



19th American Regional Meeting

Panama City, Panama, 2–5 October 2018

AMRM.19/D.5

Final report of the meeting

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Elections and appointments

1. The 19th American Regional Meeting of the ILO was held in Panama City, Panama, from 2 to 5 October 2018.
2. On behalf of the Government group, a Government representative of Brazil nominated Mr Luis Ernesto Carles Rudy, Minister of Labour and Workforce Development of Panama, for the position of Chairperson of the Regional Meeting, and the Meeting unanimously elected him to this post. The Meeting also unanimously elected Ms Sara Graciela Sosa, Director of International Affairs of the Ministry of Production and Labour of Argentina, as Government Vice-Chairperson; Mr Severo Sousa, President of the National Council of Private Enterprise of Panama, as Employer Vice-Chairperson; and Ms Toni Moore, General Secretary of the Barbados Workers' Union, as Worker Vice-Chairperson.
3. The Meeting appointed the Officers of the groups as follows: Mr Ney Artur Gonçalves Canani of Brazil as Government Chairperson; Mr Alberto Echavarría Saldarriaga of Colombia as Employer Chairperson and spokesperson; and Mr Gerardo A. Martínez of Argentina as Worker Chairperson and spokesperson. The Meeting appointed Mr Roberto Suárez Santos and Ms María Paz Anzorreguy as Secretaries of the Employers' group, and Mr Víctor Báez Mosqueira as Secretary of the Workers' group.
4. In accordance with the *Rules for Regional Meetings, 2018*, the Meeting appointed the members of its Credentials Committee as follows: Ms Verónica López (Government, Paraguay), Mr Pablo Bobic (Employer, Chile), and Ms Isabel Guzmán (Worker, Panama).
5. The Meeting established a drafting group to prepare the conclusions of the Meeting, composed of five Government representatives, five Employer representatives and five Worker representatives, with the following members:

Government representatives: Brazil
Mexico
Panama
Peru
United States

Employer representatives: Ms Joyce Arlene Martin (Antigua and Barbuda)
Mr John Craig (Canada)
Mr Fernando Yllanes Martínez (Mexico)
Ms Viveca Amorós Khon (Peru)
Mr Juan Mailhos (Uruguay)

Worker representatives: Ms Marta Pujadas (Argentina)
Mr Antonio de Lisboa (Brazil)
Ms Gilda Chacón Bravo (Cuba)
Mr Brian Finnegan (United States)
Mr Fernando Gambera (Uruguay)

Opening addresses

6. *The Chairperson* welcomed participants to the 19th American Regional Meeting and expressed satisfaction that Panama had been chosen as the host country for the Meeting. He recalled that the idea of creating a tripartite international body dated back nearly a century, to the Treaty of Versailles. Designing effective, equitable institutional rules that allowed the new world of work to be governed fairly remained a challenge. The new world of work must be built in a collective and tripartite fashion, on the basis of the founding principles and values of the ILO.
7. He added that the ILO must promote a global dialogue on the type of future of work that it wanted, which should be a central topic of the Meeting. If what was envisaged was a future in which decent work was the rule and not the exception, in accordance with Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ILO should outline not only a dream but also a way forward – a policy roadmap that would define the bases of an innovative strategy to visualize and jointly create a “Decent Work Agenda 4.0”, in other words a decent work agenda for the new industrial era, and reduce inequality, promote inclusion and increase social cohesion. It would be important to consider which mechanisms would adequately safeguard the interests and rights of the most vulnerable people in society. Gender equality was an essential aspect of equity in the new world of work. Women had taken on new and decisive roles in global developments, economics and politics, and their skills and strengths must be respected in the workplace.
8. Designing policies was not enough; the debate must also cover institutional questions, such as whether countries had the institutional capacities to implement the type of public policies desired and the agility and flexibility to enforce the instruments that would foster the success of those policies. In order for new policies and new institutions to be designed, tripartite social dialogue must urgently be strengthened. That was the only way to advance the Decent Work Agenda. Without dialogue there was no equity, and without equity, progress did not translate into well-being but remained in macroeconomic indicators. Countering mistrust was one of the main challenges to reviving social dialogue in the region. Actions, not words, were needed to show that social dialogue worked, produced concrete results, served to resolve social and economic problems, and helped to change people’s lives. Work was an individual, social, economic and cultural asset, but above all, it had a human face.
9. *The Director-General* thanked the Government of Panama for the considerable efforts it had made to facilitate the organization of the 19th American Regional Meeting in the country. In the last four years, the region had experienced a cycle of political and economic changes that had had a strong impact on the world of work. In many countries, dissatisfaction with the traditional political system and its actors was widespread, and people were questioning the ability of public institutions and the multilateral system to respond to the many challenges that society faced.
10. The region was currently in an electoral cycle that was giving rise to developments in many countries. In the changing world of work, it was appropriate to ask whether the remedies and tools of yesterday would also be right for tomorrow. The region had also seen a number of positive developments, including the signing of the peace agreement in Colombia, the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour in Argentina and the Regional Initiative for a Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour, as well as the launch in Panama of the Equal Pay International Coalition.
11. On the eve of its Centenary celebrations, the ILO wished to move towards the future in a constantly changing world affirming its characteristic values: tripartism, social dialogue, international labour standards and an ongoing commitment to social justice. The ILO’s standards system, which established and monitored the labour rules of the global economy, was particularly relevant because of the high number of ratifications in the region and the continual use of the supervisory procedures. He recalled that the objective of standards-related action was

to seek solutions rather than condemn or punish. The aim was to open up spaces for dialogue so that ratified Conventions were fully respected.

- 12.** Although Latin America and the Caribbean remained the region with the most inequality, a commitment on the part of social partners and governments would help to achieve a more inclusive world of work with more social justice. The reality was that indigenous people were among those most affected by exclusion, inequality and extreme poverty in various countries in the region. In 2019, the ILO would be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which marked a watershed in the defence and recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and was the only international treaty on the matter that was binding on States that ratified it. That occasion would provide a unique opportunity to dispel doubts and send out a clear and unambiguous message about the provisions of what was an important and unique international ILO treaty.
- 13.** Natural disasters linked to climate change were causing incalculable damage to the countries of the region. That had a direct impact on the world of work, economic development, migration and infrastructure. Action to counter climate change had thus become an essential component of the ILO's work.
- 14.** The current flow of migration in Latin America and the Caribbean was unprecedented. The Global Compact for Migration, due to be adopted in Morocco in December 2018, offered an indispensable international framework for governing international migration in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The ILO was working on a regional project, focusing on host countries, which aimed to mitigate the impact of Venezuelan migration on its labour markets and seek ways to provide long-term solutions that promoted respect for labour rights.
- 15.** On the occasion of its Centenary, the ILO had launched the Future of Work Initiative with a view to equipping the ILO with the tools to respond to demands and challenges and continue promoting its social justice mandate. The world of work was changing like never before. Although technology was at the centre of that change, it alone would not determine the future. It was up to governments, workers and employers to shape the future of work that they wanted. Societies were becoming increasingly unequal and, in the eyes of many, increasingly unjust and far removed from the ideals of social justice that the ILO had been created to advance.
- 16.** The past century had seen more creativity and rapid, radical transformations than any other period in human history. The ILO now faced the challenge of achieving the future of work that it wanted. The future of the ILO, the only tripartite organization in the world, would depend on its ability to face and respond to the radical changes of a constantly evolving world of work, and creating that future would require the active commitment of tripartite constituents inspired by their common and unchanging values and objectives. The current Meeting gave the ILO an opportunity to send a clear message from the region and produce, in a tripartite manner, a focused, concise and feasible outcome that would serve as a roadmap for the next four years.
- 17.** *An Employer representative* said that he was speaking as Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Body and as a member of the Global Commission on the Future of Work. The eve of the ILO Centenary was a symbolic moment for tripartite constituents to make an effective and mature contribution to frame the challenges and opportunities of the future of work and define the role that the ILO should play in the Americas from a perspective based on facts. His group welcomed the four thematic sessions, but not the information sessions. The agendas of Regional Meetings should be tailored to the priorities of the regions. Regional Meetings should not be confined to a predetermined format that did not necessarily respond to real priorities. At the 334th Session of the Governing Body, the Employers' group would be proposing that information discussions on established and recurrent topics should be avoided, and that preference should be given to topics that reflected the true priorities of constituents.

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18. A better future of work would be possible through effective and responsible social dialogue and a long-term vision for upholding the rule of law, fighting corruption, fostering free enterprise, respecting private property and reinforcing institutions. It was necessary to face the new global realities that significantly affected the Americas with ambition, courage and realism. The pattern of economic slowdown/contraction and slight recovery seen between 2014 and 2017 had caused a “slow-motion crisis” in the labour markets of the region, negatively affecting employment and social indicators. Although progress had been recorded since then, the causes of the difficulties in the labour market were multifaceted and stemmed from long-standing structural factors.
 19. The debate on the new world of work in the Americas was complex and wide-ranging, and varied between subregions and between countries. While profound transformations had taken place in the mature economies of the Americas, many countries in the hemisphere were at a crossroads. Various factors would determine their future: a large, young, flexible, mobile, more urban and more technically knowledgeable workforce, with increased participation from better-educated and more assertive women, required infrastructure, medical care, education, services, and employment and personal growth opportunities.
 20. Progress could and must be made in all the countries of the hemisphere to seize opportunities and help those who were less able or willing to adapt to overcome the challenges they faced. The future of work must be people-centred and people-enabling, and the public and private sectors should share the responsibility for making it so. The Director-General’s Report clearly showed that without a better future for production there could be no better future for work, and vice versa. No effort should be spared in encouraging sustainable and inclusive economic growth so as to prevent any stalling or reversal of social progress. Productive development policies must be implemented in the industrial, agricultural and service sectors. Policies to promote the transition from an informal to a formal economy were indispensable to securing inclusive growth. Moreover, policies that responded to the new and diverse forms of employment created by technological developments and new business models would be fundamental for the growth of employment and decent work in the region.
 21. Guidance on skills and strategic training policies were needed to build a better future of work. Employability should be a key component of education systems. Democratic governance must be strengthened. The Employers were particularly concerned about the dramatic situation created by the continuing and extremely serious violations of the basic human, civil, economic and political rights of the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which included threats, harassment and intimidation against the leaders of FEDECAMARAS and affiliated businesses and organizations. The Employers’ group hoped that the recently established ILO Commission of Inquiry and the recently adopted General Assembly resolution would help progress to be made towards a medium- and long-term solution. The serious situation affecting Nicaragua was also of the utmost concern. He invited the tripartite constituents of the region to share a vision of the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead and to define together, at the Regional Meeting, a roadmap for creating a better future of work that would generate a virtuous cycle of sustained and inclusive economic growth, education, talent and development, thereby according more opportunities to the people of the hemisphere. Lastly, he urged the Regional Meeting to make its conclusions clear, concise and action-oriented so that they would favourably influence not only the discussions and report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, but also the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference and the work of the regional office over the next four years.
 22. A *Worker representative* said that he had high hopes for the Regional Meeting, as it was the last that would be held before the ILO Centenary. The main priorities of the Workers included, in addition to technical analysis, the drafting of a consensus document with a view to developing an action plan incorporating specific and measurable actions. Currently, workers were experiencing negative changes that implied the renouncement of legitimate aspirations for social and inclusive development with social justice. Globalization had taken its toll on society worldwide, as shown by the increase in poverty, hunger and unemployment, as well as the

growing gap between rich and poor. Education and occupational training should be state policies. When talking about the future of work, it was necessary to name the starting point, as the situation was different in each region. The Workers did not fear innovation but supported sustainable development. Modernity and the future of work were not compatible with the systematic violation of labour, social and trade union rights, as was currently occurring in Costa Rica. Stable, rights-focused democratic processes were needed. Workers' political participation in the process of societal evolution towards the future of work was essential. The experiences of the region showed that leaders who had clearly promoted policies favouring workers had been subject to political persecution, such as in the case of former President Lula in Brazil. Inequalities, unemployment and exclusion had obliged States to resolve social emergencies before they could proceed to create a harmonious partnership between capital and labour, with education at the centre of employment, as required by new technologies and the demands of multilateralism and globalization. The pursuit of sustainable development in accordance with the 2030 Agenda would require public policies to be prioritized. It was becoming clear that structural problems would not be resolved by austerity plans. The road to modernity must take account of the "social dimension" as a politically relevant factor. The consequences of the neoliberalism of the 1990s, when the region was used as a testing ground, were well known. The road ahead must be one of increased productivity, not adjustment policies that stripped people of their rights. Workers must continue demanding public policies on the basis of effective and institutionalized social dialogue. The Workers were fighting for sustainability in the Americas and for the culture of privilege to be transformed into a culture of work.

Special address by His Excellency, Juan Carlos Varela, President of the Republic of Panama

23. *President Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez of the Republic of Panama* welcomed all those present on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Panama and the Panamanian people, expressing the hope that, alongside the interesting debates that would take place at the Meeting, the participants could enjoy Panama, which, as a result of its geographical position, had always been a meeting place and one of union, dialogue and neighbourly tradition, a country open to the schools of thought that had driven international organizations in the field of human rights, and on that occasion, labour rights.
24. During the Seventh Summit of the Americas, held in Panama in 2015, the President had offered to host the 19th American Regional Meeting. In 2017, the ILO Governing Body had chosen Panama to host the Meeting. It was the first time that a Central American country had hosted that important regional event. Government delegates and representatives of workers' and employers' organizations from 30 countries – countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Canada and the United States – were now meeting to discuss issues of common interest.
25. The Government of Panama was committed to improving the quality of worker–employer relations and cultivating an optimal labour system characterized by respect for and the promotion of a healthy relationship between workers and employers, with a view to maintaining smooth economic growth.
26. Panama continued to participate actively in the ILO. It was currently chairing the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards. In January 2018, the Equal Pay International Coalition had been launched there. In July 2018, the National Committee for Gender Equality had been launched in which the public and private sectors worked together towards equality between men and women, with a view to reducing economic gender gaps and increasing women's participation in the labour force. The 19th American Regional Meeting would address the issue of "Preparing the future of work we want". It was an excellent opportunity to revisit issues such as sustainable development policies, transition from the informal to the formal

economy, rapid technological change, social security and full employment, elimination of child labour and reducing the wage gap within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

- 27.** The future of work was unavoidable. Societies were undergoing profound changes that had a direct impact on labour markets. Without a doubt, the Latin American and Caribbean region could not avoid that reality, and preparations therefore needed to be made to face new challenges. Latin America and the Caribbean had great development potential as the region had a large youth population. Nevertheless, those young people must be given training opportunities and access to the new employment opportunities that the economy would create. It was necessary to adopt public policies to address key issues in that regard, such as informality, child labour, decent work, the environment and migration.
- 28.** On the basis of a study conducted by the High Commission for Labour, established by his administration at the beginning of his mandate, it had been determined that Panama's education system needed to be adapted to meet the needs of the labour market, first and foremost by increasing the number of bilingual technical courses on offer in higher education. Consequently, the Higher Technical Specialized Institute had been established to provide training to young Panamanians in the technical vocations for which there would be demand in the years to come. That Institute should open in mid-2019. Furthermore, in the national education system, the teaching of English as a second language had been introduced from kindergarten in Panama's public schools. Thanks to that programme, children were offered greater opportunities, allowing them to master a second language.
- 29.** There were many challenges: the labour market was faced with demographic, technological and environmental changes and new production and recruitment methods. In 2017, the region had seen modest economic recovery and, in 2018, slightly higher growth. Nevertheless, if workers and employers were not prepared for the approaching changes, that growth would not be sustainable. That reality posed a further challenge: realizing the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustained, inclusive and sustainable development that was capable of creating decent and productive employment must be achieved in the region.
- 30.** With a view to promoting youth employment and labour market integration, the Ministry of Labour and Workforce Development was developing important programmes such as: the Support Programme for Labour Integration (PAIL); the Pro Joven youth employment programme; the POVE programme providing guidance to recent graduates on the occupations and careers that would provide greater labour market insertion opportunities in the future; and the Programme to Improve the Employability of Persons with Disabilities.
- 31.** The Regional Meeting would help to promote public policies in the region to foster decent, productive and equal work that responded to the new realities of the labour market. He expressed his public appreciation for the Director-General of the ILO and the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development, who not only directed the Ministry of Labour but also managed relations with trade unions and communities, thus strengthening his Government's position as a Government of dialogue and peace.
- 32.** He urged ministers, trade unions and business leaders to safeguard sources of employment, businesses, legal security and foreign, public and private investment. He said that his administration had protected employment in Panama, putting the country on the right course. He called on the members of the Panamanian private sector, the private sector of other countries, trade union leaders and ministers in the room to realize the ILO's vision of protecting employment and thus protecting the rights of human beings to a decent life with their families in the region.

