# INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

# 14th African Regional Meeting

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 3–6 December 2019

**AFRM.14/D.5(Rev.1)**

# Final report

## *Contents*

# List of acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ACT/EMP | Bureau for Employers' Activities |
| ACTRAV | Bureau for Workers' Activities |
| AfCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| CGEA | General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises |
| CNDS | National Social Dialogue Council – Tunisia |
| COTU | Central Organization of Trade Unions – Kenya |
| DWCPs | Decent Work Country Programmes |
| EAC | Consultative Dialogue Framework of the East African Community |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| GEA | Ghana Employers' Association |
| GYEF | Global Youth Employment Forum |
| HCSD | High Council of Social Dialogue |
| ICT | information and communications technology |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IGAD | Intergovernmental Authority on Development |
| ITUC | International Trade Union Confederation |
| NEDLAC | National Economic Development and Labour Council |
| NEET | not in education, employment or training |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| OATUU | Organization of African Trade Union Unity |
| RECs | Regional Economic Communities |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SMEs | small and medium-sized enterprises |
| STC–SDLE | African Union's Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment |
| STEM | science, technology, engineering and mathematics |
| WFTU | World Federation of Trade Unions |

# Elections and appointments

**1.** The 14th African Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 3 to 6 December 2019.

**2.** The Chairperson of the Governing Body, Mr Refiloe Litjobo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Lesotho to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, opened the Regional Meeting. He said that Africa had to embrace and respond to numerous challenges, to which investment in the digital infrastructure and digital economy would be a possible solution. Such investment would increase employment opportunities and avoid further marginalization from globalization. The continent's smaller manufacturing base meant automation was unlikely to displace many workers in the coming years. However, Africa depended on direct foreign investment and the effects of automation in investing countries were likely to trickle down to the continent. African development was largely driven by exports of primary commodities, which were subject to fluctuations in global prices. It was necessary to invest in manufacturing portfolios, which were likely to have a multiplier effect on employment, job creation and the national economies. Such investment would need to be accompanied by further significant investment in quality infrastructure and the human capital.

*An ILO video containing key messages related to the work of the Organization in the region was screened in the room.*

**3.** On behalf of the Government group, a Government representative of Ethiopia put forward a candidate for the position of Chairperson of the Regional Meeting, and the Meeting unanimously elected Mr Pascal Kouakou Abinan, Minister of Employment and Social Protection of Côte d'Ivoire, to this post. The Meeting unanimously elected Mr Paul Mavima, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe, as Government Vice-Chairperson; Mr El Mahfoudh Megateli, Secretary-General of the General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises (CGEA), as Employer Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Francis Atwoli, Secretary-General, Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), of Kenya, as Worker Vice-Chairperson.

**4.** The Meeting appointed the Officers of the groups as follows: Ms Firdosa Abdulkadir Ibrahim of Ethiopia as Government group Chairperson; Ms Jacqueline MUGO of Kenya as Employer Chairperson and spokesperson; and Mr Francis Atwoli of Kenya as Worker Chairperson and spokesperson. The Meeting appointed Mr Roberto Suarez and Mr Lameck Jaston as Secretaries of the Employers' group, and Mr Kwasi Adu-Amankwah and Ms Maria Teresa Llanos as Secretaries of the Workers' group.

**5.** In accordance with the *Rules for Regional Meetings, 2018* (the Rules), the Meeting appointed the members of its Credentials Committee as follows: Mr Fassoun Coulibaly (Government, Mali), Mr Khelil Ghariani (Employer, Tunisia), and Ms Amal El Amri (Worker, Morocco).

**6.** The Meeting established a drafting committee 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:* | South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya, Morocco and Senegal |
| *Employer representatives:* | Ms Jacqueline Mugo (Kenya), Mr Mohammed Touzani (Morocco), Ms Lindiwe Sephomolo (Lesotho), Mr Richard Ayibiowu (Nigeria), Mr Kaizer Moyane (South Africa) |

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| *Worker representatives:* | Mr Bheki Ntshalintshali (South Africa), Ms Ange Margerite Nazie (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr Modeste Amédée Ndongala Nsibu (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Mr Kassahun Follo Amenu (Ethiopia), Mr Mody Guiro (Senegal) |

# Opening addresses

**7.** *The Chairperson* welcomed the participants to the 14th African Regional Meeting and noted that the Meeting was being held at the close of the ILO's Centenary year, which had provided an opportunity to look back at the significant achievements of the Organization and its tripartite constituents and to contemplate the future of work for generations to come. He recalled that deliberations on the future of work had started in national tripartite dialogues, had been further developed by the Global Commission on the Future of Work, and had culminated in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (Centenary Declaration). The Declaration called for the development of a human-centred approach to the future work and provided guidance to constituents at the global level on how to better take into account the needs and aspirations of all people in a context marked by change and upheaval. The African continent faced many challenges, including the preponderance of the informal economy; youth unemployment; low levels of industrialization; an agricultural system with a strong focus on the export of raw materials; and climate change. To overcome those challenges, and under the guidance of the ILO or with its support, countries had developed regional and international tools and mechanisms, including Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) and policies and programmes prepared on the basis of participatory and effective tripartite dialogue. Those tools had helped to advance decent work, better distribute the fruits of economic growth and provide certain responses to people's needs and aspirations. In Côte d'Ivoire, informal employment was predominant. A significant share of the labour force was therefore exposed to the risks that were characteristic of the informal economy, in particular precarious employment and incomes, poverty, a lack of social protection, legal security and prevention of occupational risks and, therefore, to decent work deficits. In response, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had taken many measures, including the implementation of a programme to strengthen the Government's action in the field of social welfare, through projects with a far-reaching and rapid impact in the areas of education, access to essential goods, women's employment and empowerment, rural well-being, health and social protection. The work of the Regional Meeting would provide appropriate guidance for moving forward in that regard.

**8.** He warmly thanked the Director-General and the Office as a whole for the significant work carried out both in the area of standards and research and in supporting the tripartite constituents. The African constituents would endeavour to increase their involvement in the governance of the ILO and continue their efforts to achieve the democratization of the composition of the ILO's bodies in order to ensure that the aspirations of all member States were fully taken into account. He was certain that the work of the meeting would contribute to significant progress towards social justice and decent work on the African continent.

**9.** *The Director-General of the ILO* noted that the Regional Meeting came at the end of the ILO's Centenary year. He added that it had been 60 years since the ILO had first established a permanent presence on the African continent, and it was therefore particularly important that the year was ending with such an important event, in Africa. The Meeting was taking place at a time when the global economy was at a standstill. Nevertheless, 26 million productive jobs would have to be created annually on the continent if the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) was to be delivered. The sharp growth in Africa's workforce until 2035 would be an extraordinary demographic dividend for growth and development if the necessary jobs could be created, but that growth would generate increased economic, social and migratory pressures if they could not. New technologies were creating

entirely new opportunities for development in the region. However, there was a danger of a widening digital divide and increased marginalization if the necessary investment and innovation was not realized. Africa had an unparalleled potential in respect of renewable energies, but it was vulnerable to climate change. There was therefore a risk of large-scale population displacement and the destruction of livelihoods. The Regional Meeting was therefore timely to formulate guidelines that would help Africa to shape the human-centred future of work set out in the Centenary Declaration. The aim was to identify priority areas for action, taking into account the specific circumstances of the ILO's 54 African member States. Some priorities stood out with particular clarity. As the overwhelming majority of workers in the region were in the informal economy, formalization was an absolutely necessity. The Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), provided a useful framework in that regard. As manufacturing accounted for only 6 per cent of employment in Africa, it was therefore necessary to ensure the structural transformation of production. At the same time, action was needed to strengthen skills and ensure that women had equal access to decent work.

10. To overcome all those challenges, Africa needed the right regulations and sufficient institutional capacity to ensure that those regulations were implemented consistently, effectively and transparently. While those two dimensions were certainly important, it was in respect of implementation that the greatest efforts were required. Capacity-building was therefore a key responsibility of the ILO in Africa. He recalled that the Organization's activities in the region should be directed at achieving the objectives set by the international community. In particular, he mentioned the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the implementation of which had met with some reticence. That reticence was partly due to the loss of confidence in multilateral cooperation in general, which the ILO and its African constituents had to resist. With regard to the more specific issue of migration, it could also be explained by the negative perception of that phenomenon, which was seen as a threat rather than as an opportunity to find solutions in a spirit of real cooperation and solidarity. It was all too often forgotten that the majority of African migrants who left their countries lived and worked in Africa, which was the region with the greatest governance challenges. That was why the ILO had to cooperate not only with the United Nations and other global actors, but also with its regional and subregional partners in Africa. The Agenda 2063, the Ouagadougou Declaration of 2004 and the Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development, as well as the outcome of the Ouagadougou +10 summit, provided an institutional framework for ILO activities with the African Union. In that regard, he hoped that the new memorandum of understanding that was to be concluded shortly between the ILO and the African Union would strengthen collaboration between the two organizations. There were 19 DWCPs in Africa and a further 22 were under preparation. In addition, extrabudgetary resources allocated to development cooperation had increased by 112 per cent in five years, and the regular budget resources allocated to activities in Africa had also increased, within a zero growth scenario. To have a real impact, however, those resources had to be used in the most efficient way possible. But to make a real difference in the region, the African tripartite constituents must be in a position to play their full, equal and democratic role in the tripartite governance of the Organization, as advocated in the Centenary Declaration. In that regard, he said that a tripartite working group had been set up to consider and report on the matter in 2020. He said he was pleased to inform the Meeting that, the previous week, the Government of Portugal had ratified the 1986 Instrument for the Amendment of the ILO Constitution, the entry into force of which was a long-standing priority for African constituents.

11. In conclusion, he recalled that, as affirmed in the ILO Constitution, peace depended on social justice. In that regard, the fact that two recent Nobel Peace Prize winners were heads of State and government from Africa, a region hard hit by conflict, was symbolic. Building a future of work based on social justice was the surest way to bring peace and prosperity to Africa, and also to the rest of the world.

12. *The Employer spokesperson* said meeting participants needed to reflect on the future of work and the priorities for the continent's prosperity. The 2015 Addis Ababa Declaration and its goals remained relevant. The 14th African Regional Meeting provided an opportunity to review the progress made since, the setbacks encountered, the lessons learned, and the challenges presented by a rapidly changing world of work. Africa had great potential, including its growing workforce, immense natural resources, young population, huge free trade area and many of the fastest growing economies in the world. Furthermore, democracy continued to mature, paving the way for social dialogue, political transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, challenges remained, including creating an enabling business environment, tackling informality, addressing low productivity, solving the skills mismatch, promoting lifelong learning, addressing youth unemployment, promoting political stability and enhancing migration governance. The ILO needed to take into account the effects of political instability and fragility in certain countries, as well as the intense migration trends, both of which required coordinated and smart policy action. Productivity was a pressing challenge in the region. The majority of the population depended largely on farming. Yet, agricultural practices lagged behind and overall agricultural performance had fallen further behind compared to other developing regions. Raising productivity in the agricultural sector would create better employment opportunities and improve the living standards of many people. Africa's agricultural sector would also benefit from the adoption of modern technology, improved infrastructure and skill levels, and a regulatory environment that allowed business to thrive. However, efforts to improve productivity needed to extend to all sectors through a holistic approach and country-focused strategies. This, in turn, would require an adequate policy and regulatory environment that promoted business development and growth.

13. Referring to the findings of a World Bank report, the speaker emphasized that the ILO could, within the confines of its mandate, help countries which had taken measures in pursuit of a better business environment. Such assistance could include identifying successful policies to create productive and decent employment through a conducive business environment and sound productivity strategies; focusing on the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises with a view to their formalization; and providing support to constituents so they may better follow up on their commitments. New and diverse forms of employment also provided opportunities for a more inclusive and sustainable growth. The innovation, energy and ingenuity prevalent in Africa's informal economy were an untapped gold mine with the potential to turn African enterprises into globally acclaimed businesses. As her group had emphasized during the 108th Session (June 2019) of the International Labour Conference, anticipating skills, effectively tackling informality and promoting productivity should be at the top of the ILO agenda if the Office was to assume its leadership and preserve its credibility.

14. In addition, climate change required urgent action. It was particularly relevant for Africa to make better use of its resources. A balanced dialogue, realistic strategies and green skills, knowledge and values would be necessary to anticipate the consequences that the transition to a low-carbon economy would have on employment. The ILO should invest in skilling Africa's youth to meet the future global demand for labour. The resolutions from the 14th African Regional Meeting needed to lead to positive change in the lives of the people of Africa. Her group remained optimistic that the meeting would produce clear commitments backed by financial resources and actions to positively transform the continent.

15. *The Worker spokesperson* recalled that 2019 had been an eventful year. He referred to the report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, the high-level discussions held during the Centenary Conference, the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the adoption of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206). His group attached great importance to the ILO's normative and supervisory system. Furthermore, the ILO had a crucial role to play in advancing social justice as the only way to achieve universal and lasting peace. Development

and rights at work should come hand in hand. Inequalities, corruption, unfavourable contracts and illicit financial flows needed to be tackled to improve the situation of African workers, many of whom lived in poverty despite their hard work and commitment. Africa needed to invest in public services, implement tax reform, and deliver on its peoples' right to education, and access to water, health services, energy and shelter. He recognized the role employers would play in that process. Employers would require more support from the governments than ever to overcome increasing unfair global trade imbalances. Meaningful and effective social dialogue, including collective bargaining, would be essential to achieve sustainable progress and fight precarious employment practices. Climate change and desertification were also at the heart of the continent's concerns. Furthermore, African governments and social partners needed to commit to the implementation of the decisions taken at continental and global levels, including those taken at ILO Regional Meetings. He therefore called on all parties to make sure the resolutions and decisions adopted at the Meeting could actually be implemented and bring about full and productive employment and decent work for all.

# General discussion on the report of the Director-General

## Presentation of the Report

16. *The Director of the ILO Regional Office for Africa* introduced the Director-General's Report, *Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the future of work in Africa.* The report presented key achievements since the adoption of the Addis Ababa Declaration by the 13th African Regional Meeting (December 2015). The majority of African countries had prioritized youth employment in their national development policies and plans, and designed special programmes to promote decent work for young women and men. Most African countries had set up national, tripartite social dialogue structures that, in many cases, functioned regularly as platforms for tripartite cooperation between the government and the social partners. Furthermore, at the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) level, social dialogue institutions had been established in recent years, such as the tripartite forum of social dialogue of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Consultative Dialogue Framework of the East African Community (EAC), and the African Union's Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment (STC–SDLE), a continental tripartite body. A number of countries had developed national strategies on the formalization of the informal economy based on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). At the continental level, the African Union had adopted the "AUC–ILO Decent Work for the Transformation of the Informal Economy Programme" aimed at enhancing strategic coherence, collaboration and coordination towards the transformation of the informal economy in Africa. Furthermore, African countries had adopted measures to improve the legal, administrative and regulatory environment for enterprises, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many countries had introduced legal, policy and/or institutional reforms to facilitate the inclusion of unprotected population groups into social protection schemes and almost all countries had established social assistance or cash transfer programmes that either targeted the poorest citizens or specific population groups as a means of extending social protection.

