall call on each of my fellow Officers to make their concluding remarks before the assembly.

I give the floor immediately to the Employer Vice-President, Mr Lacasa Aso.

Mr Lacasa Aso
Employer Vice-President of the Conference
(Original Spanish)

I would like to begin by congratulating the President and thanking him for his leadership in firmly and intelligently steering the work of the Conference. Together with the Vice-Presidents, Ms Majali and Ms Clarke Walker, as Officers of the Conference we have been well coordinated under his direction, conducting our work with dedication and in a friendly atmosphere to ensure the success of the Conference.

We have enjoyed the support and immensely professional and committed work of the secretariat, beginning with the Secretary-General and the entire team led by Ms Dimitrova and Mr Llobera. They have been our guardian angels in carrying out our responsibilities.

Lastly, I would also like to thank my group for placing its trust in me and for the honour it has been for my organization and me personally to take on this responsibility. I hope I have lived up to expectations.

In these closing remarks, I would like first to express our satisfaction with the results we have achieved during this session of the Conference.

The two-week format, despite all the challenges, has boosted our credibility and efficiency for the third consecutive year.

The discussions in the Committee on the Application of Standards have served to reinforce its value. Employers and Workers have acted with a sense of commitment and responsibility to reach a timely agreement on the list of cases.

There is more and more ownership in the way the conclusions are drafted. We are clearer about the areas of consensus, and the constituents continue to express themselves freely and air their different points of view, while closely following the important guidance of the Committee of Experts.

We have also expressed three major concerns: the increase in the number of cases of serious failure in respecting reporting obligations; the increase in the experts' workload; and the link that the Committee of Experts continues to make between Convention No. 87 and the right to strike and the broad interpretation that has developed as a result.

However, while there are differences on substantive issues, these were expressed in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect, which I think is very important.

Improvements in the functioning of this important Committee cannot be considered in isolation. They are intrinsically linked to the functioning of the ILO's standards supervisory mechanism. The Employers hope to achieve a positive outcome from the ILO Standards Initiative, which seeks to improve other supervisory instruments, such as the Committee on Freedom of Association or the procedures under article 24.

The general debate on migration may be particularly relevant for ILO credibility. We have to live up to the complex challenges arising from the new migratory phenomena. The discussion provided an opportunity for the ILO to support sound and effective governance that could maximize the benefits of labour migration and minimize its risks.

One key aspect of the conclusions focuses on future ILO action, particularly in the context of the forthcoming Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration. The ILO already has at its disposal a wide range of measures to support its constituents in implementing coherent and comprehensive responses, in order to guide sound and effective governance of labour migration. Instead of introducing new tools, the conclusions – I think aptly – reiterated the need to promote and make better use of existing ones.

Another key aspect of the conclusions was the importance of skills development. The role of the ILO in providing active and effective support for the skills development programme to its constituents will be critical. This practical approach will make a difference and demonstrate ILO relevance and credibility in this field. It now falls to the ILO Governing Body to be ambitious in carrying out this work.

I would also like to express our appreciation for having reached a satisfactory conclusion on such an important issue as fundamental principles and rights at work. That debate allowed us to reiterate our firm commitment, as a group, to the 1998 Declaration and to realization of the four categories of fundamental principles and rights at work. We have shown that social dialogue is alive and active in this Organization, with the rigorous debates that we had on every aspect of this issue proving to be very significant.

The constituents made a great effort to ensure that the work of this Committee complemented and was based on last year's review of the Social Justice Declaration. We urge the ILO to make a greater effort to respond to the needs and diverse situations of member States. This should focus on addressing what we call "implementation gaps", by adopting a "bottom-up" approach to ensure realization of fundamental principles and rights at work on the ground.

Looking to the future, we must continue to build on these conclusions and the progress made, especially now that the twentieth anniversary of the 1998 Declaration and the ILO centenary celebrations are approaching.

The Employers' group actively supported the inclusion in the agenda of an item entitled "Employment and decent work for peace and resilience: Revision of the Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation, 1944 (No. 71)", as we believe that updating this instrument could help strengthen the ILO's impact and authority. The international community faces numerous challenges when wars and disasters occur, many of which are at the heart of the ILO's mandate, such as the loss of jobs and skills owing to migration or the breakdown of social cohesion. In order to face these challenges, it will be crucial to have an environment conducive to sustainable enterprises. The discussions on updating this important Recommendation were not easy, but I believe they proved to be very fruitful. The constituents strove to overcome the points of controversy that sometimes threatened the attainment of a consensual and practical outcome on such an important issue.