General discussion on the Report of the Director-General: *Preparing the future of work we want in the Americas through social dialogue*

Presentation of the Report

- 33.** *The Regional Director of the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean* presented the Report of the Director-General, entitled *Preparing the future of work we want in the Americas through social dialogue*. The report indicated that, while growth figures for the region were positive, they were not sufficient because they did not reach the levels needed in the region to drastically reduce poverty and informality, generate productive employment and decent work and create the fiscal space to finance social and distributive programmes or satisfy the demands of the middle classes. The region must continue aiming towards increased growth that was sustained, inclusive and sustainable, as set out in Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda.
- 34.** The report highlighted the key policy areas that the region must continue to address in order to realize a better future of work and the links that tied them to the 2030 Agenda. It examined three large groups of long-term challenges to be overcome in the context of new factors driving change (demography, technology and climate change): (i) at the political level, it highlighted the need to establish common goals, improve democratic governance, combat corruption and strengthen social dialogue; (ii) at the economic level, it was important to focus on funding, public investment and healthy taxation through efficient and fair tax collection systems, as well as including microeconomic elements in the macroeconomic conversation regarding the strategic directions for productive and technological development and productivity growth; and (iii) at the institutional level, it was necessary to create spaces and capacity to develop and implement long-term policies and overcome institutional weaknesses.
- 35.** The 2014 Lima Declaration remained relevant and the report summarized the developments with regard to each of the 19 policy expectations set out in the Declaration, which were grouped into strategic priorities and focused on the formalization of the informal economy, respect for and application of international standards and labour legislation and productive development policies for inclusive development with more and better jobs. The latter was closely aligned with Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda.
- 36.** The report highlighted some major achievements. Progress had been made throughout the region in driving the formalization of domestic work. Concerning respect for and application of international standards and labour legislation, there was underlying unease in the region regarding freedom of association and collective bargaining. In that respect it was vital to continue supporting awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts. The report also mentioned advances in vocational training, collective bargaining in the public sector and the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in collective bargaining. Improving national mechanisms to prevent and address conflicts continued to be a key priority. There had also been significant progress regarding the ratification of several Conventions. As for child labour and forced labour, great progress had been made, but significant challenges remained.
- 37.** Respect for and application of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), was still a major challenge. The report emphasized, among other things, the advisability of maintaining coherence between the message of the ILO and that of the other organizations of the United Nations system and provided an update on the situation regarding youth employment, labour migration, green jobs, sustainable development and social protection. The report also placed special emphasis on the 2030 Agenda and United Nations reform, an issue which had received much attention at both the national and regional levels. The social partners must remain alert and proactive to defend tripartite forums. Regarding the central theme of the Meeting, the

future of work, the report detailed the activities carried out since 2016. The Regional Director concluded by recalling that the current Regional Meeting represented an important occasion for the Organization as it was the last meeting of its kind to be held before the ILO Centenary.

Discussion of the Report

38. *The Employer representative* highlighted the progress that had been made since the adoption of the Lima Declaration in 2014. Nevertheless, labour market statistics reflected decline rather than progress and a present and future of work marked by many challenges, but also opportunities. The Employers did not agree with the approach taken with regard to informality, new types of employment and labour migration. The Report lacked information on key factors affecting the political, social and economic situation and the situation with regard to migration. However, the Employers welcomed the assessment of the political situation and the policy challenges to be addressed in order to prepare a better future of work in the region.
39. A better future of work would require a better future of production in the region and guaranteeing sustained growth required a tripartite approach to address poverty, the integration of new entrants into the labour market and the creation of quality jobs through productive development policies.
40. The Employers considered the lessons to be learned from recent experience to be extremely relevant: the importance of high and sustained growth; a lack of fiscal space quickly limited policies of redistribution; long-term structural gaps would persist if no specific measures were adopted to address them; and equality of opportunity must be the cornerstone of education policies.
41. Income inequality could only be significantly reduced by means of public spending policies. It was also necessary to reduce productivity gaps. The region's ability to join the technological revolution and take advantage of the productivity and competitiveness that would bring was essential for the future that was wanted. The Report did not consider the difficulties faced by the formal sector in creating jobs, implying that informality was an independent phenomenon. The Employers rejected the term "new forms of employment" and did not share, inter alia, the assertion that those forms of employment would exacerbate informality. Education and professional training policies must be aligned with the needs of the productive sector in an inclusive way. While the region had a high rate of ratification of international labour standards, it faced difficulties in application, which led to a large number of complaints being examined each year by the Committee on Freedom of Association. Labour reform must be accompanied by rigorous analysis of its impact on employment, social protection, informality, distribution of incomes and productivity.
42. The Employers requested the ILO to: promote a productive development agreement by encouraging social dialogue; establish an overview of productivity in the region including evaluations of the systemic inefficiencies of the region's economies; take advantage of the Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises (EASE) approach and generate national productivity diagnostics; analyse the impact of productivity on employment; identify the necessary elements for the implementation of successful development policies; strengthen the internal capacity of the Office in the area of productive development; and develop new networks of collaboration between the key institutions for productive development policies. He requested an inventory of existing skills and those that the business sector would seek in the future.
43. *The Worker representative* said that the Report represented the voice of workers in the region and challenged the model of exporting raw materials that impeded the combating of scourges such as child labour. Productivity growth must be considered in relation to public and private debt and the money deposited in tax havens, which obstructed investment and job creation, a global problem that affected the region. It was of concern that: economic growth was lower than expected; unemployment levels had increased in the period; and outsourcing and informality

were on the rise, given that limiting outsourcing could reduce informality. He referred to violations of the right to freedom of association and social dialogue, emphasizing that the latter was essential to achieve sustainable development, eliminate inequalities, and reduce extreme poverty and concentrated wealth. He also stressed the need to ensure that migrants enjoyed the same rights as national workers and to explore the factors that pushed migrants to leave their countries.

44. He affirmed the Workers' commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and recalled the obstacles to their realization. The growth of the informal economy, casualization and the lack of decent work must be addressed taking into account the importance of recognizing the rights of workers throughout the supply chain. He added that redistribution policies were vital as structural adjustments led to inequalities and unemployment. The Centenary of the Organization would be an excellent opportunity to consider social dialogue as a catalyst for sustainable development and the elimination of inequalities.
45. *The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago* reaffirmed her country's commitment to the 2030 Agenda. The rapid transformation of the global economy, persistent demographic and technological changes, emerging paradigms of production and the rapidly evolving nature of the world of work presented new opportunities and challenges. The ILO's social justice and decent work mandate was particularly relevant to small island developing States in the Caribbean, due to the specific nature of the social, economic and geographical challenges facing them, their limited natural and human capital resources, their small open markets, and their vulnerability to natural disasters. She emphasized that the Meeting offered the social partners a special opportunity to consolidate an integrated approach to addressing labour issues and that enhanced collaboration was needed to promote inclusive growth, sustainable livelihoods and decent work for all.
46. Informality and non-standard forms of employment were a growing trend and posed significant challenges for regulatory frameworks. Youth unemployment, labour migration, forced labour and child labour were also cause for concern. Emerging patterns of migration, which was growing in volume and complexity, were closely related to the search for employment opportunities and for incomes and therefore required robust, strategic and collaborative policies and legislation. Progress had been made in the fight against child labour, but constituents must continue to combat child labour and all other forms of forced labour and exploitation. No contractual form was immune to transformations in the world of work. The tripartite constituents – through national, regional and international efforts – must focus on those challenges in the context of the future of work in order to promote decent work for all.
47. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago had, inter alia, carried out a labour reform through a tripartite consultation process, conducted programmes to raise public awareness of child labour and promoted the rights of domestic workers. It was also developing policies on labour migration, the elimination of child labour, employment and combating sexual harassment in the workplace.
48. *An Employers' delegate from Chile* considered that the future of work should guide the social partners' discussions at the national and international level. Advances in know-how and technology already permeated the workplace. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Economic Forum and McKinsey, inter alia, had long been warning of the importance of aligning, as quickly as possible, education, vocational training and jobs with the fourth industrial revolution. Such changes could become opportunities to improve quality of life through the creation of new and better forms of work and increases in productivity. Only in a framework of respect for democracy, freedom and human rights would it be possible to develop sustainable enterprises and create decent work.

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49. The speed of the changes and their effects violently affected traditional work habits. Given the new reality, it was important to consider new employment relationships outside the traditional framework of industrial relations governed by legislation. The speaker stressed that the greatest challenge would be related to social protection systems. He urged the ILO to continue focusing on the future and to listen to the voice of its constituents, especially with regard to jobs that were different from those taken into consideration when the labour Conventions and Recommendations from the twentieth century had been established. The priority was to protect decent work and sustainable enterprises through frameworks that recognized the effects of the fourth industrial revolution.
50. *A Workers' delegate from El Salvador* said that the future of work was synonymous with the future of humanity, as quality of work was inherent to social peace, democracy and governability. Only by empowering institutions that promoted social dialogue and real and effective tripartism could present challenges be overcome. The neoliberal model was exerting pressure on and repressing workers' movements in many countries in the region. He recalled the importance of safety in the workplace and of ensuring labour rights in several countries in the region. He invited constituents to seek consensus, agreements and policies that would contribute to social justice through decent work, as expressed by the Development Platform of the Americas proposed by the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (CSA) and the 2030 Agenda. In the light of the global challenges surrounding the future of work, he strongly urged social movements, churches, politicians and progressive businessmen, academics and governments to support social justice through decent work and productive and harmonious industrial relations.
51. *The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay* reiterated her Government's support for the initiatives launched by the Director-General, including efforts to restructure and institutionally renovate the ILO. She emphasized her Government's commitment to strengthening social policies and to focusing on human development through greater democratization in access to education, health and decent work in order to achieve greater social equity and collective prosperity in the medium and long term.
52. The fundamental goals of the Government of Paraguay included creating jobs, particularly for young people and with equal conditions for women in both law and practice. The Government was committed to implementing public policies to promote the incorporation of the economically active population into the formal sector through significant investment in education, skills, entrepreneurship and innovation. Such policies must be aligned with the needs of the market and formulated in conjunction with employers and workers, which would strengthen commitment to tripartism.
53. She reiterated her country's political commitment to the Integrated Strategy for the Formalization of Employment in Paraguay 2018–23, which was in line with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). The implementation of the Strategy had enabled social programmes to be expanded for the benefit of the most vulnerable groups and guaranteed access to social benefits. Paraguay had ratified the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and adopted relevant legislation. The Government would endeavour to achieve better results in the reduction of child labour and the prevention of forced labour through a national tripartite commission established for that purpose. With regard to discrimination, it would focus on assisting those who were most vulnerable, such as rural and young workers. The Government would continue to focus on tripartite social dialogue and the monitoring of labour standards, prioritizing training for labour inspectors, coordination between public institutions and combating informality.
54. *The Secretary of Labour and Employment of Argentina* said that social dialogue had strengthened the institutional framework in spite of economic difficulties and national problems, but acknowledged that challenges remained. Social dialogue had enabled progress to be made on various labour issues. He emphasized that Argentina had hosted the IV Global Conference

on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour and had hosted the G20, holding a joint meeting on education and employment, with the future of work as a central element. He concluded on a high note, emphasizing that his Government was already implementing the recommendations contained in the Report of the Director-General, in collaboration with employers and workers.

- 55.** *An Employers' delegate from Mexico* agreed that social dialogue should be given a wider scope than it had been given in the past. He said that productive development was one way to achieve considerable growth in the region, but that in order for such growth to be sustained and sustainable, there would have to be, inter alia, legal certainty, investment stability and streamlined tax and public administrative procedures. It would be possible to provide a timely and sufficient response to the 2030 Agenda if the development of an Industry 4.0, the digital economy, technological changes and the retraining of those displaced from the modern workplace were taken into account. The importance of tripartism lay in allowing the equal participation of the social partners in the definition of solutions, programmes and social policies and in the creation of international standards that made it possible to improve the lives of workers and employers around the world. With the reform of the UN system, the ILO should be strengthened, its original structure respected and the celebration of its Centenary should confirm its belonging and consistency. He highlighted the importance of the Governing Body's decision to establish a commission of inquiry in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which would strengthen democracy and respect for authentic and representative organizations of employers and workers in that country. There had been two important events recently in Mexico: an electoral process conducted in an exemplary manner and a positive trade negotiation. The pillars of the ILO would be taken into consideration in the actions of the new administration, and dialogue would be tripartite, effective and inclusive. He trusted that the conclusions of the Meeting would provide a platform that would foster the growth and development of the countries in the region.
- 56.** *The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Guatemala* emphasized his country's commitment to the SDGs and full decent employment for all. In 2017, the ministries of labour, economy, education and social development had launched the National Decent Work Policy. The Policy had been developed in a participatory and inclusive manner, favouring tripartite social dialogue, and reaffirmed the fundamental values of freedom, human dignity, social justice, security, gender equity and equality and non-discrimination. Guatemala had been the first Latin American country to ratify the Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175), and sought to implement it. Guatemala was moving towards vocational training that would provide skills aligned with the requirements of the production system in order to improve employability, optimize the State's educational resources, and increase economic efficiency, transparency and competitiveness. As to the management of migration, strategies for orderly and regularized migration were being promoted. A consensus had been sought with civil society regarding the prevention of irregular migration in the towns with the highest rate of migrant expulsion, and measures had been taken to prevent fraud and promote regular migration to southern Mexico. His Ministry was trying to create a culture of occupational safety and health to improve the working conditions of workers. He reiterated Guatemala's commitment to achieving SDG target 8.7 by 2025; observing the fundamental principles and rights at work; and integrating all persons into the labour market, on an equal footing. Labour inspection services were being strengthened and modernized and a culture of compliance was being fostered. He thanked the ILO for its valuable support and cooperation and requested that such support continue to be provided in the light of the various challenges to be confronted in the new era of employment.
- 57.** *The Director of the Office of International Relations of the United States* welcomed the opportunity to establish regional priorities that would inform the future work of the Office, emphasizing the importance of education and skills development and of economic growth as a pre-eminent goal. Achieving an economic environment conducive to investment, entrepreneurship and access to capital markets was necessary. The region's low level of productivity and low level of investment in innovation remained significant challenges. Respect for workers' rights was vital, and measures to stimulate productive growth should not exclude

the rights set out in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Giant steps had been taken toward the elimination of child labour and forced labour, but there was still much to be done. Good governance was critical to the effective enforcement of labour law and the protection of workers' rights. Women, Afro-Americans, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities must have access to labour markets. Long-term growth remained sluggish; protection of workers' rights and compliance with labour standards, weak; labour law administration, uneven; and access to the labour market, obstructed. The ILO must continue to focus on such core issues, the issues that it had been created to address. It was necessary to apply time-honoured principles to the new technological, demographic and economic challenges.

- 58.** *An Employers' delegate from Argentina* highlighted two key points to consider: technology and social dialogue. Technological change altered production processes, with unequal effects at the global level. The developed countries had more complex economic structures and greater investment in innovation. How could the countries in the region create technology and not simply be users of the changes generated in the developed countries? He proposed promoting national and regional tripartite dialogue on the production and trade model that the countries would use in the future. Developing national strategies to reduce productivity gaps, improve the education system and expand business density in environments conducive to long-term investments and innovations would help to reduce the serious problems of informality and poverty in the region. The region needed businesses with a global mindset that were capable of producing technological solutions in order to generate quality employment and move away from competitiveness based on prices and tied to costs. In Argentina, proper management of natural resources, knowledge and manufacturing had great potential and could lead to an Industry 4.0 with local identity, which would mean a brighter future of work for all.
- 59.** *A Workers' delegate from Panama* considered that her country had made insufficient progress in terms of social dialogue, ratification of ILO Conventions and labour legislation, due to a lack of political will to satisfy the long-standing demands of the Panamanian trade union movement. In the tripartite commission, a consensus had been reached on a bill on freedom of association and collective bargaining for the public sector, which had not been approved due to its delayed submission by the Government. The Panamanian trade union movement was concerned about the future of social security. It had asked the Government to ratify the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and to use it as a basis for dialogue. With regard to the application of standards, bureaucratic mechanisms persisted, as well as the executive's excessive control over the establishment and registration of trade union organizations. There was no real legal certainty in procedural matters for labour legislation or consistent criteria in the registration processes, demands, submission of petitions, or registers of trade union organizations. When the current administration had taken office, businessmen, trade unionists, authorities and interested organizations had set up a round table to establish a labour migration policy, but had not yet achieved that aim. She reiterated her commitment to the trade union agenda of the Americas and to securing a more just, inclusive and solidary society.
- 60.** *A representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)* took note of the Report of the Director-General and referred to the identified weaknesses and recommendations on labour migration. A concerted effort must be made to effectively and humanely implement policies that promoted safe, orderly and regular migration. The IOM supported the recommendations regarding the need to include the labour issue in regional consultation processes in order to promote coherence between migration policies and employment policies and to improve the capacity of labour market institutions to address the repercussions of migration. The IOM facilitated regional consultation processes on migration and development and focused its support on strengthening government capacity to manage sustainable and humane migration, which would promote the human rights of migrants, including their labour rights. The IOM hoped to consolidate its joint endeavours with the ILO in order to achieve greater impact, dissemination and effectiveness for the benefit of migrant workers, as well as the countries of origin and destination.