17. Further key opportunities for realizing decent work in the continent were highlighted in the report. The region was a major destination for foreign investment. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that entered into force on 30 May 2019 had the potential to benefit decent work. The region continued to be rich in natural resources and renewable energy. Average levels of education had steadily risen. Economic growth had been good

overall and macroeconomic conditions had been stable. Lastly, while conflicts continued in parts of the continent, they had generally diminished in the past few years.

18. Key challenges still remained and needed to be urgently addressed. Some 252 million people (or 60 per cent of the working population) were still "moderately" or "extremely" poor. Productivity on the African continent remained below the world average and had not progressed much during the past two decades. Some 82 per cent of the continent's population did not have access to social protection. Informal employment, low paid jobs and poor working conditions prevailed in Africa, accounting for 85.8 per cent of all workers and 95 per cent of young workers. Seventy-two million African children worked, accounting for almost half of child labour globally. Approximately 54.5 million young people did not benefit from education, employment and training (NEET). The gender pay gap continued to disfavour women.

19. The report proposed a way forward for advancing decent work and social justice through a number of concrete actions, including promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; implementing a structural transformation; enhancing productivity; undertaking an agricultural transformation; improving rural economies; transitioning to the formal economy; improving the environment for sustainable enterprises; promoting green growth and a just transition. Further measures included strengthening the institutions of work by fostering the implementation of fundamental principles and rights at work; reviewing and renewing labour market institutions; promoting a fair and effective labour migration governance; and strengthening tripartism and social dialogue; strengthening the capacities of people by tackling gender inequality in the world of work; promoting education and training with a special focus on lifelong learning; ensuring effective policy coordination; promoting skills for all, including those in rural areas; increasing interventions in fragile countries; and extending social protection. The Regional Director concluded by recalling that critical issues regarding the environment and climate change, technology, and demographics needed to be part of the discussion on Africa's decent work future vision. Africa was in a position to reap many of the technology gains and had great potential to contribute to growth and employment as well as to other decent work objectives.

## Discussion of the Report

20. *A representative of the Employers' group* said it was time to transform and diversify African economies through accelerated industrialization, investments in infrastructure and new technologies, and improvements in agricultural productivity. This would bring about more inclusive growth and create decent employment opportunities. Anticipating skills demand, effectively addressing informality and promoting productivity should be at the top of the ILO's agenda in the African region. The number of productive jobs to be created on the continent would have to increase by 26 million per year to reach 579 million jobs in 2030. In view of this huge challenge, the Employers' group suggested that the 14th African Regional Meeting outcome document should make productivity growth the cornerstone of the ILO's engagement in Africa. Furthermore, it should emphasize skills development, the importance of a conducive business environment and effectively promote the transition to the formal economy. The speaker highlighted the need for the ILO's work to focus on skills, in particular: understanding current and future skills needs; remedying the incompatibility of skills with the needs of the professional environment; undertaking effective policy-oriented research and performance monitoring; establishing monitoring and evaluating skills systems; strengthening research and capacity on skills systems; improving trainers' skills.

21. The ILO's work should go hand in hand with incentives to retain qualified young workers in the continent while promoting lifelong learning. Employers needed the outcome document to focus on promoting a business-friendly environment in Africa as a key step towards

enhancing business development with a view to creating more and better jobs. The meeting's outcome document should also reflect on the particularity of informality. This was a pressing challenge for the continent, since formal enterprises faced fierce competition from the informal economy, which was not subject to any regulation or taxation. The speaker stressed that the foundation of the ILO should not only be a matter of international labour standards, but also a matter of jobs, skills and productivity. He recalled that the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work recognized the role of the private sector in its preamble. Productive enterprises had a potential for expansion which would eventually require human resources and creating more jobs to meet the demand for manpower. Lastly, the speaker plead for an outcome document that foresaw a tripartite mechanism for the medium-term follow-up of the implementation of the agreed actions. Such a mechanism could provide constituents with the tools necessary to review progress, assess lessons learned and develop strategies through tripartite consultations to better achieve the priorities and goals set during the meeting.

22. *The Worker spokesperson* noted that the Centenary Declaration offered interesting opportunities for future action. A number of themes had been addressed in the Report of the Director-General, such as promoting decent work for all, but not access to social protection for workers in the informal economy. Productivity should not be the sole precondition for job creation. The public sector must promote quality services and must be a source of decent jobs. The social and solidarity economy also had a part to play. The Workers' group considered that more attention should be paid to the matter of added value, beyond taxation. With a view to preserving traditional forms of agriculture, climate change should be taken into account as part of the supply-chain-based approach to be adopted. Social dialogue must remain central to development programmes. Public policies should accelerate the process of transformation of the informal economy in a process of dialogue. Policies aiming at protection for all could also be of help in that context. The speaker welcomed the ILO's work on joint management of migrants. He concluded by saying that particular attention must be paid to the MNE Declaration, as foreign investment flows had led to gaps creating inequalities on the continent.

23. *The Minister of Labour and Social Security of Cameroon* noted that the Report of the Director-General of the ILO sufficiently conveyed the awareness and urgency of action to be undertaken to ensure a better future for the continent. Cameroon had begun to put in place a national strategy on the future of work. The implementation of the 2015 Addis Ababa Declaration in Cameroon had led to progress, including in the promotion of international labour standards and of effective social dialogue and tripartism. The country had undertaken to extend welfare coverage to as many people as possible, including self-employed workers and those in the informal economy, on the basis of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). A new social vision for Africa should be pursued within the framework of a strong, united global partnership, supported by varied sources of funding, technology transfer, environmental protection and capacity-building.

24. *An Employers' delegate from Algeria* said that the meeting was addressing a subject that was crucial to the future of Africa: the future of work. It was not possible to achieve sustainable development without putting in place appropriate policies for education and training, labour rights, social protection and environmental protection. Africa had considerable economic and demographic advantages. The Continental Free Trade Area provided access to a huge market. However, Africa faced considerable challenges, including the informal economy, endemic corruption, capital flight, poverty, climate change, and enduring tension and conflicts in certain regions of the continent. The greatest challenge was to change the perception that Africa merely exported its raw natural resources and imported the majority of its goods and equipment from abroad. Sustainable economic development in Africa required good governance and the application of the various international charters and resolutions that had been ratified. Support and assistance mechanisms must be made available to young people to provide them with decent work.

25. *The Minister of Labour of Morocco* said that the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work provided a framework for future ILO action that supported the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and thus responded to its Members' aspirations for a future that promoted decent, sustainable jobs for all. The African continent had an abundance of natural, geographical and human potential, which enabled it to orient itself towards the future, despite the challenges it faced. To overcome such challenges, it was necessary to call all stakeholders to action and to adopt innovative approaches that met the needs of the African people and were in line with the 2063 Agenda. Investment in public policies aimed at young people, particularly in connection with work, would provide Africa with a great opportunity to obtain a young and effective labour force to stimulate its economic growth. The key element was to search for solutions to the crisis in education and vocational education and training. In that context, the focus should be on quality and efficiency.

26. *The Minister for Youth Development and Employment of Côte d'Ivoire* said that the Report of the Director-General provided crucial information on progress since the commitments of Addis Ababa had been made, and provided guidance on building a human-centred future of work. Côte d'Ivoire had developed and implemented a number of policies and programmes on employment, social protection and occupational safety and health, including the creation of productive jobs for vulnerable groups. A number of challenges remained, however, and for the decade to come, future action should focus on initiatives such as those aimed at: strengthening regional integration; improving the business environment and strengthening labour market institutions; combating exclusion and marginalization in social security; setting up mechanisms to monitor and evaluate poverty to generate specific, targeted data; promoting and strengthening social dialogue; increasing access for all to basic public services; promoting sustainable production and consumption models; and encouraging investment in decent and sustainable work.

27. *A Government representative of Senegal* said that, despite considerable accomplishments in the ratification and application of international labour standards, promotion of decent work, strengthening of social dialogue and collective bargaining, extension of social protection and economic growth, African States still had some way to go to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8. The key role of full and productive employment and decent work in inclusive and sustainable development must be fully reflected in strategic frameworks at the national, regional and international levels. Senegal would like the meeting conclusions to lead quickly to joint action to put in place an integrated regional programme for the full, inclusive implementation of the Decent Work Agenda for a better future of work in Africa.

28. *The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Algeria* said that his country was calling on African States to continue implementing programmes that promoted decent work and extending the basis of social protection, thereby facilitating the elimination of poverty and marginalization. The challenge was to develop public policies that would enable the creation of enterprises to generate jobs and wealth, in particular emerging businesses in the digital economy and the green economy.

29. *The Minister of Labour, in charge of the Reform of the Administration of Djibouti* recognized the 14th African Regional Meeting as an opportunity to reiterate his country's commitment to achieving decent work for all. Extending social protection for women had translated into an increase in the duration of paid maternity leave from 14 to 26 weeks. The process for the ratification of the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), had begun in October 2019. Djibouti had a universal health insurance scheme since 2014. A framework for consultation on the issue of occupational safety and health was also in place and was expected to produce a national profile and a health and safety system. The speaker commended the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), its dedication and commitment to governing regional migration. Remaining challenges included the development of youth employment and vocational integration programmes; the

modernization of the national labour legislation through the introduction of flexibility in order to meet the needs of the labour market; the establishment of tripartite structures; and the formalization of the informal economy.

30. *The Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe* noted that the challenges outlined in the Director-General's Report resonated with his delegation. This was particularly true with respect to the topics of unprecedented youth unemployment, the need to strengthen social dialogue, increase compliance with international labour standards and extend social protection. He emphasized that it was necessary to provide young people with the requisite skills to enable them to exploit the abundant resources found in different areas of the continent. With regard to social dialogue, social partners should strive to reach agreements. The significance of international labour standards had been adequately covered in the report. Zimbabwe was in the process of extending its social security coverage to include workers in the informal economy and was developing its Decent Work Country Programme (2019–22). The speaker concluded by acknowledging the Director-General's efforts to promote the 1986 Instrument for the Amendment of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation and welcomed the recent decision by the Governing Body to set up a tripartite working group in charge of giving effect to the democratization aspirations enshrined in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

31. *The Minister of Social Dialogue, Labour and Public Service of Mali* called on the ILO to apply its expertise to making "the future of work we want" a reality in Africa, including through capacity-building for constituents. He mentioned his country's pride in social dialogue and a number of examples of how the Government had worked towards reducing youth unemployment. In 2019, the Government recruited 8,600 young people; provided entrepreneurship training to 22,844 young people, and granted a further 7,833 access to start-up funds. In 2018, the Government established a universal health insurance plan which would be operational in 2020. A work injury and occupational disease plan for public servants, members of the armed forces and members of Parliament was also in place. The speaker urged the ILO to assist in the development of a new programme to strengthen the capacity of its constituents to engage in new regional and global development frameworks to achieve social justice.

32. *A Workers' delegate from Morocco* acknowledged the collective obligation of all tripartite constituents to prepare appropriate policies for achieving decent work. Such policies should include training young people. The speaker emphasized the need for the Government to take steps to engage with all partners, in particular union representatives. She observed that Morocco was witnessing a surge in social dialogue, though further progress could still be accomplished. The Government was working on a bill on the right of workers to strike. Yet there were many other bills that would need to be revised in order to strengthen social dialogue in the country. The speaker concluded by emphasizing her group's solidarity with Palestinian workers, especially those in the occupied Arab territories.

33. *The Principal Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kenya* reiterated the need for the ILO to democratize its governing institutions, as had been requested at the 13th African Regional Meeting. The 14th African Regional Meeting provided an opportunity to renew commitments towards global development goals. To that end, Kenya had already implemented a number of initiatives. Among those initiatives was a Youth Employment and Opportunities Project aimed at equipping youth with skills and start-up capital. The country had enhanced its social security coverage to include the elderly. Furthermore, it was in the process of establishing an alternative dispute resolution mechanism and a Decent Work Country Programme (2020–24).

34. *The Minister of Manpower of Egypt* said that further social justice would be necessary in order for decent work to become a reality in Africa. He emphasized the role social dialogue would play in achieving that goal. The Egyptian Government had adopted a number of

noteworthy measures recently, resulting in a decrease in the annual inflation rate of 4.2 per cent in October 2019. Attention was now focused on providing virus C treatment to those in need of it. 2019 had been declared the year of education in Egypt, with emphasis being placed on technical education for the future. A bill granting workers freedom of association and a law protecting people with disabilities were under consideration in Parliament. Egypt hoped to achieve gender equality by 2030 according to the Egyptian National Strategy 2030 in compliance with SDG 5. The Minister concluded by reiterating his country's political will to build a better future and, in particular, support free trade in Africa.

**35.** *The Minister of Labour and Employment of Nigeria* highlighted the fact that Africa had the youngest population in the world, implying the region was destined for steady economic growth in the coming years. However, as had been discussed during the 2019 Global Youth Employment Forum held in Abuja, the following five policy areas needed to be rigorously pursued: pro-employment macroeconomic policies; policy investment in education and skills; promotion of youth entrepreneurship and employment; labour market policies; and respect for young persons' rights. He commended the ILO for the recent adoption of a new research strategy. This strategy needed to be aligned with the needs and aspirations of member States and constituents, and to address critical questions such as the phenomenon of working poverty, skills, technological advancements and employability, productivity, environmental factors (including climate change), the formalization of the informal economy, sustainability of enterprises and the organization of work and production.

**36.** *A Workers' delegate from Burkina Faso* acknowledged the significant progress achieved towards the ratification of ILO Conventions, but regretted the lack of compliance with them. He highlighted the importance of facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy. However, he warned that this process should not equate to fighting against the informal economy, which (with the exception of fraud) was an economy of resourcefulness and precariousness. He observed that the promotion of decent work was often thwarted by so-called business climate improvement policies. Oftentimes, such policies undertook to restrict the rights and entitlements of workers. Without prejudice to the private sector, workers in Burkina Faso believed that the State had an important role to play.

**37.** *The Minister of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status of Seychelles* said her country celebrated the partnership with the ILO, despite the existing challenges in achieving decent work for all. She acknowledged ILO support in conducting a school-to-work transition survey and the recent adoption of their first labour migration policy to promote ethical recruitment practices and protection of workers. The speaker emphasized her country's commitment to protecting their ocean. The Government had created incentives to promote the active participation of its people in that effort. The speaker reiterated her Government's promise to keep up to date with its international obligations, continue to promote social dialogue, strengthen labour market institutions and place its people at the centre of the country's development. The Seychelles pledged its support to the ILO for the 100 years ahead, and was committed to do so in the spirit of tripartism.

**38.** *The State Secretary for Labour and Social Security of Angola* said that his country had ratified a number of ILO Conventions. However, it faced the daunting task of creating employment for its growing population. The speaker mentioned a number of initiatives in place to achieve this goal, despite the prevailing challenges. In April 2019, the implementation of the Action Plan for Employability Promotion had been approved. The aim of the plan was to create 500,000 jobs in different economic areas by 2022. The country had also developed its Decent Work Country Programme in line with the National Development Programme (2018–2022). The Decent Work Country Programme consisted of three key components, namely: promoting youth employability; the formalization of the informal economy by structuring income-generating activities; and strengthening of collective bargaining mechanisms and tripartism.