Paragraphs 183 to 189 of the second report of the Credentials Committee raised a number of pertinent issues requiring immediate attention by the Governing Body, since they relate to the monitoring of member States' legitimate and tripartite participation in the Conference. This is a response to the increase in the number of cases involving repeated failure by some countries to adhere to fundamental constitutional obligations on the accreditation of delegations.

The rich exchange of views on the Green Initiative has undoubtedly provided us with a better basis for understanding the ILO's position on the challenging scenario of climate change. The ILO now needs to make a contribution in this area, using its tripartite strength to the maximum and with intelligence.

The World of Work Summit was also relevant and may help identify more clearly the areas in which the ILO could assist women in the future world of work, although I believe that some lessons can already be learned about how better to channel spontaneous interaction between the constituents.

In summary, I believe that we have lived up to expectations and, in order to maintain that success, we must now commit ourselves to appropriate and thorough follow-up of the outcomes agreed at this session of the Conference.

Ms Clarke Walker

Worker Vice-President of the Conference

It has been a great pleasure and honour for me to be elected and to serve as Vice-President of the 106th Session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Workers' delegates for the trust that they have placed in me. I would also like to congratulate the President of the Conference, Mr Carles Rudy of Panama; the Government Vice-President, Ms Majali of Jordan; and the Employer Vice-President, Mr Lacasa Aso of Spain, on their excellent and fruitful cooperation.

Let me start by expressing some concern. I recall the words of the Secretary-General, in his opening statement last week, on the importance and relevance of the ILO Constitution for today's world of work. It is indeed crucial to recall our values, especially in these difficult social and economic times with many challenges surrounding us. It is therefore disheartening to see how difficult some of the discussions have been at this session of the Conference; very fundamental values and rights have been questioned or opposed in the various committees.

Despite this, I welcome the fact that the spirit of consensus prevailed and all the committees were able to adopt good conclusions. I congratulate the Conference on the successful adoption of a new instrument that reaffirms the principle of universal and lasting peace based on social justice and social dialogue.

I would also like to welcome the adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2018–19, which will enable this Organization to carry out the work that we have all asked it to do during the Conference.

Allow me now to briefly address the various subjects discussed at our Conference this year.

Let me start with the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards. This year, the Committee was once again able to examine the application of international labour standards in 24 countries. It discussed five so-called “double-footnoted” cases, in which the Committee of Experts requested governments to supply full particulars to the Conference. These countries included Ecuador, in relation to the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); El Salvador, in relation to the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144); Malaysia, in relation to the Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925 (No. 19); Poland, in relation to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); and Ukraine, in relation to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129). A consensual list of cases relating to 19 additional countries, which included fundamental governance and technical Conventions, was agreed upon.

The Workers' group regrets that a number of countries in which there are serious violations of fundamental rights were not examined by the Committee. These countries include Brazil, Colombia, Belarus, Honduras, Indonesia and the Philippines. Our group welcomes the clear and straightforward conclusions adopted by the Committee in order to provide recommendations to governments in relation to their obligations under the relevant Conventions ratified. This year's conclusions include mention of a high-level tripartite mission to Kazakhstan, a high-level mission to Mauritania and direct contacts missions to Bahrain, Egypt and Algeria.

Let me now turn to the Committee on Employment and Decent Work for the Transition to Peace, which has ably finalized its work on the Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation, 1944 (No. 71). The Workers' group arrived here with the firm determination to achieve a Recommendation focused on employment and decent work in the transition from war to peace, disasters and building resilience. We wanted a standard that clearly reflected the decent work pillars of social protection, social dialogue, and fundamental principles and rights at work. It was important to recognize the importance of public services and the role of the public sector; the need for just transition measures towards an ecologically sustainable economy as an element of responding to disasters and building resilience; and progress with due diligence in global supply chains operating in countries in situations of crisis or recovery. It was also important to provide concrete measures to ensure respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work with regard to refugees, migrants and other forcibly displaced persons within countries and across borders.

We have achieved much of that. We are convinced that the new instrument will serve the cause of employment and decent work in the transition from war to peace, during disasters and in strengthening resilience. But of course it will only do so if we dedicate ourselves to giving it life and pertinence.

We also welcome the conclusions of the Committee for Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We congratulate the Committee on its speedy work, and even more so on its spirit of consensus. Fundamental principles and rights at work are at the heart of this Organization; they are the human rights of workers. It is therefore reassuring to know that the constituents have renewed their commitment to them and that there was a strong consensus on the way to make better progress in ensuring their full respect, promotion and realization.