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- 61.** *A representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions* emphasized that the future of work was a source of concern for workers, as automation was replacing labour and leading to job cuts. The Report did a good job of describing the whole, complex situation of the world of work, but not the causes or the persons responsible. The causes lay primarily in neoliberal policies implemented by anti-democratic, cynical and opportunistic governments that had amended laws and constitutions in favour of economic powers and imperialist elites, to the detriment of workers' interests. Imperialism and neoliberal governments continued imposing draconian measures against various workers from the region, who defended themselves through mobilizations and strikes. What was the point of adopting Conventions and Recommendations if they were not being observed? When would effective penalties be handed down to those who violated them? Conventions and Recommendations should not be just pieces of paper. In Mexico, structural reforms were reducing fundamental labour rights, and outsourcing and neoliberal policies regarded education as a commodity. It was hoped that the new Government would improve labour and social conditions and would satisfy workers' main demands. In Colombia, as well as in Guatemala and Honduras, trade unionists and social activists continued to be murdered. Attention was drawn to the difficult situation of workers in Cuba and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who were faced with the economic embargo and direct interference by the empire. He expressed his solidarity with the workers and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and with the workers from the five continents, including those in Palestine, Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and condemned all terrorist attacks.
- 62.** *A representative of the Confederation of University Workers in the Americas* said that the trade union movement was promoting a future of work based on social justice, social dialogue and collective bargaining. The future of work should be built on the basis of fiscal equity and the redistribution of wealth, and the State should engage in fair governance of the labour market, establishing safeguards, guaranteeing the exercise of labour rights and promoting policies based on equal opportunity and social mobility. He asked that the guidelines from the Meeting include ways to guarantee access to health, education, the provision of water and energy services and to generate policies that would ensure the alignment of development goals with universal and inclusive policies. Access to higher, quality education that was free of charge, public and secular must be guaranteed in order to generate inclusive development and social progress. Decent work could not be achieved in the future without guaranteed access to education for the sectors of the population that were currently marginalized. Envisioning a future with social justice could only be possible if current issues were resolved. The Meeting must take account of the complex regional context in which it was being held. He demanded that the Government guarantee the safety of trade unionists and that the ILO act with greater resolve. In Argentina, the current economic crisis, which was the result of extreme depreciation, had led to a drastic increase in unemployment and poverty and had reduced workers' purchasing power due to inflation.
- 63.** The discussion of the future of work should not be based on theory and discourse alone and should comply with the rules of social dialogue. Now was the time to guarantee decent work and to push for policies that would guarantee equality and social justice. He expressed hope for a more equitable future of work that would promote inclusive growth, with social justice, productive employment and decent work, based on a development model with environmentally sustainable societies, in which men and women would have the same rights and minority groups would be integrated without discrimination; a future of work without labour informality, with young people employed in decent work; and a strong ILO that would lead global governance on labour, fostering real, not formal, social dialogue.
- 64.** *The Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Cuba* said that she agreed with the content of the Report of the Director-General in so far as structural problems and present circumstances must be taken into consideration in order to achieve decent work and the SDGs. In that connection, she noted that since 1959, Cuba had applied policies that enabled the observance of decent work principles, such as an employment policy that guaranteed equal, non-discriminatory access to employment, the integration of young people into the labour market, income security and equal incomes for men and women, the right to occupational safety and health, and social

protection. Moreover, in Cuba, forced labour and child labour were prohibited and women enjoyed the same rights as men. All of the above was based on the principle that guided the updating of the Cuban economic and social model, according to which no one should be left unprotected.

- 65.** *An Employers' delegate from Panama* said that the alignment with the 2030 Agenda had affected the private sector in the region, which had implemented actions at the community level where businesses operated. With the support of the ILO, technical capacities in entrepreneurship, green economy and productivity measurement had been strengthened. His country was launching a "Sustainable Businesses" project, as well as initiatives aimed at gender parity and the elimination of child labour. He welcomed the creation of a programme to address the issue of Venezuelan labour migration, but said that such efforts struck him as insufficient and that the general labour migration policy for the region should be revised and the policies on sustainable productive development should be fostered and improved. In that connection, he requested that productivity be a priority issue for the ILO in the coming years, accompanied by the development of education policies, including the vocational training required by the labour market, the amendment of labour legislation and the implementation of policies to facilitate the transition from the informal economy to the formal economy. He also recalled that decent work could not be achieved without sustainable enterprises and that employers were also workers; reiterated his confidence in social dialogue with effective results; and said that the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), must be implemented.
- 66.** *The Minister of Labour of Brazil* said that, in the light of the economic–financial crisis and the challenges for the future of work, strengthening social dialogue was an objective of paramount importance. The tripartite actors had to be open to change when new conditions made it necessary, which did not mean accepting precarious working conditions or exclusion. He added that the inclusive legislative modernization promoted in Brazil would reduce informality. The ILO should take advantage of its Centenary to strengthen international cooperation instruments, create innovative alliances, promote the exchange of good practices and reiterate the value of effective tripartism. Social dialogue should become a space for reaching consensus, in which differences and various points of view would be recognized. At a time when unilateralism and isolation were gaining strength, commitment to multilateralism must be reflected in the strengthening of organizations that were effective in achieving the modernization of standards and policies and in improving the standards supervisory system, especially its working methods, modernizing its transparency, legitimacy and effectiveness.
- 67.** *A Workers' delegate from Canada* thanked the Director-General for his Report to the Regional Meeting, but noted that it could have included more information on the northern countries in the region. She therefore took the opportunity to describe trends in Canada, where over the course of 2018 populist governments had been elected in Ontario and Quebec, provinces that comprised more than half the Canadian population. Both governments had run on anti-immigration platforms, promising cuts to social programmes, popular reforms and better access to services, while masking their intent to privatize public services, including education and health care. Such policies ran counter to the alignment of national labour legislation with international standards and would cause increasing precariousness for workers and create further exclusion and inequality. It was imperative that social dialogue be strengthened and that collective bargaining be expanded.
- 68.** *The Deputy Minister of Labour and Labour Development of Panama* said that she agreed with the Director-General that it was essential to reduce the gap in education and in the skills of the labour force, as part of productive development policies, and that her country had established policies to address such challenges. For example, it had created the High Commission on Employment and the Labour Market Intelligence Unit (UNIMEL) in 2014, taken various steps to promote youth employment and job fairs, and was building the Specialized Higher Technical Institute of Panama (ITSE). Legal status had been granted to new trade unions, including public

sector organizations, and a bill on the regulation of collective relations in the public sector had been drafted and agreed on a tripartite basis. Moreover, a large number of collective agreements had been registered, reflecting the positive outcomes brought about by the promotion of social dialogue as a way to achieve social peace.

- 69.** *A Government delegate from Mexico* said that addressing the future of work meant recognizing the structural problems that were becoming challenges, such as moderate economic growth, child labour, informality and the difficulties in generating decent work for young people, women and vulnerable groups. Such challenges had to be addressed through strengthened social dialogue in order to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable and inclusive development. Significant changes in the world of work must be taken into account: demographic and technological changes, new business models and forms of employment, and the need to address climate change. Education, training and technological advances must be taken into account by education systems with dual vocational training, as they offered great opportunities to apply more effective public policies for the benefit of workers. Asymmetries between supply and demand in the labour market must be reduced, and the workforce must be better trained. Lastly, Mexico had made progress in the creation of new jobs, the resolution of labour disputes and the modernization of the legal framework for labour, which were key aspects of industrial peace.
- 70.** *A Workers' delegate from Colombia* said that while tripartism was a fundamental tool for overcoming difficulties between employers and workers, there was growing disregard for the application of the fundamental Conventions, especially Nos 98 and 87, by governments and employers, a situation that was aggravated by the effects of an economic model without a social face. In Colombia, unemployment and informality were persistent problems, stemming from precariousness in the labour contract systems. Furthermore, in the private sector, prosecution for collective bargaining was evident, and basic and fundamental rights were being violated through practices such as collective dismissals and illegal interference in communications between trade union members and leaders. Trade unionists and other social leaders continued to be murdered. With regard to the revision of the peace agreements, he called on the world of work and the international community to maintain their support for such processes and to urge the Government of Colombia to uphold and respect them. The current economic policies were a transposition of the guidelines from the International Monetary Fund and all economic multilateralism. He reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring that the second century of the ILO would be decisive for overcoming social inequality and world poverty.
- 71.** *A Government delegate from Nicaragua* presented the Meeting with a series of questions that raised concerns about the future of work. He asked what the new forms of employment would be and in what fields old jobs would disappear; whether the advent of new jobs would be the result of emerging activities; whether the level of complexity of jobs would be based on artificial intelligence or on individuals' occupational and professional competences; and whether the use of robots would substantially replace the employment of individuals. He also highlighted the support provided to his country by the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central American Countries (DWT/CO-San José) with respect to capacity building and the dissemination and exchange of good practices in labour law. He concluded by saying that the promotion of freedom of association was a reality and an ongoing practice in Nicaragua.
- 72.** *A Workers' delegate from Mexico* drew attention to the issue of labour migration and said that decent work was a utopia for an excluded and poor majority, which would lead to a future characterized by precariousness and inequality in which peace would not be possible. He added that the issue of the future of work required an intellectual, ethical and political debate that went beyond discourse focused on accelerated technological change in order to offset the polarization of employment brought about by the shrinking of the middle classes, the rise in inequality, insecurity, vulnerability, the lack of social protection, discrimination and the deterioration in the social division of labour. He stressed that reconciling, on the one hand, profitability and, on the other hand, social equity and freedom of association required the adoption of a long-term

approach, and said that the future of work was the future of a democracy in which human rights and decent work would be inseparable.

- 73.** *An Employers' delegate from Cuba* highlighted the usefulness of the Report and of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda to achieve sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth, which would require increasing the competitiveness of the economy and businesses, being familiar with and developing new technologies, reducing the gaps in labour productivity between the countries in the region and the developed countries, as well as offering access to quality public services, to justice and to governance structures. He noted that it was essential to understand the new industrial relations resulting from technological development and welcomed the ten guidelines for work on the future of vocational training established by the Regional Office and the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR), underscoring the need for improved alignment between vocational training and the requirements of the business sector. Lastly, he highlighted the importance of and need for social dialogue at the national level, stimuli for trade and regional integration processes.
- 74.** *The Deputy Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion of Peru* noted that one of his Government's policies was to reduce labour informality and promote quality employment, with an emphasis on young people. His Government was also implementing the Sectoral Labour Formalization Strategy 2018–21 with ILO technical assistance. Moreover, a recently approved legislative amendment would expand the reach of the labour inspectorate. Observance of fundamental principles and rights at work was a high priority of his Government, as demonstrated by various national plans and programmes, several of which had been developed with the support of the ILO.
- 75.** Peru had ratified Convention No. 189 and was amending standard-setting instruments with a view to facilitating orderly labour migration. Moreover, with ILO support, pre-vocational training and other programmes had been developed to increase young people's employability. He also highlighted the implementation of the National Green Growth Strategy, which included as one of its objectives the creation of "green jobs". It was necessary to secure concrete commitments that could be assessed and shared as good practices, with a view to promoting productive, inclusive and sustainable jobs.
- 76.** *An Employers' delegate from Costa Rica* noted that the Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector was driving efforts for inter-sectoral and inter-institutional coordination to address the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution. With ILO support, the National Sustainable Enterprise Strategy was fostering an enabling environment for investment. Based on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), proposals had been made to reduce informality in four different areas, covering regulatory improvements, broader social protection, the promotion of training and education, and a streamlined tax system. In terms of including vulnerable populations, Costa Rica planned to improve women's economic empowerment and to increase the number of training places and internships available for young people to acquire the necessary skills to enter the labour market. Finally, he stated that the freedom to organize should go hand in hand with the principle of union accountability. Workers' representatives played an important role in defining the future of work, and should therefore act responsibly in exercising their right to strike.
- 77.** *The Deputy Minister for the Integrated Labour Inspection and Social Welfare System of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* stated that, although his delegation had decided not to react to provocations, two issues had arisen at the meeting that required a categorical response. A Commission of Inquiry on the situation in his country had been established on the basis of an accusation concerning which the accusers had ended up being both judge and party at the same time. The fact that various governments had found that the complaint was not receivable had been ignored, and there had not been any tripartite consensus or a vote on the matter. During the

procedure, various objections that should have been raised were not, pointing to the lack of ethics and objectivity of the procedure. Venezuela had therefore rejected the Commission of Inquiry.

- 78.** It had also been said at the meeting that migration from Venezuela was affecting countries in the region. In reality, the critical situation in the country was a result of sanctions or unilateral coercive measures that had frozen Venezuelans' economic resources abroad. That situation had been disregarded in the international arena, where it was said that Venezuela was in need of humanitarian aid and was generating migration to neighbouring countries. If the ILO wished to address the problem of migration, it should actively guarantee fundamental principles and rights at work without discriminating against migrants in all countries.
- 79.** *A Workers' delegate from Cuba* noted that, since 2014, the region had been experiencing the effects of a coordinated imperialist attack against progressive governments and their integration strategies, which had resulted in a 2.3 per cent rise in unemployment, 10 million minors in child labour and 1.3 million people in forced labour, 51 per cent of the total workforce employed in informal work, hundreds of thousands of fatal occupational accidents and a substantial level of occupational illnesses. The integrative capacity of the tripartite constituents and of the multilateral system should be coordinated in order to find efficient, alternative solutions to the devastating effects and high costs of climate change and of demographic decline, and to respond to the need for new skills at work in view of rapid technological developments.
- 80.** Cuba was continuing to update its socio-economic model, despite the North American Government's illegal embargo. Cuban workers, who were committed to a class-based, unitary unionism, would continue working together towards meeting the objectives of the ILO Centenary, to contribute to making it function more democratically and to ensuring legitimate dialogue and tripartite representation.
- 81.** *An Employers' adviser and substitute delegate from Peru* emphasized the need to take advantage of the demographic dividend to lower youth unemployment, and for the development of national policies and programmes to promote the transition to the formal economy, given that the informal economy employed a high proportion of women and young people. Peru needed public institutions with strong technical, operative and political capacities and quality services. Tripartite dialogue was necessary to close the gaps in innovation and quality of education. The technological revolution was accelerating the transformation of employment and skills requirements, which meant that educational and vocational training systems had to anticipate the new skills that would be required. It was necessary to accelerate learning processes, increase the ability to innovate and promote production linkages. Efforts to implement the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), as an instrument to protect rights, facilitate development and guide economic and social policies should be intensified as a matter of priority. The ILO must provide support to strengthen the public entities responsible for such work.
- 82.** *An Employers' adviser and substitute delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, speaking on behalf of the Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production of Venezuela (FEDECAMARAS), noted that his country was lagging far behind in addressing the challenges of the future of work. It was surprising that the report had not mentioned the serious social situation in Venezuela, which had had a significant effect on employment. Problems included a brain drain, school dropouts, malnutrition, a lack of social protection and a scarcity of medications. The Venezuelan economy had reduced by half in the past decade, and hyperinflation was running extremely high. The conditions to stimulate work as a means to provide income, well-being and quality of life must be reinstated as a matter of urgency. The absence of social dialogue and the Government's continued failure to comply with international labour standards had led to the establishment of an ILO Commission of Inquiry. The Employers hoped that that Commission of Inquiry would succeed in restoring social dialogue amid the economic, political, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

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- 83.** *A Workers' delegate from the United States* stated that the fundamental principles of the ILO and of multilateralism were in crisis in many countries, including in the United States. Trade agreements must include enforceable commitments on workers' rights, consistent with ILO Conventions. They must also promote sustainable development and respect domestic policy space. In its work in the Americas, the ILO must begin to produce integrated and inclusive contributions and commitments. North–South asymmetries must be overcome through increased cooperation between the offices and the integration of the multilingual Caribbean. The ILO must build on lessons learned from the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor. The MNE Declaration must be promoted, and the tripartite national focal points supported, with a view to achieving decent work in global supply and value chains. In the United States, and more recently in Brazil, legislative and judicial attacks on organizing and collective bargaining had, for decades, weakened the capacity of unions to defend decent work as supply chains had reorganized work.
- 84.** The wage–productivity gap had to be addressed immediately, supported by collective bargaining. In the United States, average real wages had stagnated for over 40 years, but productivity had not. Labour migration should be addressed from an approach based on rights, social justice and decent work, and tackling the root causes of migration. Temporary work programmes must guarantee the labour rights of migrants to prevent the rights of all workers from being affected. The ILO must endeavour to ensure that the labour-related aspects of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration are implemented. The ILO must avoid technological and financial determinism in addressing the changing workplace and its impact on the employment relationship. Technological changes must be accompanied by social dialogue and policies ensuring that the benefits are shared, through more just labour relations, wages and social protections. There could be no shared prosperity without strong unions, real social dialogue and collective bargaining. Industrial Revolution 4.0 must be accompanied by Social Safety Net 4.0 or Welfare State 4.0.
- 85.** *The Minister of Labour and Social Security of El Salvador* highlighted the progress made and challenges ahead in her country, including in relation to wages, The tripartite Minimum Wage Council had increased wages and reduced the number of minimum wage categories to four in all sectors of the economy, and had negotiated collective agreements in the public sector. Social dialogue required the political will of the stakeholders, a common vision and the conviction that welfare is a collective undertaking and that poverty and exclusion only lead to social decline, impeding a healthy, growing economy.
- 86.** She added that she considered social dialogue to be the main focus of her administration and the foundation on which to embark upon major economic, social and political projects. She reiterated her appreciation to the ILO for the support and technical assistance it had provided to her country, and reaffirmed her commitment to continue developing policies that would provide access to decent jobs, to make a life of dignity a reality in her country and in the region.
- 87.** *The Deputy Minister of Labour of Chile* noted that the future of work was already happening and must be approached through collaborative action from all social partners. Inclusion should be at the heart of tripartite social dialogue, in particular for persons with disabilities, women, young people and older people. For instance, in Chile, a bill on young people was being considered which would enable them to balance work and study. Another bill concerning women would guarantee the universal right to childcare. With regard to senior citizens, an improvement to the pensions system was in preparation. Another bill on teleworking aimed at balancing work and family life, without diminishing the protection of workers' rights. While the percentage of child labour was only 6.6 per cent, Chile was making great efforts to eradicate it. That effort had been strengthened with the invitation from Alliance 8.7 to become a pathfinder country on the issue. He concluded by noting that his country was modernizing the skills development system by providing relevant, quality training in in-demand occupations, in particular in the jobs of the future.