39. *A Government delegate of the Kingdom of Eswatini* congratulated the Director-General on the comprehensive report prepared prior to the Meeting. He noted with satisfaction the results that had been achieved and the work that was ongoing at the national and subregional levels with technical support from the Office. Significant reforms had been undertaken to improve the implementation of ILO standards in law and practice, including industrial relations laws and codes of conduct. Ongoing work included the restructuring and strengthening of national social dialogue institutions, the development of the second generation of DWCPs, the establishment of a compensation fund for occupational diseases and accidents, the conversion of the national provident fund into a national pension fund, and the scaling up of the functions of a state-of-the-art interactive labour market information system. The speaker commended the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Office and the national social partners on the concerted support, both technical and material, they were providing to the reform and development processes under way in Eswatini.

40. *The Minister of Labour and the Civil Service of Madagascar* referred to the risk of natural disasters facing agriculture, the primary sector of employment for the majority of the population. Madagascar had not been spared technological change, which made access more difficult for young people without adequate training or qualifications. The speaker mentioned a number of initiatives, including the implementation of a national plan for the promotion of decent work. As a pilot country for Alliance 8.7, Madagascar was taking action to combat child labour. One project, for example, aimed to facilitate the creation of enterprises for young people. A national employment promotion agency was soon to be established in Madagascar to structure the labour market.

41. *The Minister of Social Affairs of Tunisia* reaffirmed the commitment of the social partners to support decent work. In Tunisia, the National Council for Social Dialogue, established in 2018, provided a forum for dialogue for the development of programmes and policies, namely regarding employment promotion, occupational safety and health, equality at work, and the establishment of an insurance fund against job loss and a development fund for the digitalization of the health insurance system. In view of the challenges facing the African continent, the development of policies to combat poverty, to improve education systems, to develop health services, to achieve universal social protection and to promote access to public facilities must be associated with the promotion of freedoms, namely freedom of enterprise and freedom of association, the institutionalization of social dialogue and resistance to all forms of corruption, nepotism and discrimination. That also called for a rethink of economic and trade relations at the global level in order to narrow the economic, social and technological gap between industrialized and developing countries.

42. *The Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Burkina Faso* emphasized the growing importance of security challenges, particularly in the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Despite those difficult circumstances, Burkina Faso was making every effort to maintain an enabling environment for the promotion of decent work, namely support for youth entrepreneurship and vocational training, capacity-building for the stakeholders in the world of work, the modernization of labour inspection services, and the extension of the social protection system through the establishment of a national universal health insurance fund. The speaker reported significant progress made in the area of collective bargaining, in particular the conclusion of several collective agreements. Burkina Faso would pursue its efforts in the framework of the second DWCP for 2020–22.

43. *A Government delegate of Eritrea* said that the peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia had marked the beginning of a new era. The Government of Eritrea had embarked upon reconstruction and recovery, which had opened up extensive opportunities for productive employment and better quality of life for its people. The speaker called upon the tripartite constituents to act decisively to build a more promising future of work through policy integration and the harmonization of development programmes designed to create

44. *The Minister of Employment and Labour of South Africa* welcomed the efforts made by the Office to help the continent to reflect on the future of work. The economic growth of the previous 15 years had not been accompanied by an improvement in conditions of work or an increase in productive employment. The economic structures had prevented growth being translated into gains for the population. The speaker said that the brain drain had deprived the continent of numerous opportunities. The strengthening of fundamental labour rights and the addressing of decent work deficits would be key to building "the future we want". The recently established African Continental Free Trade Area facilitated the free movement of populations, but the regional agreements on employment and labour migration must be implemented. Africa had made progress in improving decent working conditions through the ratification of international labour standards and active participation in the work of the ILO. Africa was not only able, but was also willing to lead the march towards the future through its collective efforts.

45. *A Workers' delegate from Niger* recalled that workers were facing security problems. He invited the Office to support workers' organizations so that they could contribute to solutions by achieving social peace. He referred to an initiative by his organization to encourage all trade union stakeholders to contribute to the security issue, which must be a priority for workers' organizations. That called for a review of certain Conventions or an evaluation of their effectiveness in the security environment prevailing in the subregion.

46. *The Minister of Labour and Employment of the United Republic of Tanzania*, referring to the Future of Work Initiative, said that the United Republic of Tanzania had held national forums on the future of work, which had led to the formulation of a labour market policy framework geared towards the achievement of the Decent Work Agenda. The United Republic of Tanzania had developed a national in-service skills training programme based on national guidelines on work placements and apprenticeship training, and had introduced a system for the recognition of prior training. Those initiatives must be part of a much broader approach based on committed and inclusive national ownership and integrate the needs of the most marginalized groups, including not only women and young people, but also minorities and persons with disabilities. She urged ILO member States to focus their efforts on establishing and strengthening mechanisms to foster working constructively in a spirit of tripartism.

47. *A Workers' delegate from Ghana* drew attention to social protection provisions; social protection provided a lever to address the challenges of youth migration and desperate people leaving their countries to find work. On the issue of tax evasion, he emphasized that Africa needed business tax support and added that such support would require the establishment of a global tax administration under the auspices of the United Nations. Moreover, taxes on essential goods and services such as food and medicines should be withdrawn, as they penalized the poorest. An effective sanctions system should be introduced to curb the use of tax havens.

48. *A Workers' delegate from Nigeria* commended the Director-General's Report, which highlighted a number of fundamental problems affecting the world of work on the continent. He drew attention to the issue of women's work and to the steps that should be taken to ensure that they were fairly remunerated for their work. He also urged member States to respond to violence against women and violations of their physical integrity, which were sometimes used as a weapon of war and whose perpetrators remained unpunished. African States should strictly enforce the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). Nigeria was endeavouring to make it one of the fundamental Conventions.

**49.** *A Government representative of Namibia* welcomed the Director-General's Report, which looked back over progress made since the Addis Ababa Declaration. Since the 13th African Regional Meeting, Namibia had ratified two governance Conventions, three technical Conventions and the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930. In addition, the country had introduced a minimum wage for domestic work in 2016. He noted with concern the practices of some multinational enterprises which, when investing in different African countries, applied different standards, some of which were contrary to the MNE Declaration. Namibia therefore called on African States, when considering any investment in Africa, to focus on the specific impacts on job creation and decent work imperatives and, moving forwards, on capacity-building and skills development.

**50.** *A Workers' delegate from Togo* said that his country had set up a national tripartite social dialogue council and that it had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the social partners and technical and financial partners for the implementation of a second-generation DWCP covering the period 2020–22. Togo had ratified the eight ILO fundamental Conventions. The country was engaged in the promotion of social protection through the establishment of a general directorate for social protection, following on from the piloting of extending universal health coverage. The Government recently embarked on a tripartite process of revising the Labour Code and the Social Security Code to enable workers in the informal economy to have access to various social security benefits.

**51.** *A representative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)* commended the range of issues that the Report identified as needing to be addressed or included in the definition of a Decent Work Agenda in Africa for the period 2020–30. Noting that the Report referred to the implementation of the MNE Declaration in Africa, he emphasized the need to pay greater attention to the issue, as the Declaration was an essential instrument for promoting policy coherence. Efforts to regulate investments in order to promote decent work should also continue. The ITUC drew attention to (i) normative aspects and the ILO supervisory mechanisms; (ii) policy research and development; and (iii) the promotion of social dialogue. The above factors were crucial to regenerating the Organization to ensure it fulfilled its core mandate in Africa to shape the future of workers and achieve social justice.

**52.** *A representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)* welcomed the Regional Meeting. She stated that the common demands of African workers remained the same, including: health and safety in the workplace; health care; access to drinking water and health infrastructure; quality education for all; and trade union rights and freedoms. She asserted that African people must benefit from its enormous wealth, and called for the cancellation of African countries' debts.

**53.** *The Minister of Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development of Botswana* emphasized the importance of the future of work and the need to address the drivers underlying it, namely: globalization, technological innovations, demographic change and climate change. He underlined that the linkages between the education system, industry and labour are vital in equipping school-leavers, particularly young women and men, with skills that are demanded by the global economy. The Minister referred to efforts in Botswana to increase the number of graduates in science, technology and information and communications technology (ICT), in order to keep pace with the digital and technological changes. In particular, his Government had recently established the Botswana International University of Science and Technology and a medical school. In support of entrepreneurship, the Government had implemented the Revised National Youth Policy, and to complement it, the Government social partners had also laid a solid foundation for investment in decent and sustainable work, through the Botswana Decent Work Country Programme.

**54.** *A Workers' delegate from Côte d'Ivoire* noted that although agriculture was the mainstay of Africa's economies, food deficits remained a challenge. He observed that agriculture was the sector that should create jobs for the youth. He added that social dialogue institutions

should play a comprehensive role in promoting the regulation of the social sector, and that productivity growth could only be meaningful if it has an impact on living standards. In the spirit of the future of work, Africa should focus on reducing decent work deficits, promoting access to social protection, emphasizing the rural economy and transitioning from the informal to the formal economy.

55. *The Minister for Employment, Labour and Welfare of the Democratic Republic of the Congo* reported that since the 13th African Regional Meeting, her Government had made great strides in support of the Decent Work Agenda. In particular, her Government had initiated a dialogue with the social partners through the National Labour Council, which had resulted in the establishment of a new minimum wage for workers; the National Social Security Fund of the public administration; and a regulatory framework to support the right to decent work for all.

56. *A Workers' delegate from Eswatini* observed that public services were critical to poverty alleviation, noting that the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals clearly addressed the urgency to eradicate poverty and other challenges. He echoed the need to ensure existing jobs would not be lost as new jobs were created, as well as the need to formulate overarching development strategies which prioritized decent work and industrialization. He underscored that universal, comprehensive social protection could only be achieved with robust public services, as could be seen in the Nordic countries. At the heart of that was education, health and social care.

57. *The Minister of Employment and Labour Relations of Ghana* noted that Africa faced the problem of skills mismatch which could be redressed by improving labour market information systems to ensure that information on the available skills and demands of industry was always accurate, complete, comprehensive and timely. That would require upgrading the curriculum and adopting innovative training approaches to suit the constant changes and transformational impacts taking shape in the future world of work. In order to meet the need for relevant skills, he suggested the following measures: (1) disseminating accurate labour market information; (2) reforming the education curricula; (3) promoting innovative teaching and learning approaches; (4) adapting cost-effective but safe and environmentally friendly technology; (5) providing workers with appropriate logistics and infrastructure to facilitate productive work; and (6) instituting a modern productivity measurement index common to all enterprises, to improve observance of decent work standards.

58. *A Workers' delegate from the Seychelles Federation of Workers' Unions* recognized that, despite efforts to improve labour markets and promote decent work, social challenges such as injustice and inequality still remained. He made reference to the need to collectively tackle pressing global issues including climate change and the situations of small island developing States, which also had implications for the world of work. He urged the ILO to continue organizing capacity-building programmes for trade unions to enable workers to fully and effectively participate in the ongoing and sometimes challenging social dialogue concerning the blue economy. Such efforts would promote the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs for all.

59. *The Minister of Labour and Employment of Lesotho* reported on concerted efforts to promote social dialogue at the subregional level by organizing social dialogue forums. The first of such meetings took place at the subregional workshop on enhancing the effectiveness of social dialogue in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 1 to 2 October 2019. Further efforts were being made to ensure that Ministers of Labour and Social Partners as well as Ministers of Finance meet in one forum, with a view to increasing the gains in support of decent work. Regarding social protection, she appreciated that the Director-General had recognized the social protection floors available in the region, and underlined that her Government remained committed to

providing comprehensive social security. Furthermore, there had been recognition of the efforts to register small businesses in Lesotho, in support of transitioning from the informal to the formal economy. There was a plan to coordinate all relevant Government ministries to ensure that they all played their roles in transitioning from informality to formality. She noted the continued need to monitor employment relationships. Finally, she thanked the Government members of the Africa group for pursuing the issue regarding the democratization of the ILO governance structure.

60. *An Employers' delegate of the Democratic Republic of the Congo* drew attention to skills, particularly for young people. He called for investment in education and training, along with a mechanism to follow up on action plans. Improving the business environment, promoting sustainable development and ensuring political stability were key to decent work. He also noted that social inclusion and fair tax structures were critical in supporting livelihoods and encouraging investment.

61. *A Government delegate of Sudan* noted that her Government had ratified a number of Conventions, including those that guarantee the implementation of international legislation and standards. She mentioned the increased focus on social dialogue in order to safeguard workers' rights, determine wages and improve working conditions. She further underscored the importance of labour migration, noting her country's development of national migration policies, and cooperation with all relevant regional and international institutions. She welcomed the human-centred approach to the future of work and noted that it would require strengthening the capacities of all persons, promoting economic growth and strengthening labour institutions. Such efforts could effectively be achieved through the harmonization of training and education with new forms of work, the promotion of gender equality, the transition to an organized economy and the assurance of protection.

62. *A Workers' delegate of the Central African Republic* observed that Africa must consider real investments in human capacity development. Significant and real efforts should be made for education, training and human capacity building as factors of development. He noted that since Africa's development relies heavily on agriculture, the transition from the informal economy to the formal economy and the development of human resources capacity should be made a reality. In the spirit of the Declaration of Philadelphia and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which underlie the right to work, choose a job, have just and favourable working conditions and be protected against unemployment, countries need to ratify the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122).

63. *A representative of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity* (OATUU) observed that poverty was still pervasive in Africa despite important interventions. He emphasized that social justice and equality should be the focus of such interventions. Africa must implement and comply with the international Conventions to which it is party and governments must strengthen the institutional instruments of control and intervention by all necessary means, including labour inspectorates that must also work with unions. Furthermore, he noted the need for African governments to prioritize tripartism and to ensure the involvement of all constituents in all tripartite actions, at all levels.

64. *A Workers' delegate from Malawi* stressed that among the challenges relating to the future of work in Africa, those associated with the greening of the economy and technological change would affect many workers and, first and foremost, those from the energy sector. To address that challenge, he suggested the establishment of a financing mechanism for the updating and enhancement of the skills of affected workers. The Meeting participants should reach agreement on concrete actions to support labour ministries in the region in financial and statutory terms. The speaker concluded by emphasizing that Africa should have a fund to prepare for the future of work in order to defend itself against the effects of the fourth industrial revolution and to advance social justice in the region.

**65.** *An Employers' delegate from the United Republic of Tanzania* said that the various statements had highlighted the need to define the concrete results that would place the continent on the path towards sustainable development. The Regional Meeting should identify an African roadmap for the future of work, in which productivity, growth, skills development and the promotion of an enabling environment for the development of sustainable enterprises should be the principal focuses. Weak productivity growth, the slow pace of vocational training and the mismatch between growth and general skills had a negative impact on the labour market in Africa, the main characteristic of which was informality. Bureaucracy, recurrent political instability, poorly developed infrastructure and the lack of business support programmes also had negative repercussions for enterprises in Africa. Drawing on the Tanzanian experience, the speaker proposed establishing a blueprint of regulatory reforms to improve the business environment.

**66.** *A Workers' delegate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, recalling the challenges outlined in the Report, referred to a lack of political will by African States in respect of the ratification of Conventions and the implementation of jointly adopted policies and decisions, and stressed the lack of a sanction mechanism. He asked the Office to put in place a mechanism to monitor the application of Conventions and Recommendations at the national and subregional levels, including a reporting requirement. He considered that there were very few functional frameworks for social dialogue.