The conclusions outline a clear direction for the road ahead. There is commitment to work towards universal ratification of all the core labour standards by the centenary in 2019. In the campaign for ratification, but also with a view to tackling gaps in implementation, we welcome the clear focus on freedom of association and collective bargaining as enabling rights. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an important opportunity for the ILO to develop a plan of action to support projects around target 8.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers. Indeed, this target can only be reached through tripartism, social dialogue, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

We are facing serious challenges, but with an ILO that will scale-up its work on policy coherence, partnerships with and outreach to economic institutions, and capacity building for constituents, as well as research, analysis and data to guide future standard setting and policy development, we are confident in facing the challenges of the future of work with freedom of association and through tripartism, social dialogue and collective bargaining in the same spirit of consensus.

Last but not least, the Committee for Labour Migration, despite difficult and long discussions, was able to achieve a good result and adopt an important set of conclusions. They reaffirm the important leadership role of the ILO in the area of labour migration based on tripartism and our normative framework, not only in its future work but with a view to the development of the Global Compact for Migration. The relevance of the migration Conventions in protecting the rights of migrant workers and contributing to good labour migration governance is also reaffirmed.

The conclusions identify key areas that warrant special attention. Three of these areas that I would like to mention in particular focus on the need to address much more effectively abuses with regard to temporary migration, irregular migration and fair recruitment. Protection of migrant workers, their right to organize, and especially the need to guarantee equal treatment for migrant workers are important achievements.

The conclusions include priorities for action by the ILO in all of these areas, in particular raising awareness of the migration Conventions; assessing the decent work impacts of temporary migration schemes; and assessing the impact of the recently adopted operational guidelines for fair recruitment.

We therefore think that these conclusions strengthen the ILO's mandate for fair labour migration.

The work of all these committees is a manifestation of the founding objectives of the ILO and its commitment to social justice. Its unique tripartite structure gives an equal voice to workers, employers and governments in advancing internationally recognized human and

labour rights in pursuit of its founding mission: that social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.

The ILO must continue to pursue social dialogue and promote tripartism in order not only to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men, but also to assist in their implementation.

My report would not be complete without mentioning the world of work. This year the World of Work Summit was dedicated to the theme: “A better future for women at work”. The Workers welcomed the interactive nature of the Summit and its engagement of ILO stakeholders and constituents in discussing how to ensure a better future of work for women and looking at work–life balance, the care economy, violence and harassment as barriers to decent work, and the gender pay gap. A key part of the discussion also included the role that men must play in this process. The Summit also welcomed three women Presidents, who spoke about how they had advanced the gender equality agenda.

Finally, let me congratulate all of the new Governing Body members on their election and wish them all success in their important work over the next three years.

Let me conclude by thanking the Secretary-General, the ILO staff and the interpreters who worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the Conference, as well as all of my Worker colleagues, who did an excellent job in the various committees.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you all a safe journey back home.

Ms Majali

Government Vice-President of the Conference

Let me start by saying that I have been humbled to serve as Government Vice-President of the 106th International Labour Conference. In this regard, I would like to thank the Asia and Pacific group for its support and the trust it placed in me, and the Conference for its confidence.

The Government of my country takes its membership of the ILO very seriously and makes every effort to interact and participate in the business of the Organization and also to promote and sustain ILO values. This is built on Jordan’s long history of close cooperation with the ILO since joining the Organization in 1956. Both His Majesty the late King Hussein and His Majesty King Abdullah II addressed the ILC, in 1997 and 2003, respectively, and in more recent times our former Prime Minister, Mr Abdullah Ensour, was a guest at this Conference.

Having said this, allow me to share some of my sentiments and observations on the Conference, as I sensed or heard expressed by many participants in their speeches, in the plenary, in the Committees or in the corridors. First, the agenda of this session of the Conference was most suitable and timely, as were the Reports of the Director-General. Once again, heads of state, ministers and world leaders representing the three constituents met for two weeks, and all were in agreement on the fundamental and pivotal role that the ILO plays in promoting social justice and economic advancement for all workers.

Members reiterated their thanks to the Secretary-General and for the manifold important support and the partnership and cooperation that the ILO provides. This year the Conference, despite being shorter than previous Conferences, also still managed to complete its work on time and in a most satisfactory manner, thanks to the able management of our President, the chairpersons of the different Committees and the ILO’s secretariat and staff.

The five Committees established for our Conference worked steadfastly and studiously and managed to achieve satisfactory outcomes. The discussions were difficult at times but, under the leadership and able stewardship of the chairpersons and in view of the spirit of understanding and cooperation that finally prevailed, the Committees were able to achieve their desired results.

With respect to the work of the Committee for Labour Migration, its work was harmonious, if arduous. The Committee held a number of very long sittings in order to achieve its results, with its Drafting Committee in particular working late into the night, and was able to adopt its conclusions as a result of true tripartite negotiations.