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- 88.** *A Workers' delegate from Guatemala* emphasized that without freedom of association there could be no social dialogue, and that it was essential to strengthen collective bargaining in his country. Since 2012, Guatemala had been the subject of a complaint before the Governing Body, in the context of which the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the violations of fundamental labour rights had been sought. Despite the fact that the State had made commitments to the ILO, as set out in a road map, the situation had not been resolved.
- 89.** Guatemalan workers were aware of the importance of social dialogue in addressing problems, and had participated in the National Tripartite Committee on Labour Relations and Freedom of Association. In 2018 alone, reports had been received of the killing of six workers, bringing the total number of murdered union members to over 90. Guatemala must commit to the 2030 Agenda, and in particular to the ILO Decent Work Agenda, in its fight for long-awaited social justice.
- 90.** *An Employers' delegate from the United States* shared some thoughts on the role of the ILO in the region. The new forms of work, to which both enterprises and regulatory frameworks must adjust, were necessary for better-functioning labour markets and economic growth. Governments should promote effective labour market policies and diverse forms of employment conducive to robust job creation at every point along the skills curve. Furthermore, social benefits and rights should be portable across different sectors and jobs, regardless of specific contractual employment relationships. What the report called the “new” forms of employment were already a productive reality in the region, and she disagreed with the idea that those new forms of employment were aggravating labour market difficulties and informality, as there was no evidence to support it. In that respect, she was in favour of engaging in constructive discussion on overcoming the disincentives to formalization. New ways of working were being added to traditional models and were creating new opportunities. The diversification of work scenarios and of forms of work offered the tripartite constituents of the ILO new opportunities to join forces to build a beneficial and productive future for all.
- 91.** *A Workers' delegate from Chile* said that the ILO must be strong and play a leading role in the governance of social dialogue. She expressed solidarity with the situation of workers in Costa Rica, Argentina and Brazil as a result of their governments' policies, as well as with workers in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Nicaragua, as any solution should fit within democratic rules. Moreover, she condemned the murder of union and social leaders in Colombia, Honduras and Guatemala, as well as the Government of Chile and its new military policy, and the absence of social dialogue to discuss projects such as the occupational status of students and tax reform. She lamented the fact that the Government of Chile had not ratified the Escazú Agreement, and reiterated the commitment of the Single Central Organization of Chilean Workers (CUT) to the 2030 Agenda and to advocating for equal pay. She concluded by expressing satisfaction with the fact that the Report of the Director-General had mentioned the initiative of the CUT on the pilot application of the gender-neutral job evaluation methodology in the public and private sectors in her country.
- 92.** *An Employers' delegate from Honduras* said that future growth in the countries of the region could be achieved by removing bureaucratic obstacles, simplifying administrative processes and eliminating corruption with a view to creating an enabling environment for investment and sustainable enterprises. Quality education was also a challenge for the region and for Honduras. Vocational training had to adapt to demand from the productive sectors. Workers and enterprises required preparation for the new forms of work in order to increase productivity. Labour laws taking account of technological changes must be promoted, and collective agreements must be in line with policies to improve employment and productivity in the region.
- 93.** *An Employers' delegate from Guatemala* reiterated his support for social dialogue as a tool for social cohesion, and said that the future of work in the region could not improve without the promotion of sustainable enterprises and improved productivity, through long-term state policies to be monitored by the social partners. In that connection, he sought practical measures

from the ILO with regard to productive development, in the form of a collective accord with broad participation of the social partners, an analysis of productivity in the region, and the identification of the elements, institutions and factors necessary to implement the relevant policies. He also requested the ILO to help pinpoint the main challenges in the region to promoting enabling environments for the creation and development of sustainable enterprises, and to map achievements, existing skills and skills that businesses would be seeking in the future.

94. *A Workers' delegate from Honduras* said that the economic, social and labour conditions of the region were driving the population to migrate, which led to family separations, increased informality and aggravated poverty. He also expressed concern about the lack of state social protection policies with lifelong coverage, and the strong influence of multinational enterprises in government decisions, including in imposing their anti-union practices. He also referred to the importance of the 2030 Agenda to achieving social justice, and to the challenges that must be overcome to reach the objective of decent work with dignity. He concluded by condemning the fair trade practices which no longer protected small producers as was originally intended. Finally, he expressed solidarity with his Venezuelan fellow workers.
95. *A Workers' delegate from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* said that the ILO must highlight examples of developing countries that, like his country and Nicaragua, in their efforts to consolidate social development, had suffered ferocious external attacks, including from the ILO itself, which wrongfully undermined its national democratic dynamics and the Bolivarian revolution. He underlined that Venezuela had the most positive levels of employment of the whole region, and that it was one of the countries that received the greatest number of migrants in the region, in particular from Colombia, seeking better living conditions, which contrasted with the requirements imposed on the alleged migrants from Venezuela to neighbouring countries. He recalled that the programme *Misión Volver a Venezuela* (Mission Return to Venezuela) was being implemented with a view to repatriating Venezuelans who wanted to return from countries that, according to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), had the worst records of violations of workers' rights. He concluded by urging the ILO to speak out against the external sanctions imposed on Venezuela and by condemning the media for lying about the validity of collective agreements and constitutional rights in his country.
96. *The representative of Public Services International (PSI)* expressed support for the workers of Costa Rica and expressed surprise that no mention of public services had been made in the Report of the Director-General, which raised questions about the role and invisibility of this sector in the present world. She also mentioned the lack of references to the issues of the intersectionality of class, race and gender, which were relevant to the world of work. Referring to the increasing automation of production, she invited the Governments and Employers to answer various questions on how the economy and the State could continue to exist in future if it was not for the workers. Referring to the income redistribution mechanisms in Brazil that were mentioned in the Report of the Director-General, she added that since 2016, all social programmes had been drastically reduced or withdrawn, and that cuts were foreseen in health care, social assistance and education until 2036.
97. *A representative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)* said that dialogue in Nicaragua had generated stability and sustainable economic growth, and that the destabilizing actions of big business, which had had economic consequences and had led to unemployment, were being remedied. Dialogue with SMEs was fundamental. The social security reforms promoted by workers and rejected by employers had triggered actions against citizens who did not support the coup d'état. Large employers who had determined that the economy was not important as long as it brought down the State are now complaining about their economic losses. He expressed appreciation for labour policies that respected freedom of association and collective bargaining. New communication technologies were generating disinformation, giving rise to views that were far from reality. The future of work rested on respect for human beings, and technology, if used to improve working conditions, should not represent a threat.

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- 98.** *A representative of the Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Public Workers (CLATE)* condemned political processes that aimed at destroying the welfare state. The military dictatorships and the democratic governments that had succeeded them had brought about the privatization of public services and the near-total disappearance of state productive industries in the countries of the region. At the turn of the current century, in a context of social conflict and popular resistance, progressive governments had come to power and had attempted to restore the public sector, and social assistance in particular. Currently, through the vote of the people or institutional coups, neoliberal governments were once again embracing the remedies and loans from the International Monetary Fund.
- 99.** Public workers were currently the target of government smear campaigns to justify dismissals and planned outsourcing, and had to put up with the same exploitation, low wages and poor working conditions as workers in the private sector. Neoliberal governments intended to invest as little as possible in protecting human rights. Collective bargaining was being undermined in the public sector, the right to strike was being restricted, and initiatives and campaigns were being implemented to bring about a crisis in state pension schemes so that they could then be privatized. The only state sector that was growing in terms of size and investment was law enforcement.
- 100.** *The representative of the Latin American Association of Labour Lawyers (ALAL)* drew attention to the worsening situation of social legislation, owing to widespread exclusion, marginalization and killings, clear examples of which could be seen in the migration policies of the United States, the labour reforms of Brazil and Argentina, failure to comply with peace agreements and the murders of social leaders in Colombia, and the economic war against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Labour rights were regressing within the world of work, as large numbers of employees were living in a precarious situation without the means to contribute to social security systems, while many others were being kept in unlawful work situations by States and employers. The issue of the future of work involved not only recognizing the new forms of work or decent work for employees, but also understanding the realities of evolving daily life.
- 101.** Living standards in Europe and North America were made possible by the unsustainable practices of multinational enterprises in the Global South. Wars were being declared based on hidden interests, while impunity prevailed. A social structure that had clearly failed for the majority of people was stubbornly being perpetuated, which was inhuman. A transformation was required, and the time had come to shape it.
- 102.** *The representative of Alternativa Democrática Sindical de las Américas (ADS)*, speaking also on behalf of the National Union of Workers of Venezuela (UNETE), the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV) and the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions (CODESA), called for reflection and ongoing action. The constitutional order in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been broken, the country's institutions were under attack and the rule of law and justice had been violated. In 2016, workers had submitted a complaint containing a request for the establishment of a commission of inquiry as a result of the violation of Conventions Nos 87, 95 and 111. In 2017, the Venezuelan independent trade union movement and the ADS had submitted seven requests for direct intervention to the Director-General owing to the constant harassment of public workers. The Government had repeatedly ignored the recommendations of the supervisory bodies of the ILO, to the extent that the Governing Body had decided to establish a commission of inquiry into the violation of Conventions Nos 26, 87 and 144. The UNETE, CGT and CODESA trade union confederations had requested the Director-General to ensure the urgent and immediate intervention of the ILO as a result of the violation of Convention No. 98.
- 103.** The ADS was building a united front against situations such as the violation of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 in El Salvador, the persecution and repression of trade union leaders in Cuba, the murder and persecution of hundreds of young people in Nicaragua and Venezuela, labour reform in Brazil and the economic policies in Argentina.

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- 104.** *A representative of the International Transport Workers' Federation* signalled the need for a strong ILO. There were various cases of violation of freedom of association in the region: in Argentina, the attempt by the Government to restrict the right to strike; in Colombia, the violation of the rights of striking members of the Colombian Association of Civil Aviation Pilots (ACDAC), who had been replaced with foreign nationals not in possession of work permits. Furthermore, the increased threats against and murders of trade unionists was a matter of deep concern. In particular, he called on Minister Carles to intervene to combat the extortion practices targeting tugboat captains who were members of the Union of Captains and Deck Officers (UCOC) and employed by the Panama Canal Authority, who were obligated to work inhumanely long hours or face dismissal, and the collective bargaining process involving the Panamanian Union of Flight Attendants (SIPANAB). He congratulated the people of Costa Rica on the strike against the Government's fiscal plan and called on the Government to make use of social dialogue mechanisms.
- 105.** He welcomed the ratification of Convention No. 98 by the Government of Mexico and its undertaking to combat corruption and the simulation of collective bargaining, and to promote democratic trade union elections by secret ballot. He concluded by recognizing the Development Platform of the Americas as proof of the trade union movement's commitment to building a fairer world.
- 106.** *The representative of the Organization of American States (OAS)* said that, despite regional progress in the coverage of and investment in education, the region lagged far behind in the quality, inclusiveness and relevance of education, with huge gaps persisting in learning, reading comprehension and basic skills, particularly among the most vulnerable groups. There was an urgent need to link education more closely with work, in view of the rapid technological change. It was crucial to end the intergenerational cycle of poverty and to narrow the skills gap, which hindered employment, productivity and social inclusion. She requested that the call for greater linkages between education and work be included in the conclusions of the Meeting.
- 107.** She added that the OAS promoted dialogue within the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor and the Inter-American Committee on Education, and had institutionalized tripartite dialogue in its General Assemblies and the Summits of the Americas. In 2016, with the support of Brazil, a number of challenges and policy recommendations had been identified to strengthen the link between education and work. In 2019, the ILO and the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR), with the support of Chile, would conduct analyses on the skills required for the twenty-first century.

Thematic plenary sittings

- 108.** The Regional Meeting held four thematic plenary sittings on the general topic of "Preparing the future of work we want". The specific sittings were:
- policies for sustainable, productive development that lead to inclusive growth, with more and better jobs;
 - policies to promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy and to respond to accelerated technological change and diverse forms of employment;
 - measures and policies to strengthen and redesign institutions in the world of work, including social security, and to ensure that trade union and labour rights are fully upheld; and
 - the digital economy and labour skills and competencies.

First thematic plenary sitting: Preparing the future of work we want: Policies for sustainable, productive development that lead to inclusive growth, with more and better jobs

- 109.** *The Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Regional Meeting* welcomed the moderator, Ms Claudia Palacios, a journalist from CNN, and the panellists. The panel was composed as follows: Mr Alvaro Ons, Secretary of Productive Transformation and Competitiveness, Uruguay; Mr Juan Planells, Chairperson of the National Competitiveness Center, Panama; Mr Fernando Yllanes, President of the Committee on Social Security, Confederación de Cámaras Industriales (Confederation of Chambers of Industry, CONCAMIN), México; and Mr Gerardo Martínez, Secretary of International Relations, Confederación General de Trabajadores de la República Argentina (the General Confederation of Labour of the Argentine Republic, CGT-RA), Argentina.
- 110.** *The moderator* pointed out that the Americas were not an example of sustainable development. Lost opportunities in the decade of growth had not led to a significant transformation as far as inequality was concerned. Countries had not moved away from raw materials to added-value production. Tripartism and social dialogue – among governments, workers and employers – needed to take a great leap forward and adopt a long-term vision. She asked how that could be done in the digitalization era, which was taking societies from one abrupt change to another, and how the challenge of more formal work for millennials could be dealt with, to help them to increase their knowledge and avoid the middle-income trap.
- 111.** In a video recording which was displayed in the room, *Mr Ricardo Hausmann* from Harvard University provided a conceptual introduction to the panel. The development process was not just about producing more of the same products, but rather about producing different and more complex products, which resulted in better-paid jobs. In Latin America that had not happened and it was important to ask what was hampering a change in production that could lead to greater diversification. There were two main problems: the first related to the absence of markets in the private sector – if there was no demand, there was no production. The second arose when there were certain public goods that were not present in the ecosystem. Productive transformation policies were extremely important to address both problems. They helped to identify what was lacking when it came to the absence of markets and how to develop a cooperative approach that could reduce the obstacles and help societies to embark on new activities. Public–private and public–public coordination was at the heart of such policies, facilitating a common understanding of where the opportunities and obstacles were, so solutions could be sought and implemented. Social dialogue could play an important role in that regard.
- 112.** *The Secretary of Productive Transformation and Competitiveness of Uruguay* outlined the institutional setting in place in Uruguay to support public–public coordination. Addressing productivity gaps was a major priority in the country. Productive transformation policies were complex; they involved a multiplicity of dimensions and therefore a multiplicity of institutions. Coordination was a critical challenge – it was not just a question of making sure institutions coordinated, they had to cooperate on specific projects, involving different ministries and institutions. Uruguay had an institutionalized platform to foster the participation of both public and private entities in specific projects. A virtuous circle was needed, where institutions provided their specialized expertise and cooperated with others to address complex problems. In that regard, social dialogue was important at several levels, including the national and sectorial levels.
- 113.** *The Chairperson of the National Competitiveness Center of Panama* said that Panama was a leading country in terms of both economic growth and income inequality. While the Panama Canal and the service sector had provided economic dynamism, other sectors, such as agriculture, had been abandoned. Panama could take advantage of its position as a hub between

the Atlantic and the Pacific regions in order to support agricultural and light manufacturing development and achieve more economic balance. Agriculture played an important role in the distribution of wealth and the cost of foodstuffs. In Panama foodstuffs were very expensive despite highly fertile land; few companies had been able to benefit from the export of vegetables. Good quality education for all was critically important for a fairer distribution of opportunities in the country. Social dialogue was also key; Panama had a strong tradition of bipartite and tripartite dialogue.

- 114.** *The President of the Committee on Social Security of CONCAMIN of Mexico* agreed with the moderator that Latin America was going down the wrong path and seeing the consequences of deeply-rooted problems. Productive transformation for more and better jobs was more than a mere concept – it was a strategy that deserved to be adopted with a sense of urgency. It opened up real possibilities to accelerate economic growth, promote sustainable enterprises and generate decent work for all. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) had shown that the average rate of growth in the region in 2017 was 2.4 per cent, yet the goal should be between 5 and 7 per cent. Social dialogue was crucial to develop productive transformation policies as national policies. Lifelong learning and vocational training should be part of those policies.
- 115.** *The Secretary of International Relations of the CGT-RA* emphasized the uncertainties that workers faced in a rapidly changing world of work. The existing social contract no longer appeared valid, as governments, workers and employers well knew. While the driving forces of globalization were generating greater opportunities for the trade and financial sectors, workers did not seem to be part of the strategic design behind that process, and there was a growing income gap in the world. He asked how labour conditions could be improved in the capitalist system and how the social contract could be reformulated in a world with automation and robots? Countries such as Argentina exported food to the whole world, yet there were still Argentinian families with no food on the table.
- 116.** *The Secretary of Productive Transformation and Competitiveness of Uruguay* said that although the need for coordination was clear, the question was how to achieve it. In Uruguay the approach was to have someone responsible for coordination. It was not easy for ministries to coordinate among themselves and the solution was not just to create another ministry. An entity exclusively focused on coordinating the different projects was needed, to serve as a point of contact, coordination, communication and cooperation among the various institutions. The projects targeted sectors with the greatest potential for growth, and while the strategy had previously been based on cluster development around those sectors, the Government currently promoted sectorial roadmaps for each sector. The programme had been in place for some time; in some sectors it worked well, for instance in the audiovisual sector, whereas in some it was less successful, such as in the automotive sector.
- 117.** *The Chairperson of the National Competitiveness Center of Panama* provided additional insights into the importance of social dialogue for the productive transformation of Panama. He cited a bipartite institution – Fundación del Trabajo (the Labour Foundation) – where mutual confidence and trust had developed over the years. The ILO had provided valuable technical assistance to reach agreements between the Government, workers and employers. An example in point was the reform of the Labour Code.
- 118.** *The Secretary of Productive Transformation and Competitiveness of Uruguay* explained, in response to a question from a Government representative of Colombia, that Uruguay had established a national system of productive transformation directly linked to the President. The role of its secretariat, rather than being of substance, was to work in a low-profile manner to organize various bodies with specialized mandates and to support other institutions in matters of coordination.
- 119.** *A representative of PSI* expressed doubts regarding the session’s thematic emphasis. The title referred to sustainable and inclusive work through more and better jobs, and the Report referred

to SDG 8. Nevertheless, the discussion had focused more on public–private partnerships, which in the 1990s had been a disaster, with much social unrest when privatization had been openly promoted.