**67.** *The Minister of Labour, Skills and Innovation of Malawi* agreed with the content of the Report of the Director-General. She pointed out that her country, together with a number of African countries, had the necessary potential to make social justice a reality, given their extensive natural resources and their dynamic young labour force. Despite this potential, Africa still faced many challenges, namely the size of the informal sector, environmental and technological challenges, precarious conditions and social injustice. Malawi had made considerable efforts in respect of decent work. The speaker requested that the functioning and the composition of the Governing Body be reviewed, as called for in the resolution accompanying the Centenary Declaration. She urged the member States that had not yet ratified the 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution to do so without delay. The outcomes of the Regional Meeting should go towards achieving the targets set by the regional and global frameworks, namely the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**68.** *The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Ethiopia* considered that the Report of the Director-General clearly set out the progress made in achieving decent work for all on the African continent during the period 2016–19. Ethiopia had undertaken major reforms and aspired to become a middle-income country by 2025. The country was taking action to create decent jobs, particularly for young people and women, through the creation of an enabling environment, increased investment in key economic sectors, productivity and innovation. Efforts had also been made to advance workers' rights through the review of labour legislation. Ethiopia was one of the pathfinder countries of Alliance 8.7, which aimed to accelerate the achievement of SDG target 8.7. The speaker reiterated the Government of Ethiopia's commitment to work closely with the ILO and its partners to advance social justice and promote decent work for all.

**69.** *A Workers' delegate from Senegal* welcomed the relevance of the Report of the Director-General of the ILO. Social protection was a crucial issue which, if addressed in a holistic manner, could provide answers to society's concerns, particularly in respect of the status of women, children, young people and people with disabilities. The speaker advocated for investment in social protection systems and in capacity-building for workers' organizations. Those organizations should be supported to better mainstream gender and increase women's representation at the leadership level.

70. *The Minister of Labour and Social Security of Zambia* said that, following the national dialogue on the future of work, Zambia had strategically repositioned itself to address existing and new challenges. It had implemented a new Labour Code, reviewed the national employment and labour market policy and established a new minimum wage. The country was fully committed to the implementation of its national Vision 2030 and its Seventh National Development Plan, aligned with Agenda 2063. Zambia had aligned itself with the Centenary Declaration; that implied skills development and programme review to adapt to a changing world of work. Zambia had made progress towards extending social protection to the informal sector. The actions taken were based on the Decent Work Country Programme and the national employment and labour market policy.

71. *An Employers' delegate from Zambia* said that the various global developments described in the Report of the Director-General were cumulative and impacted governance systems and institutions. The complexity and multilayered nature of those developments called for new levels of technical and soft skills in problem solving, communication and in terms of creativity. The scarcity and mismatch of skills were the main reasons for low productivity in Africa. Productivity and skills development should be at the very heart of the African agenda.

72. *The Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Protection of Niger* emphasized that the ILO Centenary celebrations and the 14th African Regional Meeting represented an opportunity to build a future of fair and equitable work for Africa. The future of work in Africa would depend on the wise choices made by all Africans and the courageous steps taken towards greater investment in human capital, labour institutions and future jobs. Efficient implementation was also key to achieving effective labour governance. In that regard, Niger would be fully involved in efforts to improve labour governance and uphold the ideals of peace and social justice at community, national, and continental levels. He shared some of his country's important achievements since the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference (June 2019), such as ratifying the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 (No. 121), conducting a national survey on the state of play of social dialogue, holding the trade union representative elections and publishing the results thereof, signing a pre-election memorandum of understanding between the Government and the trade union organizations, and developing an inter-professional collective agreement.

73. *A Workers' delegate from Madagascar* mentioned that her Government had implemented a social protection policy for all and established a Special Task Force on Social Protection, but expressed disappointment that the Task Force did not yet include workers' representatives. Workers' representatives were interested in achieving the joint objective of extending social protection to all workers in Madagascar, including those in rural areas and invisible workers such as domestic workers. She called on her Government to form a tripartite committee to address that issue.

74. *A Workers' delegate from the United Republic of Tanzania* recalled that implementing the Decent Work Agenda remained a challenge for his country. Decent work deficits included the constant violation of the rights of workers and trade unions by investors. He appreciated his Government's efforts in *creating* an attractive environment for investors to boost job opportunities. At the same time, he urged the Government to strengthen the inspectorate department, with a view to ensuring that inspectors fulfil their responsibilities and that investors adhere to labour standards and legislation. Furthermore, African governments should create good and fair working conditions as an incentive for youth to remain in their countries. Social partners should come together to discuss and address labour market issues and sustainable development challenges. The innovation of digital technology should be embraced as an opportunity to boost youth employment. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the social partners had been promoting the acquisition of employable skills which met new technological demands for the youth, citing a recent increase in the numbers of young people attending vocational education and training centres. Social partners should also advocate for

full and productive employment in order to realize decent work for all. Lastly, African governments should also promote the implementation of the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), and combat any kind of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.

**75.** *A representative of the International Organisation of Employers* stated that the Report of the Director-General should have put more emphasis on productivity, which was the foundation for decent and sustainable living conditions. While the Report correctly identified low productivity as the main cause of labour market problems in Africa, it failed to explore the issue in-depth. He recalled that the widening developmental gap between Africa and Asia was characterized by widening productivity gaps. Unfortunately, Africa was still crippled by layers of deep-rooted and systemic obstacles that made business ventures seem daunting. Informality – which concerned almost 90 per cent of employment in Africa – was a major problem driven by an absence of productivity growth. Weak policies, laws, regulations and institutions had made the business environment unfavourable to a dynamic private sector. It was therefore critical to introduce reforms to lower the costs associated with formalization and raise its benefits. Lowering taxes, simplifying tax administration, improving labour regulations and removing bureaucratic barriers for business licensing and registration must be vigorously pursued. Small and medium-sized firms should be granted incentives such as access to credit and business development services to encourage formalization. He recalled that innovation, productivity growth and decent employment creation mostly occurred in Africa's formal sector, which accounted for only 10 per cent of employment. Furthermore, he highlighted that the productivity potential of formal sector enterprises was significantly affected by the unfair competition from informal businesses. As World Bank surveys had revealed, almost half of informal enterprises in Africa chose to operate informally in order to avoid tax payments, labour law regulations and social security obligations. Productivity growth was therefore the major remedy for Africa's informality, working poverty and unemployment problems. He called on the ILO to address informality in Africa through the Decent Work Agenda.

# Thematic plenary sittings

**76.** The Regional Meeting held a Presidential Panel on the Future of Work We Want for Africa; a discussion on the promotion and application of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy in Africa, and four thematic plenary sittings on the following topics:

– International Labour Standards, Social Dialogue and Gender Equality in the Realization of the Decent Work Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

– Making Decent Work a Reality for Africa's Youth.

– Skills, Technological Pathways and Productivity for a Brighter Future of Work in Africa.

– Transforming Africa's Informal and Rural Economy for Decent Work.

## Presidential Panel on the Future of Work We Want for Africa

**77.** The panel, moderated by Ms Nozipho Mbanjwa of CNBC Television South Africa, was composed as follows: Mr Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire; Mr Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the ILO; Mr Mthunzi Mdwaba, Vice-

President of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) for the ILO; and Mr Ayuba Wabba, President of the Nigerian Labour Congress.

**78.** *The moderator* asked, in the light of the 13th African Regional Meeting in 2015 and the major regional priorities identified therein, what had been achieved in terms of decent work. What were the key factors that had facilitated those achievements?

**79.** In response to the first question, *the Director-General* noted that since the 13th African Regional Meeting, Africa had achieved a relatively good growth rate. Despite that, such growth should benefit a greater part of the population and lead to job creation. The difficulty for Africa was that the sources of growth came from sectors that were not job-rich. Therefore, the challenges facing the continent included broadening sources of economic growth, formalizing the informal economy and delivering the good governance needed to ensure strong institutions of work. On the other hand, there had been good progress with regard to the integration of Africa. While the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could be a potential game changer, it was necessary to exercise caution in terms of the social dimension of regional trade to avoid leaving too many behind, resulting in a backlash against integration. There was still progress to be made, but the general direction was positive.

**80.** *The Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire* also pointed to the economic growth that had been achieved in Africa since 2015. He stressed, however, that growth should be inclusive. In his country, 2,800,000 jobs had been created in the formal and informal economy. Since 2015, the unemployment rate had dropped from 4 per cent to 3 per cent. Underemployment had also declined from 20 to 15 per cent. In terms of youth employment, some 222,000 jobs had been created and 75,000 young people were in vocational training. The elements that had enabled these outcomes were a healthy and stable macroeconomic framework for economic growth; structural reforms in certain areas; investment in human capital through training, education and the provision of health; creation of employment which improved living standards; and unlocking private sector capital to complement government efforts through public–private partnerships and build-operate-transfer (BOT) schemes.

**81.** *The President of the Nigerian Labour Congress* recalled that the 13th African Regional Meeting had prioritized three main issues: implementing structural reform in Africa; promoting policy coherence; and building the capacities of ILO constituents. Since 2015, social dialogue had been mainstreamed in national development plans and in solving problems concerning youth employment and minimum wages in countries such as South Africa, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. The capacities of constituents had been increased through Decent Work Country Programmes. The Centenary Declaration had created great momentum, which must be capitalized on.

**82.** In contrast, *the Vice-President of the IOE for the ILO* stressed the gap between the many conversations that had taken place in the past and the lack of implementation, noting that he was referring to all ILO constituents. Productivity was one of the major challenges facing Africa. According to the Report of the Director-General, Africa was faring well below all other regions in terms of productivity. He also stressed that while Africa was the region with the highest level of entrepreneurship in the world, it also had the highest rate of failure. This was because young entrepreneurs lacked support. Although he agreed that progress had been made in certain areas, that had been work in silos rather than broad-based achievements.

**83.** *The Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire* underlined that a key determinant of entrepreneurship was the mindset of young people. When they left school, they wanted to be civil servants rather than entrepreneurs. It was therefore necessary to consider how to help them change their mindset. Côte d'Ivoire had put in place a number of programmes but

more needed to be done in terms of skills development, vocational training and enterprise creation skills.

84. *The moderator* raised a question on how African economies could take advantage of the opportunities for new types of jobs and mitigate job loses, given the impact of technology, artificial intelligence, mechanization and digitalization.

85. *The Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire* acknowledged that while technology could be harmful, it was also important and facilitated people's lives. Today in Côte d'Ivoire, over 26 billion CFA francs was transferred via mobile phones. His Government had therefore decided to install some 7,000 km of optical fibre to speed up the internet network. It had also set up a technology village in the Grand-Bassam region to stimulate start-ups. In that respect, technology could be a tool for development.

86. *The moderator* asked what were the plans to create a brighter future of work in order to harness the youth dividend, promote gender equality and achieve structural transformation.

87. *The President of the Nigerian Labour Congress* stated that issues concerning youth should not be seen as a challenge but rather an opportunity. He called for a focus on youth employment as a national priority and the provision of adequate education, skills and vocational training for young people. Infrastructural development was another key challenge facing Africa, the improvement of which could help to address youth unemployment. Investment in agriculture was another priority area. He gave the example of Nigeria, which was now the biggest producer of rice on the continent owing to young people entering the agricultural industry. Young people had not been included sufficiently in national development plans and must therefore be given the space and necessary support. Women should also benefit from the same level of proactive support.

88. *The moderator* stated that conversations on such issues had been going on for a long time. She asked what needed to change in order to have a different conversation in the next decade.

89. *The President of the Nigerian Labour Congress* said that it was time to walk the talk and deliver on all issues that can been discussed. He stressed the need for continental food security for all, to ensure that Africa was no longer a destination of finished goods. He called for the resolution of all labour market issues through social dialogue and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work. In particular, trade union rights should be respected, as prescribed in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

90. *The Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire* stated that his Government was making efforts to meet the numerous challenges in the area of value chains. As Côte d'Ivoire was the highest producer of cocoa in the world, the Government decided to process at least 50 per cent of Ivorian cocoa by 2025. The same policy was in place for cashew nuts. For the electricity sector, solutions had been found through collaboration with the private sector. The Government fixed the rules, worked with private partners and consumers benefited. It was necessary to think differently and push people to seize the opportunities of globalization and new technologies.

91. *The Director-General* addressed the issue of structural transformation. The natural progression from agriculture to industrialization to high growth must change. Structural transformation in Africa must be seen in different ways. As in Côte d'Ivoire, structural transformation could also involve investment in agriculture.

92. He observed that, although today, Africa was in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it had been bypassed in earlier industrial revolutions. The challenge was how Africa could shape the

Fourth Industrial Revolution to meet its aspirations. For instance, discussions on supply chains could explore the development of African supply chains for its produce. In that context, the AfCFTA was a big opportunity. Africa could develop regional value chains to exploit the huge market presented by the AfCFTA.

93. *The Vice-President of the IOE for the ILO* agreed with much of what had been said earlier. However, he emphasized that there were many governments that did not have policies like those of the Ivorian government. The Secretary-General of the Pan-African Productivity Association (PAPA) was present at the Regional Meeting, however only 12 out of the 54 African countries were represented in the PAPA. Productivity together with innovation were the challenges facing Africa. Productivity must be at the centre of all action and prioritized, as in Asian countries. Informality was another challenge. Many companies chose to go into the informal economy to survive because they faced various difficulties in the formal economy and lacked adequate support. A change in attitude was necessary. Lastly, ministries of labour should be boosted to be higher up within the pecking order of governments, as they play an important role in looking after people.

94. *The moderator* asked panellists to look at future challenges and identify one medium-term and one long-term challenge.

95. *The President of the Nigerian Labour Congress* identified a few priority challenges among the many issues that should be addressed. Those challenges were addressing youth unemployment, as young people should either be in education, in vocational training or at work; and ensuring compliance with the core labour standards. Although they had been enshrined in law, they were not respected in practice.

96. *The Director-General* said that emphasis should firstly be placed on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Secondly, from a world of work perspective, the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work must be implemented, as it was the road map for the future. In concrete terms, it was necessary to increase investment in people's capabilities, the institutions of work, and the decent and sustainable work of the future.

97. *The Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire* stated that his Government had the habit of developing long-term plans. Its Vision 2040 had set the goal of being an industrialized country by 2040 and a nation with an educated, well-trained and healthy youth. Resources had been allocated to make this a reality. It was necessary to convince people to see globalization as an opportunity to be seized rather than feared.

98. *The Vice-President of the IOE for the ILO* once again stressed the critical importance of productivity. Nothing could be done without mainstreaming productivity. If the productivity problem was solved, the causes of the problem could also be solved for the future. Furthermore, in addition to many major trends, the IOE and the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) had identified that there was a lack of skills. It was therefore necessary to focus on skills development. Discussions on how to manage transitions such as climate or technological change must also address the acquisition of skills, reskilling and upskilling.