As for the Committee on Employment and Decent Work for the Transition to Peace, as had been expected, completing the task of revising Recommendation No. 71 was not easy. With the cooperation, again, of the three constituents and, under the capable leadership of the Chairperson and with the assistance of the ILO secretariat and staff, the Committee was able to come up with a text that was more acceptable and balanced than initially thought possible. Indeed, the language on international cooperation in the different sections is most encouraging, as well as many other good things in this Recommendation. We thank the Chairperson, as well as the ILO secretariat, including Mr Vines, for their hard work in ensuring this successful outcome.

Turning now to the Committee for Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, I should like to echo the Secretary-General's opening remarks and highlight the fact that this question is one of the ILO's core issues – a subject that could not be more ILO. This Committee also worked in a harmonious atmosphere and, after long discussions, was able to work towards tripartite agreement on even the most difficult issues. The Committee's conclusions and six-year plan provide concrete targets from which States can choose in developing their policies and programmes.

Our World of Work Summit this year was on another theme that remains very topical, that of gender equality. As the Secretary-General rightly pointed out, we still have a very long way to go to attain full equality, and the reality is that progress in that direction is unacceptably slow. It is for this reason that the ILO launched its women at work Centenary Initiative and decided to dedicate this year's World of Work Summit to the issue of gender equality. In the Summit this year, we were honoured by the participation of three women Presidents of their countries: Malta, Mauritius, and Nepal. The discussion was, of course, very interesting, as was the input of the three lady Presidents who graced our assembly with their presence.

Also on gender equality, I would like, if I may, to point to the gender balance achieved with respect to the Officers of the Conference this year. With my colleague, the Worker Vice-President, women represent 50 per cent of the Officers. I understand from the Credentials Committee that women's participation in the Conference is struggling to go far beyond 30 per cent and is still a long way from a true gender balance. I know that this is one of the Director-General's Centenary Initiatives and hence it is hoped that we, all Government colleagues, Employers and Workers, will include more women in our delegations.

The question of child labour has also featured largely during our Conference and, as usual, the ILO led the celebrations of the World Day against Child Labour. The ceremony held beside Michelangelo Pistoletto's "Rebirth" sculpture in the Parc de l'Ariana at the Palais des Nations was very moving and reminded us all of the terrible scourge of child labour. Child labour is an important issue for my country. Indeed, Her Majesty Queen Rania was among the First Ladies that had worked with the ILO on this issue, and my country has implemented many programmes and projects with the ILO and received its support on child labour.

In the plenary, the subject of the Director-General's Report *Work in a changing climate: The Green Initiative* struck a very strong note with many participants, and numerous speakers supported this Report. There was clear support expressed for the ILO's action in this very important sphere and member States, including my Government, look forward to future discussions on this important subject.

The Director-General again this year presented his Report, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. As in previous years, he sent a mission to Israel and the occupied Arab territories in order to make as full an assessment as possible of the situation of workers there. His Report and concluding observations found clear support by delegations and was widely discussed.

The Conference adopted the ILO's programme and budget for the next biennium. This is a very important moment in the life of an organization, and I wish to congratulate the Director-General on the huge level of support that this adoption shows for the direction in which he is steering the ILO. I also wish, of course, to congratulate him on his recent election to a second mandate as Director-General. Through his unanimous election, he has the full confidence of all tripartite constituents, including that of my country, Jordan.

I shall conclude my remarks with these words and retain you only to thank my fellow Officers of the Conference, the President, Mr Carles Rudy, the Employer Vice-President, Mr Lacasa Aso, and the Worker Vice-President, Ms Clarke Walker. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to work with them all on a conference and in a conference with such a full and up-to-the-minute agenda.

Allow me also to extend my sincere thanks to ILO officials and members of the secretariat, whose assistance was most vital to me in performing my duties as Vice-President. I mention in particular Ms Dimitrova, Mr Higgins, Mr Salazar, Ms Ontal and Ms Pralong. I would also like to thank Mr Ulrich Seidenberger, Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body, for his comprehensive report on the Governing Body to the ILC for the year 2016–17 and for all his efforts throughout his tenure. I also thank the interpreters for their hard work, without whom our deliberations would have been very difficult, if not impossible.

Last, but not least, we have worked together collectively most constructively, and in our tripartite efforts we were able to bring the Conference to a successful conclusion. It is hoped that we have advanced one step further towards ensuring social justice and decent work, and perhaps even an understanding of the importance of gender equality. May all these good efforts and our decisions also find their way into implementation.

The Secretary-General of the Conference

Under the leadership of our President, and that of the Vice-Presidents, this session of the Conference is coming to its conclusion. We got there. And the reports that we have received and adopted here in plenary show that it is a successful conclusion reached after long, hard and constructive work, to which delegates from all groups and from all regions have contributed in accordance with the spirit, and indeed the responsibilities, of tripartism.