120. *A Workers' delegate from Uruguay* highlighted the importance of collective bargaining as a way to improve income distribution. He asked the panellists which new collective bargaining clauses should be in place in the future world of work to avoid wealth concentration.
121. *The President of the Committee on Social Security of CONCAMIN of Mexico* responded that inclusive productive transformation policies were needed to ensure better conditions for workers. In the region, 50 per cent of workers were in the informal economy, not covered by any collective bargaining agreements. Countries should generate conditions for more investment that could create new and decent jobs.
122. *An Employers' delegate from Chile* argued that in the absence of sustained growth, social progress could stall or fall back. More attention must be paid to preparing people for the new world of work. Countries were experiencing a new industrial revolution and must retrain their workforces and provide them with continuous education.
123. *The President of the Committee on Social Security of CONCAMIN of Mexico* fully endorsed the comments on that key issue. The purpose of the current session was to see how to use productive transformation policies to create more and better jobs. The ILO could play a vital role in that regard. Social dialogue was necessary to address those challenges, but not just sporadic social dialogue – it had to be part of long-term government vision and practice.
124. *A Workers' delegate from Colombia* questioned the effectiveness of the existing development model in Latin America. The widespread informality and inequality in the region demonstrated the absolute failure of the model. He asked the panellists what the new model should be.
125. *The Chairperson of the National Competitiveness Center of Panama* stressed the importance of concentrating on the education of workers and on guaranteeing social mobility. The distribution of wealth was a major challenge in the region, as was equal access to quality education. Furthermore, cultural changes were under way in terms of political participation. There was a trend towards greater democracy in the region, meaning greater participation and the resulting need for more and better education. He cited a university programme developed with unions in Panama to provide training to help workers adapt to changes in the new world of work.
126. *A Workers' delegate from the Dominican Republic* said that some of the panellists were looking at changes in production systems from a public service privatization perspective. The assumption was that the public sector was ineffective and that things should be changed. However, it was necessary to remember that the rights of freedom of association, collective bargaining and decent work for all were essential in order to avoid exploitation.
127. *The Secretary of Productive Transformation and Competitiveness of Uruguay* said that in Uruguay social dialogue was not concentrated on privatization. While cost levels and efficiency perspectives were open to discussion, workers' rights had always been a government priority, which had helped to improve income distribution levels.
128. *An Employers' delegate from Honduras* highlighted the urgent need to increase productivity in the region. While collective bargaining was important, it must be in line with productivity requirements. He asked the panellists for their views as to how to close the skills mismatch and to promote productive diversification.
129. *The President of the Committee on Social Security of CONCAMIN of Mexico* agreed that efforts must be made to revamp the education system. The education model had failed – there was a lack of the necessary skills in conjunction with unemployment. Education should provide the

skills necessary for workers' skill sets to match the jobs available on the labour market. The ILO must give higher priority to that pressing challenge.

Second thematic plenary sitting: Preparing the future of work we want: Policies to promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy and to respond to accelerated technological change and diverse forms of employment

130. *The Worker Vice-Chairperson* introduced the theme of the panel and said that, owing to the high level of consensus in the region regarding formalization, the discussion should advance work to define a plan of action. She welcomed the moderator, Ms Claudia Palacios, a journalist working for CNN, and the members of the panel: Ms Carla Bacigalupo, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Panama; Mr Carlos Alberto Madero Brazo, Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras; Mr Roque Benavides Ganoza, President of the National Confederation of Private Business Associations (CONFIEP) of Peru; and Mr Brian Finnegan, Global Worker Rights Coordinator of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO) of the United States.
131. *The moderator* said that there were 140 million informal workers in the region. There was a risk of that figure increasing owing to both the technology driving self-employment and low economic growth. That situation brought with it new challenges regarding the creation of social security models adapted to the new forms of employment. The need to improve conditions for enterprise growth constituted a further challenge. The informal employment rate in the agricultural sector stood at 49 per cent, while the overall informal employment rate had reached 53 per cent.
132. *The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay* said that informality in the region gave cause for alarm. The rate of informality in Paraguay stood at 65 per cent. Efforts were ongoing to tackle that issue and it was vital to have the ILO as an ally in that regard. A study group had been set up to look into the causes of informality, one of the main ones being low levels of education, which also led to low productivity. The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education had launched a process of educational transformation and were preparing a national plan on technical education. Decent work was underpinned by education. Social dialogue and tripartite work were essential to the coordination of all actions promoting formalization. A further important element was the promotion of enterprise formalization. Social dialogue must be encouraged if the jobs of the future were to be formal.

An ILO video containing key messages related to the theme of the panel was screened in the room.

133. *The Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras* said that his country had experienced economic growth and a high rate of informality. Informality brought with it low incomes and precarity. He said that he shared the view of the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay regarding the link between education, training and formalization. Informality should be combated by addressing the issue of low productivity affecting small enterprises. The growth of production chains had led to the disappearance of small family businesses and greater inequality. Informality prevented certain producers from gaining access to larger markets where they could increase their incomes. However, there might be a reversal of that situation to the extent that productivity would link value chains together.
134. *The President of CONFIEP* said that none of the labour market actors benefited from informality and that it was informal workers themselves who suffered the most. The ILO could cooperate in order to improve informality measurement standards. Informality in Peru had given rise to

rigidity. The State and the private sector must work together to address one of the causes of informality: bureaucracy. In Peru, most jobs were created within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as was the case in developed countries such as the United States. SMEs must be formalized to enable them to integrate their workers. Pension systems must be made more flexible to cover self-employed workers. Discussions on informality neglected the issue of environmental protection. The challenge of formalization was a matter of interest to both workers and employers.

- 135.** *The Global Worker Rights Coordinator of AFL–CIO*, referring to the situation in the United States, said that, although the level of informality was not particularly high, a number of forms of precarious employment did exist. The country had undergone technological change on several occasions but the current process was broader and faster, leaving no time to react and plan policies. In Germany, the trade unions, enterprises and the Government were seeking to establish “fair transitions”. Labour relations in the United States and Germany differed on a number of counts, such as the lack of sectoral-level collective bargaining and systematic social dialogue. As the Director-General had said, it was important not to fall into the trap of technological determinism. It was also vital to avoid financial determinism. Technology was a tool but the growth of inequality was a collective decision. Lastly, he referred to a number of cases in which new technology had been introduced and to the resulting changes (the cotton gin, the Ford production line and the use of robots in the automobile industry).
- 136.** *The moderator* asked the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay what progress had been made in setting up more flexible social security systems in her country.
- 137.** *The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay* said that her Ministry had previously prepared a sectoral strategy but that, more recently, an inter-institutional team had been set up, focusing, among other things, on strengthening the social security system. Furthermore, a law on part-time work had been drafted to help young persons who were both in work and in education at the same time. A dialogue had been launched on the national strategy for employment formalization within a tripartite, inter-ministerial advisory council, which additional government institutions were set to take part in.
- 138.** *The President of CONFIEP* said that both his country and Paraguay had high levels of informality and that there was a need for innovative ways of integrating workers in informal situations into the social security system. New tools were also required, such as credit card transaction data.
- 139.** *The moderator* asked the Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras whether the situation in his country was similar and whether a strategy had been put in place for the expansion of the social security system.
- 140.** *The Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras* said that there was a need to strengthen inspection, education and training systems because gaps therein led to informality. Existing social security legislation made allowance for employment on an hourly basis. The system of sanctions had been overhauled, with the introduction of larger fines and conciliation mechanisms. Increased productivity was essential in reducing informality. Technical education must be improved.
- 141.** *The moderator* asked the Global Worker Rights Coordinator of AFL–CIO what measures had been taken to reduce informality in the United States against a background of technological change.
- 142.** *The Global Worker Rights Coordinator of AFL–CIO* said that the courts were currently considering the issue of the employment relationship in enterprises such as Uber. Industry had more experience of bargaining than the service sector. As wages in the service sector were typically low, in the past, there had been no investment in worker replacement. Trade unions

did not encourage resistance to change because there was a firm belief that new jobs would be created. However, the process must be humanized and conditions put forward regarding its implementation. For example, one trade union had proposed delaying changes for a year to allow for worker training. However, the dialogue option only worked for unionized workers, meaning that there was a need to promote unionization and clearly define who the employer was in a given situation.

- 143.** *The moderator* asked the panellists whether Uber drivers should be considered to be employees. The Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras and the Global Worker Rights Coordinator of AFL–CIO said that they should, whereas the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Panama and the President of CONFIEP said that they should not.
- 144.** *The Secretary of Labour and Employment of Argentina* said that the issue of formalization had been discussed at the most recent Group of 20 summit. Informality in Argentina was concentrated in five sectors in particular: the rural sector, construction, small businesses and textiles factories, food and drink and domestic work. In those sectors, work had been formalized through joint trade union–employer agreements for the rural sector, inspection and social dialogue. Regularization should cover work carried out through platforms and individual undertakings. Given that global platforms were managed at the national level, an agreement should be reached between countries. The ILO could perhaps propose standards related to basic conditions for the workers of said platforms.
- 145.** *The Global Worker Rights Coordinator of AFL–CIO* said that one of the ILO’s tasks was to provide global responses.
- 146.** *The Vice-Minister of Labour of the Dominican Republic* listed the measures taken in her country, including the strengthening of inspection, the dissemination of labour legislation, the setting up of a one-stop shop, loans to enable enterprises to formalize and registration requirements for would-be state suppliers. She asked the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay what the impact of policies to reduce informality in Paraguay had been.
- 147.** *The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay* said that the inter-institutional strategy had only recently been implemented and that no results had yet been noted in that regard. The strategy encompassed many of the elements referred to by the delegate from the Dominican Republic, such as the strengthening of inspection and requirements for participation in public procurement processes.
- 148.** *A Government delegate from Brazil* put forward the concept of “inclusive flexibility” as a form of regulation created outside of the traditional labour relationship of paid work with the aim of broadening social security coverage. That concept had been included in the latest Brazilian labour legislation in order to take into account the reality of work in certain sectors, intermittent work, teleworking and other forms of employment. Inclusive flexibility could also provide a pathway for enterprise formalization that would allow self-employed workers to benefit from unemployment insurance during periods when demand fell.
- 149.** *The President of CONFIEP* said that there was an ongoing debate in Peru regarding flexible contracts for youth. Under the special labour regime for the export of agricultural produce in Peru, 700,000 workers had been formalized and the volume of exports had increased. Those successes had resulted from flexible contracts.
- 150.** *The Global Worker Rights Coordinator of AFL–CIO* said that, in the United States, flexible contracts were arranged through recruitment agencies specializing in casual work or in the recruitment of persons classed as self-employed. Such contracts gave rise to precarity, insecurity and extremely limited access to social security. There was a need for a more collective approach involving greater solidarity. The new forms of contracts might be beneficial for certain sectors

and workers on high wages but they did not constitute an appropriate model for everyone. Lastly, there was a lack of dialogue in the labour reform process in Brazil.

- 151.** *The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay* said that 94 per cent of domestic workers in her country were working in situations of informality. There had been significant progress in the legislative field, for example with the increase of the minimum wage for domestic work, but thousands of women had lost their jobs as a result of a protectionist measure. Thought should be given to the idea of making legislation more flexible in order to increase social security coverage.
- 152.** *The Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras*, following up on the statement made by the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay, said that wage negotiations were essential. Honduras had an employer–worker wage-negotiation mechanism. The practice of direct negotiation between social actors meant that wage increases did not become politicized, a process that could lead to informality.
- 153.** *A Workers' delegate from El Salvador*, returning to the question regarding Uber drivers put to the panellists by the moderator, said that the enterprise did not protect the workers. Workers wanted jobs and what a number of the panellists had proposed was more flexible work. Such an approach had been adopted by former President Fujimori in Peru in the early 1990s. Employers were not the masters of the means of production. The economic model should be reoriented. The workers were continually being urged to adapt to the new realities: perhaps the employers should do the same.
- 154.** *The Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security of Honduras*, responding to the statement made by the delegate from El Salvador, said that he shared his concern and that the lack of clear rules regarding labour relations could destroy individual rights. Although the world of work had been globalized, labour administration rules remained national in nature.
- 155.** *A Workers' delegate from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* said that all those States with high levels of informality had high levels of violations of freedom of association. His country had one of the lowest levels of informality in Latin America. Increases in violations of trade union rights were directly linked to informality.
- 156.** *The moderator* closed the session by pointing out that there were more questions than there were answers, and thanked all participants for their contributions.

Third thematic plenary sitting: Preparing the future of work we want: Measures and policies to strengthen and redesign institutions in the world of work, including social security, and to ensure that trade union and labour rights are fully upheld

- 157.** *The Government Vice-Chairperson* welcomed the moderator of the session, Mr Mario González, and the members of the panel: Mr Luis Ernesto Carles Rudy, the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development of Panama; Ms Jennifer Baptiste-Primus, Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago; Ms Alicia Arango Olmos, Minister of Labour of Colombia; Mr Guido Ricci, Legal Adviser of the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF) of Guatemala; and Mr Antonio Lisboa, Secretary for International Affairs of the Single Confederation of Workers (CUT) of Brazil.
- 158.** *The moderator* recalled that the region was experiencing major changes, spanning from Argentina to Mexico. Those changes, the outcome of which was yet to be known, presented

significant opportunities and challenges. He added that social dialogue was a fundamental building block of the ILO, key for creating a positive future of work, and that the panel discussion would present an excellent opportunity to learn from others about how to move forward.

- 159.** *The Minister of Labour and Workforce Development of Panama* emphasized that policies needed to be reformed in order to deal with the future of work. In that respect, tripartism had a key role to play. Tripartite constituents needed to understand that there was no leader, and that in social dialogue all parties held equal positions, and that at times, difficulties arose because each sector or the Government tended to consider their role central. In light of the rapid economic changes in the region, technological changes, and the new technological platforms for the services driving the 4.0 industry, it was increasingly urgent to address the needs of the labour market and national economies. Governments should not place downward pressure on the working conditions of the employees in their country for the sake of competition, as that would be unfair. Increasing the flexibility of labour rights in one country would divert flows of foreign direct investment and force other Governments to adopt similar policies. Rights such as paid leave, maternity and paternity leave, maternity protection, the right to collective bargaining, and freedom of association, must be upheld. Labour market institutions, just like minimum wage fixing mechanisms, must remain in place. It was necessary to expand social protection and resolve informality, which was a barrier to achieving decent work. The ILO Centenary should re-establish and strengthen the fundamental principles and rights at work and the pillars of decent work.
- 160.** The speaker highlighted the importance of gender balance and said that women possessed the skills and capacity to adapt to new working environments, indicating a growing number of women in the workplace, as demonstrated by the Panama Canal expansion project, which had been developed under the leadership of a woman.
- 161.** *The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago* underlined the need to redesign labour market institutions, by establishing necessary initial agreements, fostering inclusion, entrepreneurship and tripartism, in order to achieve collective bargaining, as well as mechanisms for minimum wage fixing and promoting social dialogue. It was necessary to identify and, as appropriate, to modify the role of the constituents and the particular sectors, the roles and responsibilities of the national tripartite structures, and align them more closely with the 2030 Agenda and the values and pillars of decent work. After taking office in 2015, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago established a National Tripartite Advisory Council (NTAC) with equal involvement from all parties (6-6-6). The speaker regretted that the Workers' representatives had decided to cease their involvement in the Council in March 2017, which demonstrated that building trust in social dialogue mechanisms was one of the key challenges, exacerbated by the lack of support between the social partners. The critical factors to ensure the successful implementation of a tripartite mechanism were: sustained political will, the Government's continued engagement with social dialogue, the existence of strong and committed workers' confederations and employers' organizations, and the recognition of the importance of social dialogue. Those elements made it possible to overcome the temporary difficulties associated with participation and to adopt the two social agreements. Social dialogue played an important role in: ensuring accountability and involvement, building trust, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the social partners for the development of the country, recognizing national interests – going beyond group interests alone, and ensuring alignment with the 2030 Agenda as a platform for development.
- 162.** *The Minister of Labour of Colombia* recalled that before the new government of Colombia had taken office in August 2018, it had already used social dialogue in the presidential campaign. Social dialogue needed to be anticipatory, preventive and proactive. It was a central tool for achieving consensus without engaging in conflict and problematic situations. She stressed the reality of our changing world and that change did not wait for anyone. It was thus necessary to adapt labour standards and drive social change.