## Discussion on the promotion and application of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy in Africa

99. The Employer Vice-President of the 14th African Regional Meeting opened the sitting. He then gave the floor to Ms Githa Roelans, Head of the ILO Multinational Enterprises and Enterprise Engagement Unit. She presented the panel members: Ms. Lindiwe Sephomolo,

Executive Officer, Association of Lesotho Employers and Business; Mr Bheki Ntshalintshali, General Secretary, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU); and Mr Karim Cissé, Director-General for Labour and Social Security, Senegal.

**100.** The *Head of the ILO Multinational Enterprises and Enterprise Engagement Unit* presented the report entitled *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 Africa*, [1] prepared for the 14th African Regional Meeting with direct inputs from governments, employers and workers. She highlighted the relevance of the Multinational Enterprises Declaration ("the MNE Declaration") in the context of Africa's human-centred approach to the future of work, structural transformation, skills development and youth employment fully. The aforementioned, harnessing the opportunities offered by trade, investment and operations of multinational enterprises, contributing to the SDGs and the African Union's 2063 Agenda.

**101.** *The Executive Officer, Association of Lesotho Employers and Business* emphasized the employers' full support for the Declaration, awareness-raising and capacity-building activities in the region, and requested continued Office assistance. The Declaration was an important driver to attract investment. The nature of MNEs was changing as more and more SMEs became multinational enterprises, particularly in the area of technology and online businesses, and African enterprises were becoming multinationals, especially from countries such as Nigeria, Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire. This had enhanced the Declaration's importance for the continent. It was necessary to raise awareness, including on existing tools, such as the ILO Helpdesk for Business on International Labour Standards, which was a good platform for disseminating information on the Declaration and on international labour standards. On the employers' response rate to the questionnaire (13 per cent compared to 31 per cent from governments and from workers), she asked if a questionnaire was still the best way to collect information or if alternatives should be explored. Office country-level assistance should be tripartite, balanced and include the social partners. Further awareness-raising and capacity-building, as well as training of trainers, should be looked into.

**102.** *The General Secretary, Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU) expressed appreciation for all the efforts made to ensure this very important session was included in the programme of the Regional Meeting. It should be registered, however, that it had been a bad decision to make this a lunchtime discussion, which should not happen again. All three ILO constituent groups had unanimously adopted the Declaration and its operational tools, and recognized it as important. His group wanted the ILO to increase promotional activities combined with technical assistance and support to social partners in appointing national focal points. He could not overemphasize the importance of this instrument to assist countries in attracting the right kind of investment and avoiding damage to the local economy stemming from foreign direct investment. The Declaration was an important framework for both workers and employers on enterprise behaviour. It helped to protect fundamental principles and rights, workers' rights, and to promote compliance with national laws and respect for international principles. The Declaration covered all elements of the Decent Work Agenda, so all constituents should welcome further assistance on the instrument.

**103.** *The moderator* opened the floor for questions.

**104.** *An Employer representative from Côte d'Ivoire* shared his organization's experience on the promotion and application of the Declaration. This Declaration had been unknown in Côte

---

[1] https://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/regional-meetings/africa/arm-14/reports-and-documents/WCMS_724152/lang--en/index.htm.

d'Ivoire. However, through promotional activities and capacity-building over the past years, it had become a framework for tripartite action on decent work. Studies had been conducted on linkages between MNEs and local SMEs in various sectors in Côte d'Ivoire. Good practices on youth employment had also been identified and shared. Côte d'Ivoire had appointed national focal points for the promotion of the Declaration within the Government, the employers' organizations and the trade unions. Furthermore, a joint action plan had been developed. He had shared his experiences as employer with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). This had led to subsequent discussions in the WAEMU's Social Dialogue Working Group and to the adoption of an opinion providing very concrete recommendations to the WAEMU's member States regarding the promotion of the Declaration. The Declaration was a very important instrument that required further awareness-raising and capacity-building.

105. *A representative from the Organization of African Trade Union Unity* (OATUU) stressed that there were different levels of social dialogue, ranging from information sharing and consultations to collective agreements. Social dialogue played a critical role in policymaking and trust between all parties was needed. He asked how the Declaration could assist workers to engage in policymaking on MNEs.

106. *A Worker representative from Kenya* added that many MNEs in Kenya were not ready to engage with unions, and asked how the Declaration could be used to sensitize them on industrial relations.

107. *A Worker representative from Morocco* commented that free trade agreements provided enormous opportunities, but the reality for workers on the ground was often different. Workers were seldom consulted on trade policies or investment agreements. She asked the employer panellist whether the employers' low response rate to the questionnaire was not an illustration of their disengagement on this topic, as it had also been impossible to add a reference to corporate due diligence in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. ILO support for the appointment of focal points for the promotion of the Declaration needed to be increased and these focal points should be truly tripartite.

108. *The President of the High Council for Social Dialogue (Haut Conseil du Dialogue Social) of Senegal* congratulated the ILO for having put this discussion on the agenda, but added that the discussion regarding this important topic should not have taken place during the lunch break. She underlined the challenges posed by MNEs in many countries in the region and the critical role of social dialogue in addressing them, not only at the national level but also within the enterprises themselves. The High Council for Social Dialogue had established a tripartite committee for the promotion of the Declaration, chaired by the employers. This committee had also engaged with Senegal's Socio-Economic Council to strengthen its capacities for discussions regarding multinationals operating in the extractive and oil sector, the telecommunication sector and the agricultural sector. The relevance of the Declaration in achieving social justice could not be underestimated and further awareness-raising and capacity-building were highly needed.

109. *An Employer representative from Benin* stressed that the Declaration was the only ILO instrument directly addressing enterprises of all sizes. His employers' organization had taken ownership of this Declaration following an ILO training for tripartite constituents from Togo and Benin. They had now started an awareness-raising campaign on the Declaration, corporate social responsibility and achieving the SDGs. Furthermore, they were engaging on the instrument with the Government, trade unions and civil society. He requested ILO technical support for further workshops in Benin.

110. *A Worker representative from Nigeria* affirmed the strong support for the Declaration by all three ILO constituents. He reiterated that the session should not have been organized as a lunchtime discussion. The issue was critical, as the number of MNEs in Africa was

increasing. More dissemination of the instrument was needed and the related critical issues should be reflected in the outcome document of the Regional Meeting.

111. *A Government representative of Mali* indicated that Mali had requested ILO training, as no focal points had been appointed yet. He reiterated his request for a capacity-building workshop for tripartite constituents in 2020. He added that the promotion of the Declaration could also help the labour administration to increase compliance with labour law.

112. *A representative from the International Trade Union Confederation Africa* asked the employer panellist how employers could be engaged in this process if the questionnaire did not yield the expected results. The Declaration was a tripartite instrument and, therefore, relevant to all parties to establish a rights-based, human-centred business environment. The approach should be shifted from shareholder to stakeholder. Relaxing labour rights should not be a tool to attract investment.

113. *A Government representative of Côte d'Ivoire* shared his experience regarding the Declaration. Following capacity-building workshops, the Ministry of Employment and the social partners had appointed national focal points and adopted a joint action plan for the promotion of the Declaration. Further focal points had been established in other ministries and in various trade unions. All parties had been trained, sensitizing more than 200 people last year. The tripartite focal points had organized a national forum on the Declaration during 2019, attended by MNE representatives. He expressed his willingness to share his country's experience and the joint action plan with other ILO member States.

114. *A representative of the workers from Morocco* commented that MNEs often enjoyed fiscal advantages. Investment was primarily in the extractive industries. However, Africa needed investments in other sectors, such as industry and agriculture, to support its structural transformation. On corporate social responsibility, he asked what MNEs were really doing at the operational level, given that too often they contributed to precarious work. MNEs should respect workers' rights, social dialogue and gender equality, which in turn would lead to enhanced productivity.

115. *The Director-General for Labour and Social Security, Senegal* shared two concrete experiences. Firstly, he highlighted how, following the adoption of the revised MNE in 2017, that same year Senegal had appointed national focal points through a ministerial decree. Senegal had four focal points: one for the Government, one for the employers, one for the workers and one in the High-Council for Social Dialogue. The national action plan focused on the promotion and application of the MNE Declaration and comprised a number of training modules, including one for labour inspectors. The High-Council for Social Dialogue had done remarkable work by establishing a tripartite committee for the promotion of the Declaration and had engaged with MNEs. Secondly, he reiterated what had been previously stated by the employer representative from Côte d'Ivoire regarding Senegal's engagement with the WAEMU and the resulting opinion, which contained very concrete recommendations for the WAEMU's member States and social partners. Taking ownership of the Declaration had been critical for Senegal, especially as the country was attracting more investments and, thus, more MNEs. The Declaration was instrumental in upholding decent work in these MNEs. Furthermore, it helped make sure that these companies' practices in Senegal were of the same standard as those in their countries of origin.

116. *A representative of the WAEMU* provided more information on how his organization promoted the Declaration. Investment attraction was an important priority for the WAEMU's eight member States, especially in the mining sector. In 2019, they adopted an opinion on the promotion of corporate social responsibility and the Declaration. The opinion had specific recommendations on the application of the Declaration in areas such as the promotion of decent work, formalization, investment agreements, tripartite dialogue platforms, export processing zones and collective agreements, among other topics. The

WAEMU was contemplating developing a standard and asked for ILO support in this process.

117. *The Executive Officer, Association of Lesotho Employers and Business* concluded by saying that rigorous awareness-raising and robust promotion of the Declaration were needed, bearing in mind that this Declaration did not substitute national law. It was a voluntary instrument providing guidance. Regional employers' and workers' organizations, together with the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) should play a more prominent role in the regional follow-up process. National focal points should be established in each member State.

118. *The General Secretary, Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU) expressed his appreciation for the Office's support with regards to the promotion of the Declaration and requested that the experiences of Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal be shared more broadly.

119. *The Head of the ILO Multinational Enterprises and Enterprise Engagement Unit* thanked all participants for the very rich discussion held and confirmed the Office's commitment to supporting tripartite constituents who requested technical assistance with a view to promoting the Declaration.

## First thematic plenary sitting: International Labour Standards, Social Dialogue and Gender Equality in the Realization of Decent Work Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

120. *The Employer Vice-Chairperson* welcomed the moderator, Ms Tatiana Mossot, a journalist, and the panellists. The panel was composed as follows: Mr Mohamed Trabelsi, President of the National Social Dialogue Council (CNDS) and Minister of Social Affairs of Tunisia (Government); Mr Evance Kalula, University of Cape Town Professor and Chairperson of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association; Ms Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Director, Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, UN Economic Commission for Africa; Mr Kaizer Moyane, Chairperson of the Social Policy Standing Committee, Business Unity South Africa (Employer); and Professor Fatna Afid, Decmocratic Confederation of Labour, Morocco (Worker).

121. *The moderator* highlighted the importance of the issues to be addressed in the panel (international labour standards, social dialogue and gender), which were at the heart of the ILO Decent Work Agenda and represented key components of governance of the world of work. She referred to the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, which was a reminder of the profound changes taking place in the world of work which created both challenges and opportunities. These changes required action on the part of both the ILO and its member States. Enhancing the governance of the world of work would be key in that regard. The moderator introduced the five members of the panel and indicated that panel would address four questions, namely: (i) key priorities for further improving labour market governance in Africa; (ii) gender equality; (iii) social dialogue; and (iv) international labour standards.

## 1. Key priorities for improving labour market governance in Africa

122. *The Worker representative from the Democratic Confederation of Labour, Morocco* stressed the need to realize and apply the fundamental principles and rights at work to guarantee decent work for both men and women. Collective bargaining was also a key factor that underpinned good governance.

123. *The Director of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, UN Economic Commission for Africa* underlined that good governance involved two main components. The first of these was active labour market policies that could help to address the challenge of low productivity in the informal economy in Africa. This included upgrading skills and removing structural barriers for the creation of formal jobs. There was also a need for income support to help lift women from poverty and to invest in health and education. The second component was labour migration governance to manage the free movement of labour across Africa, including ensuring skills portability.

124. The speaker stressed the need for the expansion of productive employment, noting that women carried the burden of household responsibilities and were expected to perform in the workplace.

125. *The Minister of Social Affairs of Tunisia* stressed the critical role of social dialogue to underpin good governance, democracy, sustainable development and social justice.

126. *The University of Cape Town Professor and Chairperson of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association* emphasised the importance of having strong labour market institutions, which were necessary to ensure inclusion, participation and gender equality. Having laws and ratifying conventions was not enough. Effective implementation was critical too.

127. *The Employer representative from Business Unity, South Africa* emphasized again that social dialogue was key to governance. African countries needed stable institutions and commitment. The ratification and effective implementation of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), was very important. He also recalled the importance of implementation of international labour standards and the enforcement of national laws.

## 2. Gender equality

128. *The moderator* asked which were the areas in which Africa needed to prioritize efforts in order to improve gender equality in the world of work. She invited panellists to share their good practices in that regard.

129. *The Employer representative from Business Unity, South Africa* stressed that while some companies were already promoting women to some higher positions, more could be done to achieve gender equality. Very few women held chief executive positions in South Africa. Employers must audit their policies and practices and be very deliberate, as well as to support science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, and continue to deliberate on the issues. *The Director of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, UN Economic Commission for Africa* underlined the need to remove obstacles that hindered women's participation in the labour market. She decried the fact that women were not in the market for the jobs for the future. In STEM, where the jobs for the future prevailed, there were very few women (less than 10 per cent of women graduating from these fields). She stressed the need to support young women to access STEM schools and other opportunities. One such opportunity worth exploring was women's access to business, where they could rise and run private companies on their own rights, if they received support.

130. According to *the Worker representative from the Democratic Confederation of Labour, Morocco*, investment was also needed in several policy areas, including education and vocational training, health, social services and literacy, alongside combating violence against women and human trafficking. According to *the Employer representative from Business Unity, South Africa*, there was a need to address the structural problems that were the root causes of gender inequality. One such problem was the confinement of women to certain sectors, such as care work.

**131.** The panellists delivered other messages on which they expressed converging views. Conventions relating to equal pay, maternity protection and workers with family responsibilities would need to be implemented more strictly in order to recognize the vast potential of women in the workforce. Investment in education, skills, and leadership of women in business would bring down barriers that restricted womens' access to formal employment. Furthermore, it would reduce current blind spots in formal policy-making, such as the recognition of care work. Economic growth remained essential to create more jobs for women, including outside the traditional "soft" sectors, such as health and education. Nevertheless, other measures (such as job quotas in the private sector) could be considered to promote employment opportunities for women. Lastly, inclusive and equitable policies on issues affecting young people were vital for success.

## 3. Social dialogue

**132.** *The Minister of Social Affairs of Tunisia* said certain conditions needed to be in place for social dialogue, including respect for international labour standards, a sound political climate, democratic foundations (such as freedom of expression and association). Social dialogue could be a source of resilience and national conciliation in the event of a serious political crisis. Such was the case in Tunisia, where the social partners had facilitated a smooth transition. There was a need to build a culture of social dialogue. According to *the Worker representative from the Democratic Confederation of Labour, Morocco,* political commitment from all parties was key for a successful social dialogue. This was echoed by *the Employer representative from Business Unity, South Africa*, who stressed the need for all parties to engage. Tripartite partners would benefit from opening up the dialogue to other actors of civil society, as shown by the example of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) in South Africa.