My first conclusion from the experience of the last two weeks is that our reformed and shorter Conference works, and it works well. Yes, it certainly makes demands of us all – sometimes to the limits of what is reasonable. But I do feel confident that we have managed now to combine the real needs of efficiency and focus with the imperative of providing the Conference with the conditions it must have to do its work fully. And all of you seem to agree, because meeting rooms have been full and the number of accredited participants was 6,092. That is an absolute record. We have dealt with issues which have clearly engaged your interest and, in some instances, your passion as well.

This is all to the good, but let me add that the proportion of female participation was 31.3 per cent. After yesterday's World of Work Summit and what we heard from the three women Presidents who were our distinguished guests, I am going to leave it to you to draw your own conclusions from that number. For my part, I would just say that it does not seem to me to be the Conference's highest achievement. We must learn from all the good things of this Conference, but particularly from those where, maybe, we can still do better. But my own conviction is that there is now little or, indeed, no margin to shorten our Conference further without placing in danger its vital functions.

The three technical committees that did the heavy work of this Conference have all produced consensus outcomes which speak to their determination to combine determined defence of interests with the pursuit of compromise and agreement. I think that anyone who examines all of these outcomes might come to the same three conclusions that I have come to: Firstly, that the pursuit of tripartite consensus does not mean the evacuation of content or the retreat into generalities or lowest common denominators, because you have produced results of real substance and real importance. Secondly, that there are real and significant linkages between the agenda items that were addressed at this session of the Conference, and I think that is evidence of the overall coherence of the ILO's work and the real topical relevance of the issues which the Governing Body decided to put before the Conference. And thirdly, that what you have done, and which is obviously key to the world of work and the ILO, is also a major contribution to ongoing processes in the broader multilateral system: next year's UN global compact for migration, for example, and the one on refugees; the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of course; and also the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. This does not give evidence of mission creep, but rather of an entirely positive ILO contribution to the broader international agenda. The world of work has everything to gain from that.

The details of the substantive results recorded have been extensively covered in all of the committee reports and the debates upon them, so I am going to comment only briefly on these substantive results; this brevity, however, is not any reflection of their significance. The adoption of a new Recommendation – we are going to get to know it as Recommendation No. 205 – on employment and decent work for peace and resilience is very significant, and at several levels. Significant because the Conference, in this second debate, showed its remarkable capacity to address and to overcome some of the tough and unresolved challenges that remained from its first discussion. Significant because it shows, unequivocally, that the ILO is ready and able to update its standards, to make them robust, to keep them up to date and to keep them relevant. And significant as well because this Recommendation is a vital answer from the world of work to millions of people affected by conflict, crisis, disaster or displacement. It shows not only that we are listening to them, but also that we are acting for them and acting with them.

The responsibilities of the ILO in respect of migration are, of course, not new. But I think we are now called upon to discharge them in rapidly changing circumstances, and under the pressure of widespread governance deficits which, unfortunately, allow so much space for serious abuse and, too frequently, a deterioration of public attitudes and political discourse towards migrants and migration. I believe it is our responsibility to make no concessions to attitudes which are offensive to the ILO's values and standards, but rather to provide concrete guidance and real leadership in the construction of governance systems for migration which do address the real policy challenges involved and which allow for the realization of the benefits of migration for all concerned – that elusive but essential “win-win” outcome.

I was struck by the fact that many who spoke yesterday afternoon on the adoption of the report on fundamental principles and rights at work made reference to both of the solemn declarations that the ILO has adopted over the last 20 years: the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which governs these recurrent Conference discussions, and

the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. I thought that the strong tripartite support for both of those Declarations was testimony to just how deeply embedded the promotion of human rights at work is in the institutionality and, indeed, in the very purpose, the very identity of the International Labour Organization. That is perhaps a commonplace, but I think it is nevertheless a thought that is worth hanging on to at a time when not only is universal respect for these rights pending business and some distance still from universal respect and application, but also the specific meaning and application of those rights and principles still stand at the centre of some of the more turbulent controversies that our Organization has known in recent years.

That takes me on to the Committee on the Application of Standards. Entering into the spirit of that Committee, I am going to take the risk of describing it as “a case of progress”. Once again, the Committee’s work was completed successfully, and I now dare to believe that this is, as it should be, the “new normal” for this key Conference activity.

I think it important to insist on the significance of the discussion of the Committee of Experts’ General Survey on occupational safety and health. It should not go unremarked upon, primarily because work continues to take too great a toll on workers’ lives and health, but also because this discussion provides a valuable input, an orientation, as we go to the 21st World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, to be held this September in Singapore.