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- 163.** Rules that were no longer needed had to be rewritten. That was demonstrated by one of Colombia's pressing problems: the lack of flexibility in hiring workers, who should be entitled to social security, regardless of the conditions under which they were hired, and freedom of association. Collective bargaining agreements therefore needed to play an important role in bringing about change. Formalization, health insurance and pensions were also key factors that the government wanted to change by demanding further formalization as well as allowing persons to adopt new and different ways of working. Workers should be able to work intermittently and enjoy protection, as there were many scenarios where such flexibility was not only in the interest of the employer, but also the individual worker. In addition, she agreed that it was highly important to promote gender equality. As regards social dialogue, it was necessary for parties to: listen to and understand different positions; accept realities and be willing to accommodate them, while ensuring that labour rights remained in line with technological developments; and cooperate with each other and overcome differences, with a view to achieving a win-win situation and consensus. Social dialogue was not a competition and should not give rise to winners and losers.
- 164.** *The Legal Adviser of CACIF from Guatemala* agreed that the question of how to change labour market institutions and regulations in order to make them more inclusive and to encourage healthy entrepreneurial development was not wide-reaching enough. The panel needed to be more self-critical, as the key question was whether these institutions and standards even responded to current needs. The high rate of informality in the region, reaching 50 per cent and 80 per cent in some countries, was a worrying sign. The existing regulations seemed to apply to an ideal world and not the real world, which was also a problem concerning some of the International Labour Standards set in Geneva. It was sometimes said that tax inspectors were hunting in the zoo (the formal economy), rather than the jungle (the informal economy). The speaker regretted that that was also true for labour inspection, which seemed too often to completely disregard the efforts made in the informal sector. It was necessary to respect entrepreneurs' rights at all times, and to strengthen sustainable companies, as these were the only means to create formal employment. Regulations should reflect so-called new forms of work in a forward-looking way.
- 165.** Continuing on the topic of social dialogue, the speaker pointed out that not only should it be limited to formal dialogue, but in order to solve problems, it was necessary to boost the quality of interactions in order to deal with the great challenges ahead. Strengthening the capacity of worker and employer organizations to bring about better policies, regulations and laws was key to making that boost forward. Another important issue was indigenous peoples' rights, as there was a significant amount of conflict in the region, sometimes even involving groups that were not necessarily indigenous but nevertheless claimed these rights. In order to avoid destroying enterprises and damaging national economies, better regulation was necessary. Permanent institutions needed to be created that would allow indigenous peoples to voice their views and would solve historical problems, which often unnecessarily complicated consultations on specific projects that had no connection to these longstanding disputes.
- 166.** The speaker asked the ILO to step up efforts in that area, as he considered that the topic had not been adequately addressed by the Organization for many years, and that other UN agencies had begun to interpret provisions of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), in their own interest. In light of that, the ILO needed to take back its responsibilities. In closing, the speaker urged governments to involve social partners in the design and supervision of social security systems, and to ensure that they were properly administered and transparent.
- 167.** *A Workers' delegate from Brazil* stressed the importance of respecting labour and trade union rights, and social security. Thinking about the "future of work we want" was the same as thinking about "the future we want". The fourth industrial revolution should also be acknowledged. It was not possible to resist technological progress, but its purpose should be to serve humanity, and not to accumulate wealth. Labour standards should not increase inequality but improve the quality of human life. That progress should help to decrease working time,

increase the number of workers and reduce working hours. That required strong trade unions and solid, democratic governments. Migration should not be seen as a problem and it should enable and guarantee the free movement of workers, just like the free movement of capital. The ILO had to remain strong and resist pressure from financial matters and agents. The future of work should cover the rights of children, the elderly, and environmental protection.

- 168.** *The Minister of Labour and Workforce Development of Panama* explained that enforcing laws without consensus or consultation would lead to death and failure. A positive example from his country had been the expansion of the Canal, in which the people were consulted; a negative example had been the *Corredor norte y sur* toll road which had failed because no consultations had taken place. Social dialogue should be led by strong trade unions, enterprises and governments. The Labour Minister played an important role in enforcing labour rights. Non-unionized workers in Panama were entitled to freely consult an Ombudsman. It was necessary to differentiate between enterprises which met their obligations and those which did not. Lastly, economic development should also give rise to better wages.
- 169.** *The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago* stated that the partnership for promoting social dialogue had deteriorated as a result of operational issues within the NTAC. The Workers' representatives occasionally used it as a forum to bring other complaints concerning issues other than those which had been called for. The Council should be improved and reformed for it to be an appropriate forum for social dialogue. International trade interests had led to the withdrawal of enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago, leaving thousands of workers unemployed. In social dialogue forums, parties should come together with a sense of respect and commitment.
- 170.** *The Labour Minister of Colombia* claimed that without social security, there was no future. Labour inspection (involving preventive measures and penalties) was necessary and was being strengthened. She also stated that social dialogue needed to be accompanied by improvements in productivity and competitiveness. The rate of informality in the rural sector had reached 80 per cent, indicating that today rural workers were highly unprotected. In order to provide health and pensions for the elderly, it was necessary to improve social protection coverage and agricultural productivity.
- 171.** *The Legal Adviser of CACIF from Guatemala* said that a forum for social dialogue had been in place since the 1990s, prior to the current forum, which had been implemented with the support of the ILO and which was currently producing good results. More work was required in order to continue improving the situation.
- 172.** *A Workers' delegate from Brazil* pointed out that the rise of businesses such as Uber and Amazon was a global governance issue; international regulations were required to deal with the "uberization" of the economy. New technologies had outpaced governments and trade unions. Unions must be aware of new demands and be representative.
- 173.** *The Vice-Chairperson of the Confederation of University Workers in the Americas (CONTUA)* denounced the violation of labour and trade union rights, and demanded the full right to freedom of association. He acknowledged the progress made in collective bargaining in the private sector, but said that the same was not true for the public sector or universities. He called for compliance with constitutional labour standards.
- 174.** *A representative from the Confederation of Legislative Employees in Latin America and the Caribbean* said that parliaments and assemblies must handle national regulations. She asked the Secretary for International Affairs of the Single Confederation of Workers (CUT) whether the Report of the Director-General took into account the rights of public employees. The speaker responded that it was necessary to have high-quality public services and public employees with labour and trade union rights.

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175. *An Employers' delegate from Honduras* asked the Legal Adviser of the CACIF of Guatemala how to achieve greater formalization of enterprises and employees, and improve labour inspection, which did not extend to informal employees.
176. *The Legal Adviser of the CACIF of Guatemala* responded that most labour inspectors did not work in the informal economy. Thus, it was necessary to apply both incentives and penalties and to introduce legislation which would facilitate the creation and regularization of enterprises.
177. *A Workers' delegate from Colombia* asked who was responsible for paying the social security for Uber and Rappi. The Labour Minister of Colombia responded that social security for Uber and Rappi was a delicate issue. Enterprises should pay for it, given that workers' income was so low that it barely covered the basic essentials. The Secretary for International Affairs of the CUT of Brazil added that workers should be organized, there should be international regulations and it was enterprises that should be responsible for paying social security.
178. *An Employers' delegate from Uruguay* asked the Employers' delegate from Guatemala how countries could reduce the employment deficit in the face of the need for economic growth, given that public employment had reached its limit.
179. *The Minister of Labour and Workforce Development of Panama* concluded by saying that efforts needed to be made to identify the areas where informal employees worked and to achieve greater regularization.

Fourth thematic plenary sitting: Preparing the future of work we want: The digital economy and labour skills and competences

180. *The Worker Vice-Chairperson* welcomed the moderator, Mr Mario González, a CNN journalist, and the panellists: Mr José Juan Haro, Director of Public Policy and Wholesale Business in Latin America for Telefónica; Mr Frederico Lamego, Executive Manager of the International Relations Unit of the National Confederation of Industry of Brazil (CNI-SENAI); Ms Yolanda Martínez Mancilla, Coordinator of the National Digital Strategy of the Government of Mexico; Ms Gabriella Herzog, Vice-President for Labor Affairs and Corporate Responsibility of the United States Council for International Business (USCIB); and Ms Alejandra Tamara Muñoz, Official Responsible for International Affairs of the Single Confederation of Workers of Chile (CUT).
181. *The Coordinator of the National Digital Strategy of the Government of Mexico* mentioned three challenges: promoting digital transformation as a State policy to make the Internet accessible to everyone and to bridge the gap in access; aligning digital transformation policies for a secure free-flow of data and personal data protection; and developing computer skills through appropriate public education policies. The businesses of the future would be technology-based and would call for various skills, such as teamwork, computational thinking, entrepreneurship and ethical values. In the Mexican ecosystem of entrepreneurship, companies could be created, updated and dissolved without intermediation, thereby democratizing access. The digital economy would generate challenges and opportunities, especially if entrepreneurship was stimulated. Social security schemes should be updated in line with the professions that new technologies would create.
182. *The Director of Public Policy and Wholesale Business in Latin America for Telefónica* noted that digitalization was the major challenge of our time, and that, in the future, Latin America would be digitalized. Telecommunication companies were building the highways along which digital content flowed, which allowed for and stimulated innovation. Regional growth had been based on trade in commodities and had slowed down in recent years; it was an obsolete model.

New motors of growth should be sought through increased productivity, and digital technologies could help in that regard. Digitalization called everything into question and made it necessary to discover new ways of doing things and new activities to which to devote existing skills, as many others would be carried out by artificial intelligence or automated. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had estimated that 14 per cent of jobs and 32 per cent of activities would be automated. According to the World Economic Forum, 65 per cent of young people were preparing for jobs that did not yet exist. The digital economy should be considered a global phenomenon. The demand for services could be met from anywhere in the world through the use of platforms. Jobs in Latin America could be replaced by jobs in another continent. The continent should become a supplier of digital services, and not only be on the demand side.

- 183.** *The Executive Manager of the International Relations Unit of the CNI–SENAI* explained that Brazil had a forum on innovation and digitalization comprising over 200 general directors of local and multinational companies. Six years previously, the CNI–SENAI had been asked to create a network of technological innovation institutions, in which over US\$800 million had been invested to cover various key technologies.
- 184.** Process digitalization was critical. The CNI–SENAI was developing a support programme to digitalize over 2,000 businesses, a first step towards Industry 4.0. New digital content had been designed for professional training in response to industry demands, intended for workers without access to conventional training systems and who required training in areas such as artificial intelligence, Manufacturing 4.0 and the Internet. The CNI–SENAI was advocating widespread transformation and was convinced that Brazil’s competitiveness would improve with new production techniques.
- 185.** *The Vice-President for Labor Affairs and Corporate Responsibility of USCIB* said that she agreed with the comments made. She referred to the power and challenges of the digital economy in the region, that some called the “fourth industrial revolution”. Although there had been other revolutions in the past, the current one represented great opportunities for growth, for the creation of millions of new jobs and for the transformation of work. The digital economy was also generating opportunities for the public sector. The use of data and of new algorithms could improve transparency and reduce corruption. The World Economic Forum had estimated that 133 million jobs would be created in the next ten years, while 75 million might be lost; a positive net result. Everyone had a role to play as ILO tripartite partners.
- 186.** Investments in connectivity would generate better opportunities for everyone. The public sector should draft new rules to strengthen social security networks. The digital economy was very important for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and for them to access adequate financing. She referred to opportunities to create relevant vocational training programmes that met the current and future demands of the productive sector. In the United States, there was a gap estimated at 6 million positions due to candidates not having the required digital skills. Businesses should step up their efforts to continue training the workforce. Finally, she emphasized that individuals were responsible for their own professional development and had a role to play in that regard.
- 187.** *The Official Responsible for International Affairs of the CUT* said that the work of the future was already happening, and that workers had their own views on the topic. Platform economies had a number of decent work deficits, for instance in respect of social security coverage. The Government should consider new mechanisms to protect workers in that area. It was also important to link the dynamics of such changes with dialogue. In that regard, the question was how to apply new strategies to promote social dialogue. Chile, for instance, had a Higher Labour Council, a tripartite body that allowed for dialogue on the future of work. To bridge the technology gap between the North and the South, guarantees should be put in place to ensure access to knowledge, transfer mechanisms and funding to support technological innovations in countries in the South without generating debt. She recalled that the decent work deficit in

supply chains made it necessary to ensure compliance with the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

- 188.** She noted that one of the business strategies of call centres was to subcontract services to smaller businesses in which work was very precarious and mainly carried out by women. Social dialogue had allowed for progress to be made in areas such as maternity protection, time management and productivity. Social dialogue made agreements possible, and should therefore be strengthened and institutionalized.
- 189.** *A Government representative of the United States* recalled that the digital era had already existed 30 years previously and that currently the main problem was a lack of qualified staff. One third of SMEs in his country had trouble filling vacancies. The transition meant a reduction in the number of jobs requiring manual skills, and an increase in demand for non-repetitive cognitive skills, such as creativity and interpersonal skills. He wondered how to connect workers with the means to develop these skills, what types of policies were required, how to coordinate closely with the business sector and how to connect people who remained outside the labour market with new opportunities.
- 190.** *The Director of Public Policy and Wholesale Business in Latin America for Telefónica* mentioned two challenges. First, basic education was not ready to tackle the current challenges, as demonstrated by the results of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests and the lack of proficiency in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Governments played a key role in that regard. The second was that active workers needed to develop digital and entrepreneurial skills. The Telefónica Foundation was working with the Organization of American States (OAS) to introduce digital skills in Central American countries, and had created a business accelerator to promote them.
- 191.** *An Employers' delegate of Panama* said that opportunities should be seized and that together with other stakeholders, it was necessary to identify and develop the competencies required. She asked the panellists what each one's role should be in order for Latin America to join the new scenario and have a positive impact.
- 192.** *An Employers' delegate of Colombia* said that legislation should be revised to include flexible arrangements and collaborative work scenarios to reflect what was already happening in the world. It should be legally possible to hire third parties through a regulatory change to guarantee the flexibility of business structures. He asked how that regulatory change could be made viable.
- 193.** *The Vice-President for Labor Affairs and Corporate Responsibility of USCIB* suggested revising educational systems. In the United States, for instance, programming skills were part of basic education curricula. The skills required by the digital economy should be defined through dialogue and should be part of school programmes. The changes must be reviewed by all parties. In the United States, in coordination with the Secretaries of Labor, Education and Trade, improvements were being made to the federal accreditation system to recognize training in digital skills with portable certificates. It was accepted that a new industry-led model was needed to create new recognition, training and skills certification systems.
- 194.** *The Executive Manager of the International Relations Unit of the CNI-SENAI* said that there was a quality gap in education in Brazil, and that new teaching models should be introduced to meet the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution. The CNI-SENAI was providing content about entrepreneurship to students in training centres. Given the gap, one to two months of the programmes were dedicated to levelling out participants' skills in mathematics, Portuguese and even in art.
- 195.** *The Coordinator of the National Digital Strategy of the Government of Mexico* noted that leadership was needed in order to participate in the digital economy, encourage equal participation and promote women's access to the labour market. By way of example, she

mentioned the *Laboratoria* initiative, which was very relevant given that only 6 per cent of women were professional programmers. The Internet access points provided under the *México Conectado* programme guaranteed the constitutional right to Internet access and facilitated the development of digital skills.

- 196.** *The Vice-Minister of Labour of the Dominican Republic* described the *República Digital* programme, which provided public services such as employment services, government procurement and employment services, and services relating to procedures, labour registers and higher education scholarships and so on. She asked the CUT representative to elaborate on Chile's experience.
- 197.** *The Official Responsible for International Affairs of the CUT* recalled that 80 per cent of call centre workers were women. Maternity leave and the breastfeeding law had had to be requested time and time again, but eventually there had been some progress.
- 198.** *An Employers' delegate of Mexico* highlighted the dizzying amount of opportunities born out of the digital economy. He voiced concern that, although both formal and informal enterprises benefited equally from it, it was the formal enterprises that bore the cost of labour and taxes, not the informal ones. He asked how the digital economy could help reduce informality.
- 199.** *A Workers' delegate of Mexico* said that she disagreed with the overview provided by the panellist from her country and asked what was being done or proposed to provide workers and users of the platforms with social security.
- 200.** *The Director of Public Policy and Wholesale Business in Latin America for Telefónica* noted that in some countries, informality reached 70 per cent, which was not the world that was aspired to. However, many of the efforts made to achieve formalization had failed. Informality was bolstered by a lack of sanctions, and digital tools offered an opportunity to reduce it. Some platforms might have generated precarious forms of work, but the digital economy also made economic activities more transparent and traceable. Employment contracts would not necessarily remain the same in the future. They were changing for economic and productive reasons, opening the door to new employment relationships. Laws should be adapted to guarantee social rights, and those left behind should be covered by support measures such as the universal basic income.
- 201.** *The Coordinator of the National Digital Strategy of the Government of Mexico* said that, in order to combat informality, formality should be made more attractive. She identified three main areas to work on: legislation to close the access gap and ensure tangible benefits (in accessing credit and social benefits, for instance); the telecommunications reform, improving access to the Internet and to other services such as education and public services; and the alignment of regulatory frameworks, such as legislation on the protection of digital data.
- 202.** *A Workers' delegate of Mexico* recalled that his country had more than 60 million citizens living in poverty and that there had been no successful telecommunications reform nor proposals to boost that sector. He asked the panellists what was being done to protect workers and users of platforms.
- 203.** *A representative of the Confederation of Workers of the Universities of the Americas* asked the CUT panellist how governments, enterprises and trade unions should work together to close the digital skills gap in older workers, who could be disadvantaged in relation to young workers.
- 204.** *The Official Responsible for International Affairs of the CUT* said that there should be tripartite agreements on how to bear the severance costs occasioned by digitalization. Social protection systems should be redesigned to cover laid-off workers and define a lifelong learning programme for workers and trade unionists.