**133.** The panellists also expressed a number of converging views with regards to this topic. Social dialogue needed to be as inclusive as possible, meeting the expectations of young people, women and vulnerable populations. It should cover a wide range of topics and not be limited to purely social issues. Such topics should include vocational training, education, individual freedoms, womens' rights, human rights, migration policy, financial policy, etc. Furthermore, social dialogue had to produce effective results; hence the importance of implementing the resulting agreements and decisions. Social dialogue institutions needed to be strong, independent, and endowed with the necessary human and material resources.

## 4. International labour standards

**134.** *The University of Cape Town Professor and Chairperson of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association* stated African countries had a good record of ratifications of international labour Conventions, but implementation was still weak because of weak institutions and lack of capacity. Labour ministries were not regarded as important institutions, they were marginalized and lacked resources. African countries needed to reverse that trend if they were to improve the implementation of ratified Conventions and related reforms. It was necessary to strengthen the capacity of ministries of labour and national expertise. Furthermore, strong labour and employment institutions were needed, with skilled human resources. The skills of the various stakeholders, including the social partners, had to be developed in order to achieve a better understanding and application of the principles enshrined in standards. This could be addressed through technical cooperation and the mobilization of donors. Such technical support should be guided by national priorities defined jointly by the national social partners and rely on national expertise. This way, support would be optimized and respond to the real needs of the country. African countries should have the courage to show political willingness to make democratic gains irreversible.

**135.** *The Worker representative from the Democratic Confederation of Labour, Morocco* explained that , promotion, awareness and implementation of international labour standards were essential for trade unions, as they would enable workers to claim their rights, increase effective collective bargaining processes, and enhance principles regarding womens' rights (such as equal pay for work of equal value). This was how international labour standards contributed to political stability and helped avoid crises with socio-economic origins.

**136.** The panellists also expressed a number of converging views with regards to this topic. International labour standards were an indispensable framework for progress on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and on the African Union's Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want. Normative policies would shape the future of work, and decent work would be brought about by guaranteeing international labour standards for all workers. The panellists agreed that strong, inclusive and representative labour institutions were needed. These had to be supported by active national labour policies which benefited from local ownership on the part of all workers, including women, young and migrant workers. Implementation of the ILO's fundamental Coanventions played a key role to attain this inclusiveness and for the strengthening of the rule of law in Africa. Standards served as a reference to measure the degree of progress in terms of social dialogue and toward sustainable development.

## Second thematic plenary sitting: Making Decent Work a Reality for Africa's Youth

**137.** *The Vice-Chairperson* welcomed the moderator, Ms Nozipho Mbanjwa, conference moderator, and all participants. He also acknowledged the presence of the Prime Minister of Madagascar, Mr Christian Louis Ntsay.

**138.** *The moderator* welcomed and introduced the panellists which included: Dr Chris Ngige, Minister of Labour and Employment, Nigeria; Mr Mamadou Touré, Minister for the Promotion of Youth, Youth Employment and Civil Service, Côte d'Ivoire; Ms Ifeoma Okafor Obi, Director of Operations of the Tony Elumelu Foundation, Nigeria; Mr Ayabonga Cawe, Managing Director of Xesibe Holdings, (and the youth representative on the panel), South Africa; Mr Peter Mutasa, President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions; and Ms Grace Nabakooza, representative of the Federation of Ugandan Employers.

**139.** *The moderator* noted that the greatest policy challenge facing Africa was ensuring full and productive employment for young men and women – 13.4 million were unemployed, 52 million were in the "neither in employment, education or training" (NEET) category and 54.4 million were employed but considered to be working poor. The situation would become increasingly complex with the expected 37 per cent increase in the youth labour force by 2030. The future of work in Africa was therefore particularly relevant for its youth, who were vulnerable to political, economic and environmental fragilities. Without innovative policies and political commitment, full and productive employment would not be achieved. A deliberate conversation was needed on how to deliver more and better jobs at the regional, national and local levels.

**140.** *The moderator* invited the panel's youth representative to provide contextual insights building on the Abuja Youth Statement and Global Youth Employment Forum (GYEF), held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 1 to 3 August.

**141.** *The youth representative* pointed to the lack of employment opportunities for youth which would further intensify, given that the African labour force was set to double by 2030, and the increase of atypical forms of employment in both the informal and formal economy. Climate change was an urgent issue that was affecting human settlements and production processes, and youth migration within and outside of Africa. To address these challenges, a mix of policies was required, as had been discussed during the Global Youth Employment

Forum (GYEF). That should consist of decent employment and climate resilient macroeconomic and sectoral policies, active labour market and skills development policies, as well as practical policies that address informality which was such an integral part of Africa's world of work. As had been discussed in the forum held in Abuja, it was also critical to harness the job creation potential of sectors such as the digital economy, the culture and creative economy, care work, etc. Furthermore, priority should be given to safeguarding humanity, privacy of data, and to ending tax avoidance and evasion. Finally, he noted that young people would act on the commitments they made at the GEYF in Abuja, both inside and outside of the ILO and the United Nations.

142. In response to a question from the moderator regarding lessons learned on the creation of decent work for youth, *the Minister of Labour and Employment of Nigeria* explained that the lack of continuity of government programmes, as a result of a change in Government, was a challenge for his country. Political will was therefore required to ensure the continuity of such programmes irrespective of any potential changes in government. He emphasized that plans should be implemented, and adequate funding be made available. He called on all partners in Nigeria to work towards ensuring that curriculums were updated and that they reflected the labour market needs. He also called for the need to identify and scale up effective employment programmes. He underlined his Government's committed to finishing all projects that had been introduced by the former administration, noting that it had also introduced new programmes building on previous experiences and had ensured adequate funding.

143. *The moderator* took note of the consensus that "business as usual" would not bring about the transformative change required to ensure full and productive employment and decent work.

144. Responding to the moderator's question on how to achieve sustainable growth and youth empowerment, *the Minister for the Promotion of Youth, Youth Employment and Civil Service of Côte d'Ivoire* highlighted that underemployment was a problem in Africa. He explained that while the unemployment rate in the region was low, the number of young people in the informal economy was approximately 93 per cent. The challenge was how to support the informal economy in transitioning to the formal economy. His Government had been examining the various bottlenecks that hindered growth in the informal sector, lowering taxes that are providing jobs, with a view to fostering job creation. His Government was also looking at how it could empower young people leaving school without qualifications. The solution was to ensure that training met the demands of the labour market. He stated that the education system should be reviewed, citing Switzerland and Germany as examples that his Government had examined. It was also crucial that the private sector play an active role in such reform. His Government had also introduced a reform initiative focusing on a complementary training internship programme, which provided young people with internship opportunities and work experience.

145. *The moderator* asked the Employer representative about the role of the private sector with regard to quality apprenticeships as a means of skills acquisition.

146. *The representative of the Federation of Ugandan Employers* responded by highlighting that employers played a major role in addressing youth employment by creating new job opportunities specifically for youth. Skills development and vocational training was critical but had to be modernized as the current curriculum did not reflect the fast changes in the labour market. Involvement of the private sector in skills development was essential for improving productivity and job quality.

147. *The moderator* asked the Worker representative how to ensure job quality and the role played by trade unions in that context.

148. *The President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions* highlighted that the statistics on youth employment should shock everyone into action – jobs were degrading, opportunities were vanishing, the middle class was disappearing, and informality and the working poor were increasing. While Africa was a very rich continent boasting huge natural resources, it had suffered from an economic model that catered for the few, and this was based on export of its natural resources that commanded lower prices than the finished products. To get out of this crisis, it was necessary to "reboot" the economy. To create decent jobs, innovation and research must be promoted. Youth had to be integrated in all structures of society and affirmative action introduced through quotas for youth.

149. Responding to the moderator's question, the *Director of Operations of the Tony Elumelu Foundation* said that effective policy and regulatory frameworks were necessary to ensure that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement delivered decent jobs for young Africans. While there was no shortage of ideas in Africa, governments needed to support young Africans with the right mechanisms for implementing these ideas effectively. It was necessary to continuously learn from previous experiences as Africa ventured into newer areas and increased its networks. A clear commitment was needed to the creation of decent jobs.

150. *The moderator* opened the floor for questions.

151. *A representative from the Ministry of Employment of Mali* asked what was needed to transition from subsistence self-employment towards entrepreneurship, given the large numbers of youth in informal employment.

152. *A representative from the Ministry of Employment of Egypt* asked which practical measures were needed to encourage the development of economic sectors which could boost employment opportunities for youth in Africa, such as the digital, care and green economies, with due gender equality.

153. *A representative from the Ministry of Employment of Cameroon* asked how organizations were promoting youth participation and voices, and how workers' and employers' organizations could ensure the presence of young workers in their ranks.

154. *A representative from an employers' organization of Burkina Faso* asked about how skill development initiatives could be brought to scale in the Sahel.

155. *A representative of a workers' organization of Malawi* commented on the lack of job creation, which led to a gap between jobseekers and opportunities. That often meant that graduates were unable to find jobs, or that they would end up in poor-quality jobs or become discouraged. He asked what could close that gap and create enough jobs for young women and men by 2030.

156. *A representative from an employers' organization of Lesotho* noted that it was clear that while there could not be "business as usual", she also questioned how to ensure that new investments would come in and how to increase the employment effects of new investments.

157. In response to all of the questions above, the panellists noted that the job creation potential of the digital sector, the creative sector, the care economy, the green economy and the ocean economy needed to be harnessed through government policies and programmes to support entrepreneurship development among youth. With the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the export potential of the continent would be enhanced by moving up the value chain instead of remaining a raw material exporter. To promote gender equality in the labour market, there was a need to recognize and value care work, which was predominantly carried out by young women, many of whom were not in education, employment or training. There was a need for policies that promoted formality along a

continuum in the African context through a combination of economic and social policies. The importance of policies for inclusive and structural change to create more jobs and to ensure protection, rights and dignity of young workers, was emphasized. Overall, there was a consensus about the critical importance of demand-side policies for job creation along with a need to integrate youth in all structures of society. Furthermore, it was essential to promote social dialogue that included youth in trade unions and employers' organizations and to implement affirmative action through quotas for youth.

## Third thematic plenary sitting: Technological pathways and productivity for a brighter future of work in Africa

**158.** *The Worker Vice-Chairperson* welcomed the moderator, Ms Nozipho Mbanjwa, a conversation strategist, and handed the chairing of the session over to her. The moderator introduced the panel, which was composed of H.E. Mr Ignatius Baffour Awuah, Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, Ghana; Ms Cisse Mariama Mohamed, Director of Social Affairs, African Union Commission; Ms Aissatou Ba-Okotie, Chief Business Development Coordinator in the Human Capital, Youth and Skills Development Department, African Development Bank; Mr Andrew Rugege, Regional Director for Africa, International Telecommunication Union; Ms Vida Nassari, Viax Products, United Republic of Tanzania; Mr Mothunye Mothiba, Pan African Productivity Association (PAPA), South Africa; and Mr Adams Sospeter Barasa, Central Organization of Trade Unions – Kenya (COTU-K). The Vice-Chairperson welcomed the panellists and handed over to the moderator.

**159.** This debate was articulated around a number of topics. The main ideas around each topic are summarized below.

### Revaluing and rebranding vocational training and skills development

**160.** The panel called for rethinking what the region is valuing. The stigma surrounding vocational education and training should be addressed, as people with technical and vocational education diplomas could easily find jobs, compared to general education degrees. The panel highlighted the need to rebrand and revalue technical and vocational education and skills development in order to attract more young people towards skills development.

### Reforming curricula and improving school infrastructure

**161.** The panel highlighted the need to reform the school curriculum to align it with the needs of the industry and make it "fit for purpose". There was a huge mismatch between qualifications acquired and the needs of the labour market. There was a strong need to revamp the curriculum in close partnership with businesses. New technologies should be introduced in teaching and education. Schools must develop the language skills of young people so that they may access opportunities in the international markets. There was also a strong need to invest in school infrastructure to serve the current demand.

### Promoting regional centres of excellence on skills and productivity

**162.** The panel recommended the establishment of regional centres of excellence on skills and productivity. These should serve to develop the right curricula in close partnership with the

private sector and businesses, and to encourage information exchanges at a regional level. These centres should also look at the growing sectors (i.e. the agricultural and food sector, information and communication technologies, etc.) and promote skills development. There should be a dynamic public–private dialogue on skills development. Africa had to embrace new technologies. Regional platforms should be developed for countries to learn from each other, share experiences and good practices on all labour market issues. The speaker highlighted the example of the African Development Bank's youth employment dashboard as a regional platform.

### *Developing a new skills and lifelong learning ecosystem*

163.  As a result of the technological innovation and disruption, almost 50 per cent of the present jobs could disappear and new ones emerge. To address this challenge, the panel highlighted the need to overhaul the education system and develop a new skills and lifelong learning ecosystem to prepare the work force of the future. Such a system should take into account the needs of the labour market and promote access to skills development for all. It was necessary for parents and teachers to guide young people in choosing the right career path based on market needs. Some of the key elements of this new system should include career guidance and counselling services, labour market information, skills needs identification, and skilling people with the ability to reskill and upskill based on future needs of the labour market. The system should also address the needs of all people. It was necessary to perform a comprehensive audit of existing skills, which should lead to identifying the gaps in skills and developing a clear plan to breach that gap. Technology could drive the skills. Schools and educational institutions needed to be provided with adequate infrastructure. All of the above should happen in a systematic way. The private sector could complement these efforts, but it was the governments who had an important role to play in facilitating skills development.

### *Increasing investments in infrastructure and skills development*

164.  The panellists and members of the audience called for investing in high quality physical and digital infrastructure to create jobs. They highlighted that investments should be made to provide access to infrastructure, including providing everyone with new and digital technologies, including for people living in rural areas. It was very necessary to improve investments in skills development to enable people to access decent work. The panel also called for a promotion of partnerships with the private sector in skills development to reduce the skills mismatch.

### *Embracing new technologies and encouraging innovation*

165.  The panellists highlighted the need to trust the African youth and encourage innovation. The panel called for the establishment of an innovation support mechanism so that African people had the opportunity to innovate. Otherwise, ideas worth millions of dollars were sold for a few thousand, developed in other regions and turned into millions of dollars. Africa needed to add value, as every ship leaving the continent left with jobs, prosperity and opportunities. Innovation had to be encouraged and funded systematically. People needed to be empowered through additional investments in research and development. The continent should not only use technology, but should instead transition into producing it. Governments needed to promote innovation centres.

### Promoting apprenticeships, internships and work experience

166. The panel highlighted the need to provide opportunities for young people to acquire experience through apprenticeships, internships and work based learning opportunities. This would enable them to access jobs, as employers wanted people with skills and experience. The skills and lifelong learning eco system referred to earlier should include apprenticeships, opportunities to gain work experience and internships. Qualifications frameworks needed to be developed.

167. Furthermore, the starting point when improving industrial competitiveness would be to coordinate skills development and productivity. Productivity and competitiveness at the local, sectoral, regional and national levels had to be institutionalized. All 55 countries in the region should join the productivity discussion and efforts. The region should benefit from sharing good practices and experiences on this topic. Productivity practitioners needed to be trained to assist governments and enterprises, and productivity champions needed to be encouraged. Collaborating with agencies such as the ILO would be very useful in this endeavour. Lastly, the link between productivity and remuneration needed to be strengthened.