But of course I am aware – and this has been said by speakers this afternoon – that it is the country cases that, as always, absorb most of the Committee’s energy and attention, and I have no intention of commenting on any of them individually. But there is one general point – an appeal actually – that I would like to make. Colleagues, the cases considered do not constitute a “blacklist” and I hope that this type of usage will no longer be employed because it does a disservice to the Committee; it mischaracterizes what it does and it makes its already difficult work still more difficult. As the name suggests, the Committee’s objective is to promote full application of ratified Conventions, and the best way to do that is through open dialogue oriented to finding solutions, not inflicting condemnation.

And while I am on the subject of standards, and having heard quite a lot of concerns expressed about inadequate rates of ratification of Conventions, I would like to inform the Conference of the ratifications that I have received in the course of these last two weeks. We have had a total of 16 new ratifications. Four of those have been on fundamental rights Conventions: the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), by Thailand; the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), by Canada; and, remarkably and very welcome, India’s ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). We have also had four ratifications of the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930. But let us all keep in mind that we have to get to 50 ratifications – the “50 for Freedom” target – by the end of next year. So I want to encourage all of you to follow the example that has been given. And, of course, the abrogation and withdrawal of Conventions ceremony that we have just witnessed is another aspect of this element of moving forward on our standards agenda.

Let me then turn to the plenary debate on my own Report to the Conference on the Green Initiative, one of the ILO Centenary Initiatives. Now this debate has been genuinely valuable, and I want to give you a brief first reaction to what I have heard. Firstly, and I think most obviously, the overwhelming majority of the 295 speakers expressed support for the ILO’s new and growing activities around the world of work and climate change, and specifically on a just transition to environmental sustainability. This went hand in hand with the very many expressions of support from all groups for the 2015 Paris Agreement. So I do feel confident that the general thrust of the Green Initiative and of my report – including the inclusion of a cross-cutting policy driver on just transition in the ILO Programme and Budget

for 2018–19, which was adopted by the Conference with only two abstentions – has met with your very broad approval, and this is welcome.

But – and this needs to be recognized – important criticisms or reservations, as well as guidance, were also offered, and some of these even extended to questioning whether it was appropriate at all to seek to integrate environmental sustainability into ILO activity and the Decent Work Agenda. Might that not dilute the ILO’s focus? Or obstruct its pursuit of social justice? But this was not, I think, the general mood. More specifically, it was objected that it was wrong to conceive of the world of work as divided into a “green and clean” part and a “brown and dirty” part. I think that is correct, and that binary approach was certainly not the intention of my report, but we will pay attention to it. There were also calls to give greater emphasis to skills development for a just transition, and to individual attitudes and behaviour.

Let me underline that it is well understood that just transition will take place in an extremely complex and challenging context. It is not a simple, unilinear progression from brown to green. We understand, too, that – as many of you have said – those complexities and those challenges will best be addressed through social dialogue. Therefore, it is incumbent on the ILO to build constituent capacities for that dialogue and to make it effective. Moreover, all of this needs to be framed in the context of national ownership and the national contributions agreed by member States in the context of the Paris Agreement. There was, of course, strong encouragement from you to make full use of the 2015 ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* for all of these purposes.

I need to mention this for purposes of clarity, because it is a sensitive matter: we heard from the Employer spokesperson at the outset of this debate an expression of concern that in my Report I had seemed – and I am going to quote the spokesperson – I had seemed to “set a date for the adoption of standards on a just transition”. Now let me just recall what I actually said in my Report, and I again quote: “At this juncture ... there is no clear consensus in the Organization over the appropriateness of the adoption of standards on just transition. That is a matter of discussion on another occasion.” That is all. Clearly, these are issues that we will need to consider further as we advance implementation of the Green Initiative.

I also believe that we need to think together further on what we can – and, I believe, what we should – be doing practically and concretely to address the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. If you looked at the content of my Report on that matter, none of you can be in any doubt about the need for us to come together around that objective.

But for now, as our Conference comes to its end, I think we can all share the sentiment of a job well done, a feeling of fatigue and satisfaction that often comes at the end of a day, or rather two weeks, of decent and meaningful work. And as I have already paid sincere tribute to the way that Government, Employer and Worker representatives have, once more, shown that indeed tripartism does deliver the goods, I hope you will also allow me the liberty of expressing gratitude and thanks to all of my colleagues who have worked so hard, so long and so competently to support what you have achieved. Some of them were there with you in the meeting rooms, some were hidden away in offices, in corridors, in the interpretation booths or outside the building. But let me say that I think all of them have been brilliant, and I thank them, and I thank you, and I wish you a speedy and safe return to your homes and to your loved ones.

The President (Original Spanish)

With your permission, I would like to make a few personal remarks before continuing with our closing ceremony.