Information sessions

205. The Regional Meeting held three information sessions on the following topics:

- reducing the pay gap and other gender gaps in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- eliminating child labour in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
- the promotion and application of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy in the Americas.

First information session: Reducing the pay gap and other gender gaps in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

206. *The Chairperson* welcomed participants and emphasized the importance that the topic had held for the ILO since its creation.

207. *The Senior Technical Officer from the ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch*, showed a video on the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) and explained that it was a joint initiative, led by the ILO, UN Women and the OECD, which aimed to ensure that governments, employers and workers adopted strategies to reduce the pay gap and thereby contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 and SDG target 8.5.

208. Fair pay for women would increase their income and give them more money to invest in the education and health of their children. This, together with more efficient harnessing of the skills of women, would enable them to increase their contribution to society and national economies. EPIC had organized an event in September 2018 in the context of the UN General Assembly, in which six countries from the Americas (Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), the ITUC and PSI, as well as multiple businesses and non-governmental organizations, had made a commitment to narrow the pay gap.

209. *The Director of the ILO Conditions of Work and Equality Department*, speaking via video link, elaborated on the wage gap, which stood at 20 per cent at the global level when average monthly wages were compared. EPIC sought to find practical and viable solutions adapted to the realities of countries and businesses, with reference to the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). She emphasized that EPIC would promote a space for open exchange to facilitate the continuous learning of its members with respect to reducing the pay gap and pay-related discrimination.

210. *The Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama*, Ms Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado, who had been named the regional champion of EPIC, welcomed those present and expressed appreciation for having been invited to participate in the information session. She explained how her work on public development policies had enabled her to recognize inequality in various spheres, and particularly with respect to political participation and family responsibilities. In addition, she explained some of the measures that Panama had taken to make progress towards gender equality, and praised the leadership shown in this area by the Ministry of Labour and Workforce Development. She drew particular attention to the enactment of Act No. 56 of 2017, which established that 30 per cent of members of executive boards must be women, an ambitious target given that women's participation was currently only 10 per cent. She also referred to the joint work being undertaken by Panama, together with the Inter-

American Development Bank (IDB) and the ILO, to measure the pay gap. The National Council for Gender Parity had been established and was working on the implementing regulations for the Equal Opportunities for Women Act. Lastly, she emphasized that, in order to advance the agenda for pay equality, the involvement of governments, workers and employers was crucial.

- 211.** *Mr Rakesh Patry, Director-General of the Employment and Social Development Canada Labour Program*, expressed thanks for the invitation to participate in the Meeting and affirmed Canada's commitment to making progress towards the attainment of the SDGs, including target 8.5. He emphasized that gender equality was a priority for his Government and indicated that in Canada, where the participation rate of women was 74 per cent, women who worked full time earned 88 cents for every dollar that men earned. In order to tackle the gender gaps, Canada had pledged to increase women's representation in leadership positions, enhance the participation of women in the workforce and develop a proactive pay equity regime for all federally regulated workplaces so as to shed light on existing pay gaps and introduce new pay transparency requirements.
- 212.** Acknowledging the complexity of the issue, he said that some pay disparities were attributable to labour market characteristics, such as the high concentration of women in the humanities and their consequent under-representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers, where they represented only 22 per cent of the workforce, and skilled trades. The Government was supporting programmes aimed at increasing the number of women in such careers and in non-traditional occupations, including union based apprenticeship training. The Government of Canada would table pay equity legislation for the federal jurisdiction before the end of 2018, which would represent a step forward from the current complaint-based system. The new approach would require employers to carry out a comparison exercise across workplaces to determine whether discrimination existed, which would hopefully help to reduce the gender pay gap in the regulated private sector. The Government was also preparing to introduce transparency requirements. At the international level, Canada was proud to be a stakeholder in EPIC and to sit on its steering committee.
- 213.** Canada was determined to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, and he thanked the ILO for the discussions on the issue at the 2018 and 2019 sessions of the International Labour Conference and expressed Canada's interest in working together in that regard. Lastly, he referred to the long-term commitment Canada had made to gender equality, which had led it to provide for measures such as flexible work arrangements, maternity, paternity and family-related leave, and the development of a national strategy to prevent and tackle gender-based violence.
- 214.** *A Workers' delegate from Canada* stressed the importance of reflecting the presentations and responses from the information sessions in the conclusion document of the Regional Meeting. She alluded to the link between the pay gap and other gender gaps, and acknowledged that the barriers that women faced were interlinked. Pay discrimination existed because work carried out by women was less valued. Noting that the average pay gap did not reflect the diverse circumstances of women, she shared the figures that she had on the situation in Canada, which indicated a gap of 32 per cent overall, but even higher percentages for women from racial minorities, indigenous women and women with disabilities. She indicated that the trade union movement would continue to push for pay equality, commended the efforts made by the ILO in the region, including the launch of EPIC, and praised the good work carried out by PSI.
- 215.** She emphasized that there was more to the income gap than the pay gap: women's wages were lower because they were over-represented in part-time and precarious jobs, as they took on the majority of caregiving obligations. It was therefore important to address the unequal distribution of care work, the issue of leave and the need to invest in quality public services in order to close the gap. There had been other barriers to overcome, such as violence and harassment, which made it important to have a new ILO instrument on that subject. It was necessary to move beyond a piecemeal approach, given that experiences of discrimination varied widely and

overlapped in such a way that they required systemic solutions. SDGs 5 and 8 were interconnected and governments, employers and workers had a role to play in achieving them. To conclude, she spoke about the role of EPIC in the exchange of best practices regarding legislation, workplace practices and the establishment of public care services, and called for the adoption of a Convention and a Recommendation on violence and harassment at the 2019 session of the International Labour Conference.

- 216.** *A Workers' delegate from Chile* provided information on a pilot project developed in the public sector to close the pay gap, which was being carried out with the support of the ILO and PSI. He emphasized that the experience of Chile had shown that the key to success was ongoing social dialogue and that the current challenge was how to transition from the pilot phase to the implementation of policies of a general nature.
- 217.** *A representative of PSI* began by saying that the integration of women into formal work was a response to the social consensus around the demand for gender equality, a vehicle for overcoming poverty and inequality, and an instrument to help countries develop. Action must be stepped up through measures such as the introduction of specific legislation, the reduction of gender segregation in the labour market, the revaluation of women's work, the implementation of policies to remedy the under-representation of women in management positions, investment in the care economy, the payment of minimum living wages, and the strengthening of collective bargaining. She reaffirmed PSI's commitment to gender equality and reiterated that public services must consider the needs of women and men and provide the former with the structural support they needed to forge their economic, political and social independence.
- 218.** *A representative of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA)* emphasized the importance of analysing jobs performed mainly by women, given that in many cases they were remunerated with minimum wages that were lower than the cost of a basket of goods. She called for the ratification and implementation of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), as a means of reducing the pay gap by protecting the rights of domestic workers. In addition, she called on the International Labour Conference, at its next session (June 2019), to adopt a Convention and a Recommendation to combat violence and harassment in the world of work. She drew attention to the gender gap in pensions and the need to establish measures to promote the joint responsibility of men, women and the whole of society in the care of dependants. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of collective bargaining as a tool to promote equality and, more specifically, pay equality.

Second information session: Eliminating child labour in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- 219.** *The Chairperson* briefly introduced the topic of the session and showed a short video in that connection. He then gave the floor to Ms Elena Montobbio, Deputy Director of the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for the Andean Countries, who presented the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative.
- 220.** *The Deputy Director of the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for the Andean Countries* explained that the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative was an innovative intergovernmental cooperation platform created at the ILO's 18th American Regional Meeting (Lima, 2014) to which the Organization and the social partners remained committed, with a view to achieving the first generation free of child labour by 2025. Latin America and the Caribbean was the region that had made the most progress in reducing child labour in the past 25 years, before which there had been approximately 20 million children and adolescents in child labour situations. Since then, countries had made considerable efforts to address the issue, moving from the "invisibilization" and social acceptance of child labour to the ratification of the Minimum

Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), the reform of standards, the development of pilot projects in different spheres and sectors that had child labour (markets, brick-making, agriculture, and the sexual exploitation of children for commercial gain), the creation of inter-institutional committees, the measuring of child labour to better understand its characteristics, and the development of national policies, programmes, plans and strategies to prevent and eradicate child labour.

- 221.** According to figures in the *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013* report, presented at the III Global Conference on Child Labour, the sustained process of reduction later slowed down. The situation was analysed and discussed by a group of countries that had decided to meet in order to exchange experiences and strengthen their responses, creating the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative, which was formally adopted at the 18th American Regional Meeting in 2014 with signatures from 25 States, later joined by five more. The Regional Initiative comprised a high-level authority, formed by labour ministers; a focal points network composed of 28 representatives of governments, five representatives of employers' organizations and five representatives of workers' organizations; and a technical secretariat provided by the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 222.** The Regional Initiative had identified the need to renew the intervention model so as to accelerate the rate at which child labour was being reduced. In order to do that, an accelerating policy framework was proposed, as well as a model for identifying child labour risk, a statistical tool that enabled the identification of areas with the highest risk of child labour so that existing public policies, programmes and services could be adapted to ensure that they functioned as real instruments for preventing child labour and stopping more children and adolescents from entering the labour market. The Regional Initiative was a useful mechanism for promoting the achievement of target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda, given that the reduction of child labour had a direct impact on another 35 SDG targets. Target 8.7 was one of the 41 targets for early attainment in 2025, meaning that only 350 weeks remained. It was appropriate to ask whether sufficient measures were in place for 30,000 minors to leave child labour every week, and 10.5 million children and adolescents were waiting for an answer to that question.
- 223.** *The Ambassador and Head of the International Relations Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Mexico* reiterated her country's commitment to eradicating child labour through legislative changes, elevating to Constitutional level the human rights established in international treaties through the General Act on the Rights of Children and Adolescents, and the Federal Labour Act and its list of hazardous or unhealthy occupations prohibited for minors old enough to work in accordance with Convention No. 182. Moreover, the minimum age of employment had been raised for Convention No. 138. Coordinated and integrated public policies for the prevention and eradication of child labour and the protection of minors old enough to work had been implemented through the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers Old Enough to Work in Mexico (CITI), committees in the 32 states of the Republic, and labour inspection. These efforts had been supplemented by the establishment of child labour protocols, the introduction of a child-labour free certification system in the productive sector, and various action strategies. Nevertheless, despite significant progress, huge challenges remained that would require a holistic response and international cooperation such as that being carried out by Mexico through the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative, and the development of the child labour risk prediction model with the support of the ILO and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 224.** The most valuable results achieved to date were the establishment of 32 child labour risk profiles, one for each state of the country, which identified the most vulnerable municipalities and the main risk factors; a map of municipalities showing high, medium and

low risks of illegal child employment; and the progress made towards a second phase of the model. Mexico was thus one of the most advanced countries in the eradication of child labour and stood ready to offer technical support through the exchange of knowledge and experience.

- 225.** *The Deputy Minister of the Dominican Republic* spoke of the progress made in respect of child labour in her country. According to the latest statistics, in a country of 8 million inhabitants, 423,000 children were engaged in child labour. The country had a roadmap; a local steering committee composed of various State institutions, social partners and members of civil society; and key services to give effect to its commitment to eradicating child labour.
- 226.** *A Government delegate of the United States* said that child labour was a complex problem that affected governments, employers, workers and consumers and called for multifaceted and coordinated solutions. The Latin American region had made significant progress, but much remained to be done. Over the previous 25 years, her country had been working closely with many of the countries in the region to raise awareness of child labour and to support innovative ways to eradicate that abusive practice, such as the child labour risk prediction model for Latin America and the Caribbean developed by the Regional Initiative. Partnerships and research were key to progress and the reports produced by the United States Department of Labor provided the basis of the country's international engagement on the issue. The United States Government wished to emphasize that many of the recommendations made in those reports focused on legislation and enforcement gaps in the informal economy, as laws meant little if they were not enforced.
- 227.** *A Workers' delegate of Colombia* said that, at the global conferences on child labour that had been held since 1997, governments had shared challenges, policies and best practices, and had undertaken to eradicate the practice. SDG target 8.7 on child labour and forced labour would not be attained through public policies alone, as those practices were a consequence of governance deficits and would require social dialogue and consensus seeking. Waiting for 2030 meant waiting a long time. It would be impossible to eradicate child and forced labour without decent work for adults and quality education for children.
- 228.** *A Government delegate of Panama* pointed out that the national strategy for the elimination of child labour had been approved in 2010 and constituted a roadmap that set out the steps to follow to eradicate the worst forms of child labour by 2020.
- 229.** Panama had recorded an 8 per cent reduction in child labour. Various programmes had been implemented and the country had been removed from the list of countries using child labour in the sugarcane industry by the Bureau of International Labor Affairs of the United States Government.
- 230.** *An Employers' delegate of Guatemala* explained that there was tripartite consensus in her country with respect to child labour, which prevailed in the informal economy, where workers had no social protection, and in occupations that required few qualifications. At the same time, attention should be paid to the job creation difficulties of the formal economy, especially in the rural sector; the lack of guaranteed access to and continuance in the education system; and the absence of an effective school-to-work transition. The implementation of the instruments of the Regional Initiative required States to provide the necessary public services. A challenge in the region was migration and the risk of child labour in three scenarios, involving: family migration, unaccompanied minors travelling without official documents, and children staying in their countries of origin while their parents migrated. Lastly, it was important to follow up initiatives with ILO technical cooperation in order to strengthen the national and international ecosystem of business representation, and to encourage the participation and engagement of national networks of employers' organizations and chambers.

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- 231.** *The Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security of Uruguay* said that the issue was complex and that labour inspection alone could not address it effectively. In Uruguay, there was a committee for the elimination of child labour which included participation from the Ministries of Labour, Education and Health and the social partners. He spoke of his country's strong commitment to combating child labour.
- 232.** *An Employers' delegate of Mexico* said that the presentations given by the Ambassador of Mexico and the Deputy Director of the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for the Andean Countries had shown that it was insulting and unacceptable that there were societies in which children were working in subsistence agriculture or other sectors. Partnerships between the relevant parties were required so that parents could find decent work that would remove the need for children to work or for young people to emigrate, especially in connection with the worst forms of child labour. The success of interventions would require education, safety, awareness raising, problem identification, a holistic approach and the coordination of efforts.
- 233.** *The Minister of Labour of Saint Kitts and Nevis* recalled some of the legislative and educational measures adopted in his country with the aim of eradicating child abuse and child labour, and he pledged his Government's commitment to adhering to the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative.
- 234.** *The Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Public Safety and Labour of Antigua and Barbuda* pledged his Government's commitment to ensuring that his country adhered to the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative.

Third information session: The promotion and application of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy in the Americas

- 235.** *The Chairperson* introduced the session by highlighting the importance of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) for the region and how the session would provide delegates with the opportunity to share ideas to further promote the instrument in the region. He reminded the delegates that the tripartite instrument provided guidance to governments, enterprises and social partners on enhancing the positive contribution of foreign direct investment (FDI) and the operations of multinational enterprises to socio-economic development and decent work. He added that the Declaration had been recently updated by the ILO Governing Body in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Declaration recognized the different yet complementary roles and responsibilities of governments of home and host countries, multinational enterprises, and workers' and employers' organizations, in the areas of employment, training, conditions of life and work and industrial relations. Furthermore, he highlighted the critical role of social dialogue in achieving positive outcomes.
- 236.** *The Head of the ILO Multinational Enterprises and Enterprise Engagement Unit* briefly introduced the regional report *Multinational enterprises, development and decent work: Report on the promotion and application of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy in the Americas*. She explained how the report – prepared with direct input from governments, employers' and workers' organizations of the member States in the Americas – was part of the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration adopted by the Governing Body in 2017. It was the second time that such a report had been produced for the Americas. She highlighted the good response rate from tripartite constituents and the quality of the responses received. The region was very diverse when it came to attracting FDI, with investment inflows mainly from the United States into Mexico, Central America and

the Caribbean; and from Europe into South America and the United States. However, China had also become an important investor in the region and the rise of the *multilatinas* continued.