### Adopting measures to leave no one behind

168. The panel highlighted the need to recognize and acknowledge the disadvantaged groups in each country, and to establish whether women and people in rural areas fit into that category. This would make it possible to develop proactive measures to promote access to skills development opportunities for all, thus preventing the gap from widening. Furthermore, specific policies and programmes targeting these disadvantaged groups needed to be developed.

### Investing in sectoral growth: Skills

169. The panellists highlighted the need to identify growing sectors in which each country had a comparative advantage. Based on that comparative advantage, countries should identify the skills needs to develop priority sectors. Those comparative advantages should also be the basis for the development of appropriate policies to benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other trade opportunities.

### Accounting for brain drain and migration

170. The panel also discussed the brain drain caused by two types of migration. On the one hand, there were people migrating abroad. On the other hand, there was a "digital migration" stemming from local people working for companies based abroad. The panel recommended the creation of policies, incentives and schemes for people to innovate and invest in their own countries, and to encourage the return of migrant workers. Such incentives would encourage highly talented and people with risk taking abilities to remain in their countries. Negotiations on movement of people within the continent needed to be sped up in order to benefit from the skills and talent available. The movement of skilled workers within the region had to be facilitated.

### Empowering women

171. The panellists discussed the need to dispel myths about new technologies. This was particularly true among women and rural populations, some of which were afraid of new

technologies. Social customs were also stopping access to new technologies. Social barriers needed to be challenged and access to new technologies provided to women and people in rural areas. The panel highlighted the particular need to address the subject within families and societies in order to empower women to use new technologies. It also highlighted the need to make it easier for rural populations to use technology in agriculture.

## *Promoting social dialogue in skills development*

172. The panel highlighted the need to develop skills through a process of social dialogue involving governments, employers' and workers' organizations. Attention should be paid to strengthening the capacity of these organizations to anticipate skills needs and design appropriate courses relevant to market demand. The issues of transitions and displacement of jobs should be handled through tripartite social dialogue.

## *Developing entrepreneurial skills*

173. The panel also recommended the development of entrepreneurial skills for people to establish their own enterprises. The ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) was a very successful programme implemented in some countries. Coverage of such programmes needed to be broadened and investment in young entrepreneurs should be encouraged.

## *Analysing the role of international organizations and development financial institutions*

174. The panel made observations and recommendations regarding the role of development financial institutions in skills development. It noted that usually governments borrow from these institutions to develop infrastructure. While it was important to build infrastructure to create jobs, it was equally important for countries to borrow with a view to invest more in people's capabilities and skills development. Funding from the ILO and other such agencies could play a very important catalytic role in facilitating these increased investments in people. It was necessary to prioritize investments in the 1.3 billion people in the continent in order to grant them access to decent work. Investments in skilling, reskilling and upskilling was vital for accessing decent work and enabling smooth transitions.

## Fourth thematic plenary sitting: Transforming Africa's informal and rural economy for decent work

175. *The Chairperson* opened the session, moderated by Ms Tatiana Mossot, and introduced the panel which was composed as follows: Mr Christian Ntsay, the Prime Minister of Madagascar; Ms Innocence Ntap N'Diaye, President of the High Council of Social Dialogue (HCSD) and Former Minister of Labour, Senegal; Ms Lorraine Sibanda, President of StreetNet, Zimbabwe; Mr Abdoul Wahab Barry, Country Director, West and Central Africa Division, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); Mr Alex Frimpong, Chief Executive Officer, Ghana Employers' Association (GEA); Mr Mody Guiro, President of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Secretary-General of the National Confederation of Workers, Senegal. The Chairperson invited the Prime Minister of Madagascar to deliver the keynote address.

176. *The Prime Minister of Madagascar* noted the social changes and transformations induced by technological innovations, demographic shifts, climate change and globalization. Africa had the highest level of informal employment with the majority of the population working in informality. One of the main challenges facing the population was how to find productive and quality jobs and reduce high poverty rates. He indicated that the demographic dividend

presented an opportunity. It needed to be translated into public policy aimed at structured and sustainable solutions that value and improve education, training, health systems, gender equality and natural disaster management.

177. Climate change threatened economic transformation, social progress and aggravated injustices in the world of work. It harmed agricultural yield, the population's quality of life, the organization of labour and social justice. Agricultural productivity was therefore a major issue. To increase productivity, it was necessary to invest in infrastructure and provide access to public services for young people and women in rural areas. Structural actions were needed to attract young people to the transforming rural economy.

178. He asked how, in the field, the ILO could influence more and better public policies, provide expertise and strengthen the capacity of the constituents, in the context of the changes shaping the world of work, especially in transforming the informal and rural economy. He reiterated the need for bold industrialization in Africa to promote youth employment and prevent further informalization. Research and innovation from multiple research centres and universities in Africa and elsewhere must be used to accelerate the transformation of our economies and societies. Delays in research and innovation are one of the root causes of informality in Africa.

179. To respond to the challenges of informality and the rural economy, the Prime Minister highlighted a number of measures that should be taken by governments in Africa. Firstly, there should be a commitment to adopt adequate monetary and financial policies. Political will should lead to a win-win partnership with the private sector, to combat fraud in the sectors affected by it. Secondly, within the concept of the informal economy, a distinction must be made between the subsistence, which presents huge decent work deficits, and the sectors where fraud and tax evasion prevails. Thirdly, African governments and actors in the private sector should prioritize the needs of the African people. Research and innovation was necessary to develop youth skills, while social security systems should undergo expansion and reform to achieve universal coverage. Fourthly, governments must prioritize the transition to formality and implement measurable goals to that effect. Lastly, investment in labour administration was needed in order to combat corruption at all levels and prevent informality.

180. To address inequality, he suggested investment in economic and sectoral diversification and the mechanization of agriculture. With the support of the private sector, governments should use sovereign funds to invest in industrialization in mining, agro-industry and the blue economy. He stressed that ILO tools and United Nations Regional Economic Commissions must be used to promote free trade across borders. At the same time, urban development in Africa must follow a model which effectively combines industry, agriculture and infrastructure and enables a coherent public policy.

181. *The moderator* indicated that the discussion would focus on the future of Africa – how could we feed and house the continent? How could we speed up the transformation of the informal economy? What had been achieved so far?

182. *The President of StreetNet* lamented the lack of political will to deal with the informal economy. The focus should shift towards the human realities, rather than statistics. All stakeholders should be involved and informal economy workers consulted in the development of strategies.

183. *The President of the HCSD* recalled the definition of the informal sector as provided in the resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector, adopted by the 15th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (January 1993). She indicated that in order to know where we are going, we need to know where we are. It was necessary to

organize the workers and raise awareness. She also stressed social dialogue as an important enabler for the formalization of the informal economy.

184. *The Chief Executive Officer of the GEA*, responding to a question on altering business processes to include workers in the informal economy, stated that entrepreneurs were the key players. However, there could be no entrepreneurs without workers and no workers without leaders. In the informal economy, many conferences had been convened but no serious commitment had followed. The business environment must change for the economy to grow and facilitate employment creation. Employers and workers must come together for such change to occur. He gave an example of the Union of Informal Workers Association, which was made up of 21 informal economy sectors. The informal sector could not be discussed without consulting the players, to whom policymakers must respond.

185. *The moderator* raised a question concerning the people who were affected by these challenges. What were their expectations and needs, and how could we provide them with decent work?

186. *The President of the African Regional Organization of the ITUC* responded by indicating that the majority of people affected by informality were illiterate women. There was a need to place the human being at the centre of policies and to implement rights-based policies and incentive measures for the formalization of the informal economy.

187. *The Country Director in the West and Central Africa Division of IFAD* said that despite the diversity in Africa, the rural economy was common to all countries, and that this was the sector in which the youth prevailed. In order to transition to formality, it was important to first transform the economy and improve productivity.

188. *The moderator* asked which commitments should be made by governments and how youth could have the guarantee of a brighter future.

189. *The Prime Minister of Madagascar* emphasized two points with reference to the definition of the informal economy. Firstly, he stated that the informal economy involved, on each end of the spectrum, survivors and fraudulent activities, each of which must be dealt with differently. There was therefore a need for a responsible government to fight such corruption. Secondly, the macroeconomic measures, including the monetary and financial resources, were often not linked to the solution. Solutions must be sustainable and adapted to the situation.

190. *The moderator* asked how corruption in the informal economy could be dealt with.

191. *The Secretary-General of the Ghana Employers' Association* indicated that companies must comply with the law, as business ethics and morals were very important. Unethical practices could compromise business and must be accordingly dealt with by the law.

192. *The moderator* highlighted the fact that the informal economy was mainly made up of women and youth. What measures could be implemented to help them and speed up their transition to the formal economy?

193. *The President of StreetNet* responded that informal workers were mainly women but also young men. It was women however, who had to carry the burden of care, which was unpaid, and faced the harsh realities of informal work. Social protection was highly necessary since there was no guarantee for pensions, medical care, funeral costs or maternity protection. In the absence of maternity benefits, women had to return to work immediately after giving birth. She appealed to governments to consider the human aspects of such situations.

**194.** *The moderator* posed a question concerning the extent to which we could propose concrete measures to ensure that no one is left behind.

**195.** *The President of the HCSD* advocated for strong measures to formalize the informal economy, including the implementation of follow-up and coordination mechanisms. In her country, such measures were being implemented, namely with regard to a law for the small and medium-sized enterprises. In order to contribute to the economy, women needed assistance, social protection and to know their rights. Policies must be inclusive or the actors will not accept the rules of the game. It was important to discuss collective bargaining for informal economy workers, as nothing should be imposed on them. With support from ILO, follow up would be organized.

**196.** *The moderator* further asked for perspectives on the rural economy, starting with agriculture.

**197.** *The Country Director in the West and Central Africa Division of IFAD* stated that agriculture must be made more attractive, as young people and women bore the brunt of poverty, and that productivity-related problems existed due to low incomes. Furthermore, women did not make decisions at the household level. They required access to quality inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer, and also to financing. In the absence of any guarantee, there would be no funding. In the value chain, the smallholders were the most vulnerable, including traders who came to buy. Education was the solution to improving organization.

**198.** *The Prime Minister of Madagascar* indicated that productivity was key when considering the types of policies required. Technology was also crucial, as rural infrastructure was not up to standard. Societal and cultural issues must be taken into account, such as land rights which determine access to land. He questioned why Africa was still dependent on imports. Governments must be bold and ambitious and have clear goals and objectives to make the rural sector competitive. As the service sector was more attractive than the rural economy, it was necessary to reverse those trends as part of the industrialization policy.

**199.** *The moderator* asked why the focus was not on boosting industrialization and productivity for workers who have no tools, or access to land and financing.

**200.** *The Chief Executive Officer of the GEA* pointed out a lack of policy coherence and continuity. He encouraged the formation of cooperatives because smallholder farmers would not be able to undertake the transformation required to become productive if they remained isolated. Providing education and raising awareness about what was needed to change their fortunes was very important. He asked what structures could be put in place to make them realize that change was needed. Infrastructure development should be prioritized. In that respect, his government had provided seeds to farmers, which had resulted in higher production. However, as there were no roads to transport the crops, post-harvest loss was high.

**201.** *The President of StreetNet* stressed that informal economy workers did not lack education, but rather, given the current African context, it was necessary to harness the innovation, skills and knowledge that workers had. However, the current physical environment was not conducive to that. Workers must be given a chance to share their experiences with governments, employers and workers, who could all learn from such an exchange.

**202.** *The moderator* reiterated that the current context was undergoing demographic, environmental and technological changes. She asked what could be done to ensure workers were not adversely affected by such change and to reassure them.

**203.** *The President of the African Regional Organisation of the* ITUC underlined the overlap between the rural and informal economy and the importance of agriculture. He also asked how to address inequalities between those who work and those who receive the services.

Awareness should be raised at the government level regarding the lack of investments in the rural economy. In the face of demographic challenges, climate change, and technological change, governments must take bold measures to support populations in rural areas, in particular with regard to social protection, maternal and child healthcare and education.

204. *The Prime Minister of Madagascar* highlighted that the African Union and the United Nations system could provide a bridge to find solutions, for example by promoting the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. There was a need for rural development policies, awareness-raising and continued discussions to implement such policies. Given that the high poverty had not been addressed in policies, the solution should be to promote industrialization based on innovation. Political will was needed and resources should be earmarked. Sovereign funds must be put to use and the economy must be further formalized.

205. *The moderator* asked whether there were means to transform Africa's economy.

206. *The Prime Minister of Madagascar* indicated that it was a question of political will and how resources were prioritized. The private sector also had a role to play in diversifying the economy in industries such as fishery and mining.

207. *The Country Director in the West and Central Africa Division of IFAD* said that technology was indeed crucial for economic transformation. It would enable increased productivity and bring the African economy closer to the market's needs. However, he highlighted that it was not possible to move forward with technology if there was no focus on education.

208. *The President of the HCSD* responded to a question raised by the moderator on how to involve young people and women in the transformation by highlighting that if informality was reduced, everyone would win. It was therefore important to address poverty, migration and new threats using tools and resources, such as the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). Dialogue was also crucial.

209. Responding to a question from the moderator, a point was raised that new forms of informality, such as platform workers had not been discussed. Those kinds of jobs had moved from the formal economy to the informal economy. Despite the contents of the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), governments continued to accept the informal economy, provided taxes were paid. However, there was no provision to ensure the rights of informal workers. The Prime Minister of Madagascar had emphasized credit but the banking sector had no specific products for the informal economy. Furthermore, the panellists did not refer to an economy based on solidarity or on value additions.

210. *A Worker representative from Côte d'Ivoire* stressed that banking reform was a must, given the imbalance between savings and credit. Financing mechanisms must be implemented, as banks in Africa did not finance young people's projects. Furthermore, land reform and development must be reviewed and urban planning improved.

211. *The Prime Minister of Madagascar* reiterated that monetary and financial policies should target informal economy workers, who had no collateral to get loans and needed funding mechanisms in partnership with the private sector such as banks and governments. The banking sector must be reformed to facilitate access to long-term funding, given that commercial banks in Africa did not fund projects for young people in Africa. Secondly, Africa should re-examine land development policy, which was currently done in a haphazard manner. New cities should be created with better urban planning.

212. *The President of the HCSD* responded that education was an important element which should be at the core of policies. As there was a lack of family planning, decision makers faced

demographic challenges and consequently, education challenges. The education sector should be considered as a priority.

213. A further question was brought up regarding the extent to which Africa had developed appropriate technology to support the rural economy. What policies could be implemented to bring about attitudinal change towards the informal economy?

214. *The President of StreetNet* indicated that a change in attitude was needed. Several ILO Conventions and Recommendations were in place, such as the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). To address the issues of harassment in the informal economy, African governments supported the inclusion of a section in Convention No. 190 that considers the role played by public authorities. Although there were many policies in place, there was a lack of will and strength to implement them. She therefore appealed to governments to ratify Convention No. 190.

215. *The Executive Officer of the GEA* stated that it was not possible to achieve one's goals without the right attitude, irrespective of one's skills. Attitude was critical for the success of social dialogue. The significant technology available could be copied and used wisely to advance the economy, but should not be copied blindly.