After two weeks of hard work and with the participation of 6,000 delegates from 187 member States, the time has come to close the 106th Session of the International Labour Conference. First, allow me to recall that the Report of the Director-General on one of the seven Centenary Initiatives, *Work in a changing climate: The Green Initiative*; the considerations contained in that document; and the contributions of the various speakers offer an opportunity to draw a line separating “before” and “after” in the ILO’s work. Environmental sustainability should unquestionably be a cross-cutting issue for the Organization because without the earth, there can be no jobs and without jobs, there can be no social or economic sustainability.

At the same time, the issues dealt with in the committees, at the World of Work Summit, during the commemoration of the World Day against Child Labour and in the reports that we have examined all testify to the hard work that has been done, the validity of our mission and the challenges and commitments that lie ahead, as the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay reaffirmed in his opening speech to this Conference.

Both the agreements reached and the disagreements expressed throughout our discussions form part of the DNA of this Organization.

Tripartism means social peace in our countries and the understanding that consensus, dialogue and respect for the right to disagree are the path towards social peace. Indeed, it is this social dialogue that has enabled us to achieve such encouraging and promising outcomes from our committees and debates.

We adopted a new Framework for action for the effective and universal respect, promotion and realization of fundamental principles and rights at work, which will guide the Organization’s work over the next six years.

As we move towards the centenary of the ILO, this Framework reflects strong tripartite consensus on the need to address gaps in implementation and to promote universal ratification of the fundamental Conventions.

Respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining and the elimination of forced labour, child labour and all forms of discrimination at work are at the heart of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda. These rights are universal and inalienable and the new Framework for action is an important milestone that offers clear and specific guidance. Its adoption is further proof of the ongoing consensus in support of fundamental principles and rights at work.

We need to understand that collective agreements are the path towards labour peace, and this one enshrines respect for workers’ dignity; its full implementation will lead to workers’ happiness, and thence to progress and economic growth shared by capital and labour. Let us fight for this labour peace and not forget that social harmony forms the bedrock of respect for individuals, workers and the concept or standard on which those labour relations are built.

In light of the complexity of labour migration and its growing importance for employment, the general debate in the Conference could not have been more timely or relevant.

The conclusions of the Committee for Labour Migration clearly reflect the importance of fair and effective labour migration management to the ILO. They identify the opportunities, challenges and risks of labour migration, the areas warranting special attention and the priorities for ILO action and recognize that labour migration governance, including through bilateral and multilateral agreements, can be more beneficial if they are based on social dialogue.

The Committee's conclusions recognize that maximizing the benefits of labour migration and minimizing the risks and social costs requires sound and effective labour migration governance. Indeed, well-governed labour migration can contribute to sustainable development for countries of origin, transit and destination. It can balance labour supply and demand, help develop and transfer skills at all levels, contribute to social protection systems, foster innovation and enrich communities both culturally and socially. The conclusions reaffirm the commitment to the ILO's agenda for fair migration with its twofold objective of protecting migrant workers and their rights and responding to labour market needs, ensuring that they work efficiently and inclusively.

The Committee on Employment and Decent Work for the Transition to Peace had some long and difficult days, but it was through social dialogue that it was able to adopt a new Recommendation on decent work and employment for peace and resilience. There was broad tripartite support for this Recommendation and I congratulate the Committee for a job well done and the tripartite constituents of the ILO for adopting such an up-to-date standard.

The new instrument provides fresh guidance on ways to generate employment and decent work in response to crisis situations arising from conflicts or disasters and to promote peace and resilience. This guidance goes beyond reconstruction to focus on prevention and resilience as well in order to anticipate and mitigate the impact of crises.

I would like to echo the words of the Chairperson of the Committee, who said in his statement that the Recommendation would also be highly relevant to the international community's efforts to find timely responses and lasting solutions to humanitarian crises.

The discussions in the Committee on the Application of Standards gave further proof that the Committee is the ideal forum for social dialogue. It considered the General Survey on several instruments concerning occupational safety and health, prepared by the Committee of Experts, and requested the Office to bear in mind the conclusions reached in the Committee, particularly with regard to promoting safe work and workplace compliance including in global supply chains.

We need to invest in workers' welfare as a social investment that will bring about enhanced productivity and to promote free, creative, participatory, productive and supportive work. The discussion of individual cases this year will allow several member States to benefit, should they wish, from technical assistance in addressing obstacles to application of the Conventions that they have ratified, and thus to improve labour welfare standards.

It is sometimes said that the International Labour Conference is labour's global parliament and that the Committee on the Application of Standards is the conscience of the world of work. There can be no peaceful working relations unless every sector lives up to its responsibilities; let us never forget that one sector's interference with another can rupture and upset this mutual understanding and the potential for open dialogue and trust between social partners.