- 237.** The responding governments, employers and workers firmly agreed on the importance of promoting respect for human rights and the fundamental principles and rights at work, as well as good practices in the areas of wages, working conditions and occupational safety and health. Various consultations and dialogue mechanisms seemed to exist between governments, employers and workers regarding FDI attraction and the operations of multinational enterprises (MNEs), but workers indicated that they were often not part of such consultations. Some promotional activities had been undertaken, but clear focal points to further promote the use of the instrument at national level did not appear to exist, although some had indicated the Ministry of Labour or the OECD National Contact Points in that regard. She listed various capacity-building and technical support activities that the Office had initiated following the 18th American Regional Meeting. Constituents had requested further support from the Office in terms of awareness raising, capacity building and the exchange of experiences on the application of the MNE Declaration.
- 238.** *The Minister of Labour of Saint Kitts and Nevis* requested significant support with regard to the MNE Declaration. He stated the importance of FDI attraction for the much-needed economic growth of his country, while ensuring job creation and promoting decent work. Policy-makers were aware of the issues surrounding the entry of MNEs in his country. Nevertheless, he was convinced that having clear guidelines on how to interact with MNEs would help to ensure that economic growth go hand in hand with creating decent work for the future.
- 239.** He stated that the Government would receive requests from MNEs for certain concessions regarding their establishment in the country, but believed that the MNEs were an important part of the economic growth which his country desired. He requested support from the ILO and other relevant agencies to attract investment in his country that would contribute to its long-term development. The Government needed to invest in upskilling and reskilling the local workforce to make the transition from an agrarian-based economy to a service economy. Human resources development was a critical component in the country's efforts to participate in international economic development through the investment of MNEs in the country.
- 240.** *A Workers' delegate from Uruguay* formally requested that the debate be included in the final report of the meeting. He made the request, not because the Workers' group was opposed to investment, but because of the powerful relationships that often generated through value chains and transnational enterprises. In Uruguay, for example, small and medium-sized enterprises often had to deal with multinationals on outsourcing and other types of recruitment practices. That should be a matter of concern for all, including employers and especially for governments, acting in the public interest. With respect to the workers, all parties should comply with the principles expressed in the MNE Declaration. Furthermore, all enterprises should follow national regulations. He provided a concrete example of how consultations in Uruguay had been held between trade unions, employers and the Government when cellulose plants had recently been set up. All parties had reached an agreement which, although not perfect, had been an important achievement. However, that was unfortunately not the case in other countries. He stated that Chinese investments were often accompanied by a large numbers of Chinese workers and that those companies did not always comply with the labour legislation.
- 241.** He emphasized that all investments must comply with the conditions stated in the MNE Declaration, including the recognition of national trade unions and the respect for collective bargaining, and that no anti-union measures should be taken. Framework agreements should be promoted as a good practice. He also highlighted certain cases where MNEs had threatened and even sued governments when legislative changes were made. He also expressed concern about the growing trend towards privatizing dispute resolution and drew attention to several ongoing initiatives to limit the power of MNEs, such as the legally binding treaty that would be discussed in the Human Rights Council later that month.

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- 242.** He closed by stating that the MNE Declaration was a tripartite Declaration adopted by the Governing Body with operational tools including a regional follow-up mechanism. It was therefore regrettable that such an important issue was taken up in an information session on the last day of the meeting. Even more regrettable were the difficulties encountered in the drafting group where the workers could not even mention the MNE Declaration on account of the opposition from the employers and the passiveness of governments.
- 243.** A *Workers' delegate from Colombia* indicated that the tripartite Declaration was highly relevant but not sufficient. He expressed his hope that over time, and during the course of the ILO's Centenary, a Convention could be established to regulate MNE operations. He indicated that some MNEs, especially in the mining and energy sectors, were currently facing criminal cases for their exploitation of natural resources and treatment of local communities. He indicated that a constitutional court in Colombia had ordered energy and mining companies to consult with local communities, but that the companies often did not comply. He indicated that while the MNE Declaration is important, it should not replace any legal and penal action against multinationals.
- 244.** A *Workers' delegate from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)* expressed support for the statements made by previous speakers concerning the relevance of the ILO's work on MNEs. Too often, MNEs employed double standards, applying good practices in their home countries but resorting to lower standards elsewhere, especially in developing countries, violating the legal standards of that country. Many governments gave incentives for attracting FDI, generating unequal treatment towards local enterprises. The ILO should promote dialogue among all actors and within MNEs. Workers should come together to reach agreements with management at the international level. Ministries of labour should have the capacity to oversee compliance of MNEs with national laws and MNEs should engage in negotiations with local trade unions and not seek to create parallel pseudo-trade unions.
- 245.** A *representative of the Employers' group* stated that the Regional Meeting agenda, which had been agreed upon in advance, foresaw that the three information sessions would not be included in the conclusions of the Meeting. The Employers' group were in favour of that agreement, maintaining that the conclusions of the Meeting should reflect only the four thematic sessions. He indicated that the Employers' group were very open to discussing MNEs but that the Governing Body was the appropriate forum for doing so.
- 246.** An *Employers' delegate from Honduras* reconfirmed the previous agreement made to have the MNE discussion as an information session. Moreover, his group did not accept the negative characterization of enterprises, or any references to penal cases.
- 247.** The *Secretary of the Workers' group* highlighted that the issue of voluntary compliance by MNEs was indeed a serious one. According to a reliable United Nations source, only 2 per cent of those companies complied with their obligations concerning workers' rights. Speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, he reiterated the Governing Body's decision to include a session on MNEs in ILO Regional Meetings and reminded delegates that it had been a tripartite decision. He also emphasized that the Workers' group had never agreed to exclude that discussion from the conclusions of the meeting.
- 248.** A *Workers' delegate from Ecuador* wished to clarify to all delegates that the session was organized based on a decision of one of the highest ILO bodies and that the Governing Body was not the only body where issues in relation to MNEs should be discussed. He insisted that the topic should be included in the conclusions precisely because of the ILO's tripartite approach on the matter.
- 249.** A *Workers' delegate from El Salvador* emphasized that the ILO should protect the interests of workers in MNEs, stating that currently MNEs were the ones who benefited most from natural

and human resources. Hence, measures should be taken to mitigate the negative impact and share resources in a more equitable manner.

- 250.** *The Head of the ILO Multinational Enterprises and Enterprise Engagement Unit* reiterated the Office's availability to provide support to tripartite constituents to further promote the tripartite MNE Declaration.

Presentation of the report of the Credentials Committee

- 251.** *The Chairperson of the Credentials Committee* said that she had received three objections, two complaints and four communications. Of the 35 member States invited to the Meeting, 31 had accredited a delegation, six of which were incomplete. A total of 238 delegates and technical advisers had been accredited, of whom 209 were registered at the Meeting; furthermore, 20 ministers and deputy ministers had participated. In terms of gender, 37 per cent of the delegates and technical advisers accredited to the Meeting were women, representing an increase of 5 per cent compared to the previous Meeting. The Committee had noted that it had received incomplete communications and documentation, which had complicated its work.

- 252.** *The Meeting took note of the report of the Credentials Committee.*

Adoption of the conclusions of the 19th American Regional Meeting

- 253.** *A representative of the Employers' group, speaking in the absence of the spokesperson,* expressed satisfaction with the Declaration and with the fact that it included a general outline of the activities that the Office would undertake over the next four years. He welcomed the fact that the follow-up to the activities would have a more programmatic focus and would provide clear guidance on the achievement of the objectives that were being pursued in a tripartite manner, and expressed the wish that the Declaration would stand as a legacy. He agreed that a number of complex issues had arisen during the negotiations, but expressed appreciation at the fact that, through social dialogue, they had arrived at a consensus-based text, which the Employers' group welcomed.

- 254.** *The spokesperson of the Workers' group* highlighted the intense debate that had taken place during the formulation of the conclusions, but emphasized that, on the eve of the ILO Centenary, efforts had been focused on achieving a robust text looking towards the next hundred years of the Organization. Social dialogue had been key to producing a text that would enable the activities to be implemented and that would strengthen workers, enterprises and society and encourage States such that social justice could be achieved.

- 255.** *Speaking on behalf of the Government group, a Government delegate from Brazil* said that the Report of the Director-General had provided an important basis for conversations, and welcomed the efforts devoted to producing the outcome document. He expressed disappointment at the social partners' inflexibility with regard to allowing wider participation of Governments, and reiterated the desire to contribute effectively within all of the Organization's bodies; that would require that Governments be given access as observers and would mean acting with transparency. The Government group agreed with the statements made in relation to the future of work and the importance of having an ILO adapted to the contemporary challenges of the world of work that were of interest to the tripartite constituents. That objective could be achieved through international cooperation, innovative partnerships and social dialogue. He concluded by urging all delegations to seize the occasion of the Centenary

of the Organization to strengthen its standards system, in particular with regard to the transparency and efficiency of its working methods.

- 256.** *A Government delegate from the United States* conveyed profound thanks to the Government of the host country for having organized the Regional Meeting. He endorsed the vision for the future set out in the document and supported the views of the Government group. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Regional Director, Mr José Manuel Salazar Xirinachs, for his integrity, intellect, expertise and dedication to the ILO's work in the region.
- 257.** *A Government delegate from Trinidad and Tobago, speaking on behalf of the Caribbean countries,* thanked the Organization, and conveyed her appreciation to the Regional Director for his support over all his years in his position, when he had demonstrated both sensitivity and passion concerning the situation of small island developing States, which faced specific problems related to issues such as fiscal spaces, vulnerability to weather conditions, linguistic diversity, and small market size. She added that substantive contributions had been made regarding productive development policies and that she understood well the major challenge of creating more and better jobs.
- 258.** *The Meeting unanimously adopted the Panama Declaration for the ILO Centenary: The future of work in the Americas.*

Closing ceremony

- 259.** *The Government Vice-Chairperson* thanked the Regional Director, José Manuel Salazar Xirinachs, for all his hard work during the Meeting, and for his role in the preparation of the Panama Declaration. She again welcomed the Report of the Director-General, which had provided a basis for much-needed discussions on issues of universal concern, including improving vocational training systems, promoting formalization and decent work, adapting social protection strategies to address the new social and labour realities, and a firm commitment to leave no one behind, focusing particularly on young people, women and persons with disabilities. In order to deal effectively with those issues, development policies must take into account economic, social and cultural perspectives. She added that a number of pending issues regarding the future of work must nevertheless be addressed, such as informality, the situation of young people not in employment, education or training, wage inequality and gaps in education, to name but a few, as well as factors such as complex migrations and new forms of work in an ageing world, against a background of rapid technological growth and high costs of climate change.
- 260.** Furthermore, she emphasized that, in order to face those changes, labour markets must evolve within a modern environment based on digital technology, while drawing on the potential of all actors within a framework of fair working conditions. She underscored that dialogue was a valuable tool to that end, and that it was vital to have an appropriate and sufficiently institutionalized tripartite plan of action and follow-up. She recognized that those issues were highly complex and required a multilateral approach. The Sustainable Development Goals provided an appropriate path that took into consideration the complementarity and integrated nature of the policies within the United Nations system, which was also necessary in the debate regarding the future of work accompanied by social justice.
- 261.** *The Employer Vice-Chairperson* expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the Regional Meeting, an event hosted by his country of origin. The tripartite community had analysed the challenges and opportunities and set priorities in connection with the future of work on the eve of the ILO Centenary. He added that a better future for enterprises and production, within the framework of inclusive and sustained growth of at least 5 per cent, was key to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With regard to productive

development policies, he urged the ILO to refocus its assistance to promote a greater emphasis on innovation, production and skills development through social dialogue and the implementation of long-term productive development policies. An integral focus on productivity would have an impact at the social and economic levels, thus setting the standard for social dialogue for productive development.

- 262.** The speaker requested the Office to carry out in-depth regional studies and, in the short term, undertake programmes and activities to strengthen capacity, frameworks and networks for collaboration, with a deadline of 2019, in the areas of productivity and sustainable enterprises. On the subject of informality, he requested the Office to provide technical assistance and carry out in-depth empirical studies. He noted the influence of economic transformations and the presence of the digital economy in the world of work, emphasizing the need to support Governments in managing such transitions and advocating increasing public investment in science, technology, research and development to more than 2 per cent of GDP, alongside strengthening education systems. Moreover, he requested the Office to produce, by November 2019, an inventory of existing skills and to identify those that the labour market and enterprises would be seeking over the next ten years.
- 263.** Lastly, he turned to the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its grave economic, social and political situation, which had triggered a migration crisis that was affecting other countries in the region, and expressed concern at the situation in Nicaragua. In that regard, he highlighted the role of the Regional Meeting in emphasizing that in a legitimate democracy, without authoritarianism, social dialogue was a key tool to ensure harmonious industrial relations and sustained, inclusive and sustainable development. On behalf of his group, he thanked the Regional Director, José Manuel Salazar Xirinachs, for his organization and paid tribute to his many professional and personal qualities. Under his leadership, issues (such as productive development in the Americas) had been addressed that had proven to be critical to the economic and social growth of the region and to the sustained and sustainable development of the continent.
- 264.** *The Worker Vice-Chairperson* said that she was grateful to have been able to contribute to the debate on the Report of the Director-General. She was convinced that the future of work would depend on a commitment from everyone to drive transformative change to make it a success. She also welcomed the fact that agreement had been reached concerning national development plans, the principles of social justice, the fight against corruption, the strengthening of social dialogue, and investment in order to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. She recalled that the region faced severe structural challenges that were aggravated by climate change and must be addressed urgently. Furthermore, economic growth, accompanied by integrated sustainability policies, must be achieved, both despite and as a result of the rapid leaps forward in the field of technology.
- 265.** The speaker underscored the need to establish an intergenerational dialogue and to ensure the inclusion of young people, without forgetting the importance of moving towards gender parity. The voices of young people and women were crucial in the run-up to the Organization's Centenary. The Workers' group considered that it was essential to go beyond making statements, given the situations of marginalization and conflict that the workers of the region were experiencing. Social dialogue must become an established practice, rather than taking place arbitrarily as and when needed. She invited member States to appoint, on a tripartite basis, national focal points to promote the use of the MNE Declaration and said that it was regrettable that the other social partners had been reluctant to include the MNE Declaration in the outcome document. In conclusion, despite continuing difficulties regarding the strengthening of social dialogue, she expressed satisfaction that there was a strong commitment to developing people-centred models of sustainability. Lastly, she paid tribute to the work of the Regional Director, Mr Salazar Xirinachs, on the eve of his retirement.

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- 266.** *The Chairperson* noted the general disillusionment with traditional political structures and actors that could be observed, alongside a questioning of the capacity of public institutions to drive the alternative, innovative solutions required by society in order to provide opportunities for shared progress. He urged the delegates to support the construction of political institutions and productive systems linked to the 2030 Agenda, which gave due importance to consensus, peace and social dialogue. He added that, under the tripartite system, rather than a single protagonist, there were multiple actors who came together in social dialogue that allowed them to address the challenges of the future of work, in which the workers were human beings and the employers promoted decent work.
- 267.** In the context of the ILO Centenary, he recalled that even at the present time, more than half the population did not have decent work. He emphasized that it was the tripartite actors who were acutely aware of the realities of the world of work. While employers highlighted the importance of productivity and the creation of sustainable enterprises, workers were familiar with exploitation in the world of work. That combination of a drive towards proactive policies on productive development and of the preservation of the body of ILO standards, together with the equitable inclusion of women in the world of work, belonged to the agenda defined by the ILO's mandate and its action in the region. He strongly urged delegates to join the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC). He emphasized that the legitimacy and strength of the ILO depended on the soundness of its founding pact based on social justice, and added that the declaration adopted by the Meeting was the road map for the next four years.
- 268.** He concluded by paying special thanks to the Regional Director, Mr Salazar Xirinachs, who would retire that month after 13 years of valuable service to the Organization, for having placed productive development policies high on the region's agenda.
- 269.** *A Government representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* expressed his gratitude to the hosts of the Meeting and, exercising his right to reply, rejected every one of the Employer Vice-Chairperson's points regarding the situation in Venezuela, noting that they demonstrated that a certain group was adopting ill-intentioned positions against his country. Venezuela fully applied the concepts of social dialogue and social justice.
- 270.** *The Director-General* applauded the Panama Declaration as a coherent, consensus-based document, and congratulated the participants from the 31 member States for producing it, as well as for the increase in the number of women participating in the event. The four-day Regional Meeting had been an example of social dialogue in practice, and had also been strengthened by the positive impact of the bilateral meetings and informal exchanges. Tripartite dialogue was the hallmark of the ILO. It was to be hoped that the proposals adopted in the Declaration would serve as a guide for the beginning of the ILO's next century.
- 271.** He added that there was currently a greater need than ever to take into account all of the member States of the region in an inclusive manner, bearing in mind the linguistic variety and the vulnerabilities of their territories, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. He paid tribute to the hard work not only of those present but also the Panamanian hosts, who had made his stay in their country such a positive experience throughout. In particular, he expressed his gratitude to the Regional Director, Mr Salazar Xirinachs, for his dedication and passion for his work in the service of the ILO.
- 272.** *The Regional Director* said that it had been a great honour to serve the ILO for 13 years, including as the Executive Director of the Employment Sector and, later, as the Regional Director of the ILO for Latin America and the Caribbean. Among the highlights of that period were the inclusion of the Decent Work Agenda in the Sustainable Development Goals, and the ILO's responses to the global economic crisis, rapid technological progress and climate change. It was a great pleasure to bring the last decade of the ILO's first century to a close. He had had the opportunity to contribute to a number of key issues through the committees of the International Labour Conference, including skills for development and productivity, rural

employment and poverty reduction, the Global Jobs Pact and matters related to youth employment.

- 273.** He concluded by saying that he shared in the general satisfaction at having been able to bring about innovation and contribute to the rethinking of decent work in the region, anchoring it in productive development policies, and at having strengthened the Regional Office's support for constituents in order to enhance social dialogue for productive development and employment. Furthermore, he expressed his appreciation for the closer cooperation between the Office and other regional bodies, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Andean Development Corporation and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. It had been a great honour to work with such highly professional and competent colleagues, in particular his team of directors.