This year, the central theme of our commemoration of the World Day against Child Labour was "In conflicts and disasters, protect children from child labour". The many children who have been displaced or are living as refugees in other countries are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and to child labour, in which millions of them are involved as a result of conflict situations and disasters. The elimination of child labour is a subject on which all here can agree, but we must not drop our guard as we move towards the goal of eliminating it by 2025. And here I would like to recall that the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 14 to 16 November 2017.

In response to concerns expressed by the constituents of this Organization, we also held a World of Work Summit on the theme: “A better future for women at work”. Women continue to face many obstacles in entering the labour market and advancing their careers. Their employment rate is still lower than men’s; they are more likely to be unemployed; informality and poverty have a woman’s face; and women earn less for the same work and work of equal value. These statistics can be seen to a greater or lesser extent in every country, regardless of its level of development.

We need to ensure that our policies on employment, training, and production and enterprise development include measures specifically designed to address the many forms of discrimination against women and give them the same opportunities as men. The challenge that we face is to achieve inclusive transformation and on this issue, we must not forget the young people who are calling for job opportunities; they too want to be part of the sustainable development of our peoples.

We had the opportunity to hear from three distinguished women – the Presidents of Malta, Mauritius and Nepal – who have broken through the glass ceiling; they are among the exceptions.

We must all undertake to dismantle the misogynist structures that were considered normal when created by a society that saw women in a secondary, subsidiary role.

If we compare the photos from the earliest sessions of the International Labour Conference with current ones, we see that diversity is one of the characteristics of the world of work today. But if a picture is worth a thousand words, I think we can say that the one we see today, with many more women but still fewer than the men, reflects the reality that while progress has been made, much clearly remains to be done; as an example, consider that only 31.1 per cent of the delegates to this Conference were women.

So, after a summary of these past two weeks, we come to the end. But I cannot close without conveying my own gratitude and that of the tripartite community of the Republic of Panama for the opportunity to preside over this 106th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would like to thank Mr Ryder, Director-General and Secretary-General of this Conference, on my own behalf for his strong support for this presidency, his commitment, his leadership and his loyalty to the principles and values of the ILO.

My sincere thanks go to the delegations that have honoured us by their presence and to the Office’s translators, interpreters and other staff members who have made everything work so smoothly. Specifically, I would like to thank those who worked so closely with me, guided my decision-making and met my every expectation: Ms Dimitrova, Mr Llobera, Mr Higgins, Ms Moreno and Ms Juvet-Mir.

Special thanks are also due to the Vice-Presidents of this 106th Session of the Conference: for the Governments, the Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Her Excellency Ms Majali; for the Workers, Ms Clarke Walker; and for the Employers, Mr Lacasa Aso; they helped to lighten my burden, their support was vital to our success and without them, this session of the Conference would not have been possible.

Before closing, I would like to recall that the Secretary-General has set us the task of reflecting on the future of work as we move towards our centenary. To that end, we must consider what we need to do differently in order to achieve different outcomes. I encourage you to take these ideas home to your own countries and give them tripartite consideration.

Lastly, allow me to close with an idea expressed in 1947 by one of my country's trade union leaders, Ms Marta Matamoros: "We will only achieve our common objective when we organize and when we respect the right to disagree. That is the strength of tripartism." And I would add, "The path is dialogue; the path is organization. That is the strength of tripartism and the strength of this Organization."

The Secretary-General of the Conference

We did not quite finish. As you know, we have changed, we have reformed, we have improved a lot of things at this Conference – at least that is what I try to tell you. But there is one thing that we do not want to change, we do not want to reform, and that is the tradition that we have at the end of our session, in honour of the President who has guided our work over the Conference period. I think we all knew when we started that we had put ourselves in the hands of a very, very able President in Minister Carles Rudy of Panama, whom we know very well in this house. I do not know how well you know the country of Panama, from which he comes, but I am sure that everybody in the room knows that the Panamanians are very good at one thing: building canals. They are very, very good at building canals. They have the talent to build canals to bring one ocean together with another ocean, two oceans through a canal. But the President has done something a bit more ambitious at this session of the Conference. He has helped to build bridges to bring three groups together: Governments, Workers and Employers. He has applied great Panamanian talent and his own personal qualities to bring us all together to this successful conclusion. Our tradition is always to present the President, as a symbol of his authority and a symbol of our appreciation, with the *martillo*, the gavel, which I think he has used very sparingly to keep authority in the room. *Muchísimas gracias.*

The President (Original Spanish)

Thank you very much to all the participants. I declare the 106th Session of the International Labour Conference closed.

(The Conference adjourned sine die at 6.25 p.m.)