216. A final question was raised concerning what should be done to maintain the already existing digitalization in a number of areas including the agricultural sector.

217. *The Country Director in the West and Central Africa Division of IFAD* agreed that new and digital technologies should be taken advantage of. Such tools could be used to solve various problems, such as water shortage in the agricultural sector. Farmers could learn skills without attending a class. It was necessary however to invest in education to ensure people could read and write. This was the main challenge in Africa.

## Presentation of the report of the Credentials Committee

218. *The Chairperson* of the Credentials Committee said that the Committee had not received any objections, complaints or communications. Almost 350 delegates and advisers from 49 member States attending as full members had been accredited, including 50 Ministers and Vice-Ministers. The speaker pointed out, however, that 24 of the 54 member States invited had not in fact attended the Meeting with a tripartite delegation, and that 20 per cent of the region's full members had not attended at all. The speaker stressed that, in view of the fundamental nature of tripartism, the situation should be reviewed and the Members concerned should provide an explanation of their own accord. While the Committee had noted a slight increase in the representation of women in delegations, it was still far removed from the goal of gender parity in delegation appointments set by the United Nations and the ILO.

219. ***The Meeting took note of the report of the Credentials Committee.***

## Adoption of the conclusions of the 14th African Regional Meeting

220. *The Chairperson* commended the work of the Drafting Committee on the conclusions of the Meeting. He welcomed the conclusions they had drafted, entitled, the *Abidjan Declaration Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the future of work in Africa*. He handed the floor to the Chairperson of the Drafting Committee, so that he could present the report.

221. *The Chairperson of the Drafting Committee, a Government delegate from Senegal,* thanked the Office for their support on behalf of the Drafting Committee. The Committee had taken the time necessary to reach a historic consensus, given that the conclusions reached clearly identified the priorities for the African region and provided guidelines for implementation. He extended his gratitude to the social partners and the Government representatives for their work.

222. *A representative of the Employers' group* expressed her gratitude to the rest of the members of the Drafting Committee. Her group was satisfied with the conclusions and agreed with them. The Employers' group commended the report to the 14th African Regional Meeting.

223. *A representative of the Workers' group* appreciated the Drafting Committee members' positive contributions to the Meeting conclusion. His group commended the conclusions to the 14th African Regional Meeting.

224. ***The Meeting unanimously adopted the Abidjan Declaration, Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the future of work in Africa.***

# Closing ceremony

225. *The Chairperson* welcomed the fruitful exchanges on topical issues such as the effective implementation of labour standards, the stimulation of social dialogue, achieving gender equality and improving young people's access to decent jobs. Africa was facing numerous challenges and at a time when the ILO was entering its second century, ways must be found to address them. The first steps to be taken included increasing the resources allocated to ministries responsible for labour, employment and social protection issues to enable them to develop and deliver effective policies. However, it was also necessary to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination, in particular with other technical or finance ministries. Essential guidance had been formulated during the Regional Meeting to make the human-centred approach advocated in the Centenary Declaration a reality; to implement the Decent Work Agenda; and to meet people's expectations. The guidance related in particular to the training of young persons as a tool to enable them to gain access to productive and decent employment, and to the effective application of labour standards. Efforts must continue to be made at the national level, taking into account the circumstances and specific features of each country, and at the regional level, drawing upon existing instruments. The speaker firmly believed that the Abidjan Declaration would provide useful direction to help the African constituents to meet the objectives agreed and noted that the support of the Office would be necessary in that regard.

226. *The Government Vice-Chairperson* affirmed that the Regional Meeting had been enriching. The discussions highlighted the region's key priorities such as the complexities of labour issues and the importance of sustainable development. With many valuable interventions from the three groups, tripartism in action had been demonstrated. The Abidjan Declaration would guide action for the next four years at the continental, subregional and national levels. He welcomed the fact that the Centenary Declaration had to be customized to enable the region to address priority issues. He looked forward to the implementation plan which would be elaborated by the Office, and to its eventual execution. He thanked the host Government and the Chairperson for their exceptional hospitality, as well as the Director-General, the Regional Director, and the Office for organizing such a successful meeting.

227. *The Employer Vice-Chairperson* thanked the Chairperson and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for their hospitality, and congratulated his fellow Vice-Chairpersons. The Regional Meeting had taken place at a symbolic moment, during the ILO Centenary year which had seen the adoption of the Declaration for the Future of Work. He reiterated the relevant

themes which had been discussed, as well as the various challenges that Africa faced. He recalled the priorities mentioned by the Director-General, to which he added the urgent need for development strategies that optimized Africa's physical and human potential, with a view to ensuring inclusive growth and generating decent work for all. To provide a road map for development, Africa could rely on its own instruments, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as well as international instruments, including those established by the ILO. In addition to these instruments however, there must be strong political will and a human-centred approach. The Employers praised the inclusion of several points in the Abidjan Declaration, concerning the private sector in Africa. Those included promoting sustainable businesses, improving productivity growth, implementing skills development programmes, and promoting measures which removed bureaucratic and political barriers to economic formalization and improved competiveness and sustainability in the formal economy.

228.  *The Worker Vice-Chairperson* expressed appreciation for the commitment and enriching contributions from the social partners and delegates from across the region, which had guided the drafting of the Abidjan Declaration. He also thanked the governments that had provided a complete tripartite delegation and called for governments that had not met that requirement to take the necessary steps in that regard, in the interests of upholding the structure and tradition of tripartism. Furthermore, he thanked the Director-General, the Office and the Regional Director for providing technical and institutional support. The Abidjan Declaration had recognized the decisions made four years ago at the 13th African Regional Meeting in Addis Ababa. Over the next four years, collective, pragmatic and genuine actions would be necessary to achieve the goals set out in the Abidjan Declaration, to which the Workers' group expressed full commitment. Given the current demands in the changing world of work, it was necessary to review and recalibrate our work, in particular by including the concerns and needs of women, youth, informal workers and local communities and economies in the framework.

229.  The Workers' group was committed to advancing the MNE Declaration with a view to implementing the Decent Work Agenda and African Union Agenda 2063. That implementation would also involve ensuring the delivery of public services in a sustainable and inclusive manner. He expressed motivation to pursue transformation in Africa by seizing the opportunities to embrace integration and diversity, driving value addition to mineral and material wealth, and transforming the rural agricultural sector to ensure food production, security and sovereignty. Echoing the words of the Director-General, constituents should recall the need to seek a future of work with social justice, to guarantee peace and prosperity in Africa and the world. Furthermore, he thanked the Minister of Labour and Employment of Nigeria for citing contradictory policies and economic strategies, which prevented development and diverted resources from earmarked projects. Lastly, he thanked the host Government for their warm hospitality throughout the successful Meeting.

230.  *The Chairperson* congratulated and thanked all participants, organizers and the host Government, whose availability, hard work and experience had made the Meeting a success. There had been fruitful discussions on current issues in the world of work for Africa, including the application of effective labour standards, the promotion of social dialogue, gender equality, access to decent employment for youth, climate and technological change, and productivity improvement. The discussions had also highlighted the need to boost efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and transitioning from the informal to the formal economy. In order for Africa to surmount the challenges it faced, there was a need for clear guidelines, greater resources for governments, strong and assertive political will, and coordination between government ministries. In order to ensure a human-centred approach, as envisioned in the Centenary Declaration, essential guidelines had been established. Future action should focus on increased training for youth and the effective application of labour standards. National efforts to achieving those objectives should continue, taking into account the realities and specificities at the regional and continental

levels, and using the instruments that have been adopted, such as the Abidjan Declaration. The region would also rely on the support of the ILO in that regard.

231. *The Director-General of the ILO* echoed earlier comments that the Meeting marked the culmination of the ILO's Centenary year, during which the visibility and influence of the ILO and the engagement with tripartite constituents had been significantly raised. However, he expressed concern over the inadequate representation of women. Despite that reservation, the strong participation of delegates from across various member States and key regional institutions was conclusive evidence of the strength of the ILO's partnerships and the importance of its role in Africa. He recognized that with such a role came significant responsibilities to meet the expectations of the region in the coming years. In that regard, the Abidjan Declaration would provide a road map to guide such efforts. The Declaration comprised two essential features – the first was its strong link to the human-centred agenda of the future of work as set out in the Centenary Declaration, with an insistence on the need to invest in capacities, institutions, inclusive and sustainable development and growth, full and productive freely chosen employment and decent work for all. Secondly, it identified the key priorities for Africa, within the framework of the human-centred agenda. He acknowledged that the Meeting had fulfilled its fundamental purpose, to translate the Centenary Future of Work Initiative and Declaration into the realities in Africa, and to provide the necessary guidance for its operationalization. He therefore congratulated all participants for the satisfactory outcome of the Meeting.

## Appendix I

## Abidjan Declaration

## Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the Future of work in Africa

## Realizing the potential for a future of work with social justice

Government, Employers' and Workers' delegates from 49 African countries, having met at the 14th ILO African Regional Meeting from 3 to 6 December 2019 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in the ILO's Centenary year 2019, which also marked the 60th year of the Organization's presence in the continent, with the aim of forging a regional framework to unleash Africa's potential for inclusive growth and shaping a future of work with social justice;

*Recalling* the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019, and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019, which provides a road map for a regional agenda;

*Recognizing* that transformative processes need to be accelerated, for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Free Trade Area;

*Acknowledging* that improvements have been made in economic growth, reduction of poverty, average real wages, and average levels of education, and that with its largely young and energetic population of 1.3 billion, and its abundance of natural resources, Africa's potential for further growth is promising;

*Acknowledging*, however, that serious concerns remain with rising inequalities, unemployment, underemployment, informality, young people that are not in education, employment or training, child and forced labour, human trafficking, governance gaps, gender gaps, working poverty, low social protection coverage, and unsustainable rural–urban migration;

*Acknowledging* that climate change poses a major threat to sustainable development today and in the future;

*Recognizing* that addressing the development challenges requires structural transformation through value addition across the broad sectors of agriculture, manufacturing and services, domestic resource mobilization, investment in the care economy and improving productivity;

*Reaffirming* that ILO governance should be democratized as a matter of priority by ensuring a fair representation of all regions and establishing the principle of equality among member States;

Adopt this 6th day of December of the year two thousand and nineteen this Declaration which shall be known as the Abidjan Declaration.

# Shaping an African Decent Work Agenda: Priorities

1. Building on the human-centered approach to the future of work, the main priorities for the Africa region will be built around the Centenary Declaration. We thus commit to:

   (a) Making decent work a reality for Africa's youth, developing skills, technological pathways and productivity for a brighter future in Africa, transforming Africa's informal and rural economy for decent work, and respecting international labour standards, promoting social dialogue and ensuring gender equality.

   (b) Strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work through:

      (i) investing in human capital by strengthening education, skilling, reskilling, upskilling, and lifelong learning to leverage technology and the new types of jobs it helps create;

      (ii) tackling gender inequality and discrimination;

      (iii) progressively extending sustainable social protection coverage;

      (iv) supporting the role of the private sector as a principal source of economic growth and job creation by promoting an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, in order to generate decent work, productive employment and improved living standards for all;

      (v) supporting the role of the public sector as a significant employer and provider of quality public services;

      (vi) targeted interventions in countries in situations of fragility;

      (vii) creating decent work and productive employment for all, with particular emphasis on youth, women, persons with disabilities and other groups vulnerable to discrimination;

      (viii) promoting entrepreneurship;

      (ix) ensuring freedom to innovate and experiment, as well as voice representation and rights for youth;

      (x) striving for an enabling environment for, and promoting where appropriate, cross boarder social dialogue to foster decent work, including for vulnerable workers in global supply chains; and

      (xi) continuing to promote the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy with strong emphasis on supporting the tripartite constituents.

   (c) Strengthening the efficiency of the institutions of work to ensure adequate protection of all workers through:

      (i) strengthening institutions of social dialogue, tripartism, productivity improvement and labour administration;

(ii) reaffirming the continued relevance of the employment relationship as a means of providing certainty and legal protection to workers;

(iii) ensuring effective and comprehensive action to achieve transition to formality in conformity with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204);

(iv) strengthening and modernizing labour laws, regulations and processes, drawing on international labour standards and respecting, promoting and realizing fundamental principles and rights at work;

(v) promoting fair and effective labour migration governance; and

(vi) strengthening the capacity of the social partners to engage in social dialogue at all levels.

(d) Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development and growth, full and productive freely chosen employment and decent work for all, through:

(i) facilitating the promotion of structural transformation with emphasis on agriculture and rural economies and food security;

(ii) enhancing productivity;

(iii) improving working conditions, in particular occupational safety and health;

(iv) improving the environment for sustainable enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises;

(v) promoting cooperatives and social and solidarity economy; and

(vi) promoting growth towards a green economy and just transition.

(e) Strengthening synergies between the ILO and institutions in Africa, namely the African Union Commission, regional economic communities, and the three labour administration training centres (African Regional Labour Administration Centre, *Centre régional africain d'administration du travail*, and Arab Centre for Labour Administration) as these play a supportive role in the implementation of the African Decent Work Agenda priority areas.

## Time for action

2. In the period leading up to the 15th African Regional Meeting, we request the Office to provide constituents with enhanced support to achieve the above-mentioned priorities by developing an implementation plan that will be presented to the 338th Session of the Governing Body (March 2020). The implementation plan will contain the following:

(a) specific and concrete actions for creating an enabling environment for sustainable business;

(b) measures to enhance productivity growth;

(c) comprehensive policy guidance and technical support for skills development;

(d) comprehensive measures for removing policy and regulatory barriers to formalization, in line with Recommendation No. 204, and enhancement of competitiveness and sustainability of formal sector enterprises;

(e) comprehensive measures for progressive extension of social protection coverage;

(f) measures to address gender inequality and discrimination;

(g) comprehensive measures for a just transition;

(h) capacity-building of social partners; and

(i) decent work and reduction of inequalities.

**3.** The implementation plan will be presented to a special meeting of the African Tripartite Group at the beginning of the 338th Session of the ILO Governing Body (March 2020).

**4.** The adopted plan will be part of the document to be presented to the ILO Governing Body as per requirement.

**5.** The mid-term review is to take place in 2021 on the margins of the 4th Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment to be held in Eswatini.

**6.** The Office will prepare a report on the implementation of the plan for review by the 15th African Regional Meeting.

## Appendix II

# Report of the Credentials Committee

1.  The Credentials Committee, which was appointed by the Meeting at its first sitting, met on 3, 4 and 5 December 2019 to examine, in accordance with article 9 of the ILO's *Rules for Regional Meetings*, the credentials of the delegates and their advisers at the Meeting, as well as any objections to the credentials and any complaints concerning the non-payment of travel and subsistence expenses of delegations, and other communications. The Committee was composed as follows:

    *Chairperson:*    Mr Fassoun Coulibaly (Government delegate, Mali)

    *Members:*    Mr Khalil Ghariani (Employers' delegate, Tunisia)

    Ms Amal El Amri (substitute Workers' delegate, Morocco)

2.  Credentials in respect of the members of the delegations had been submitted in the form of instruments, primarily using the recommended ILO form, or in the form of letters, transmitted through the online accreditation system set up by the Office for that purpose or as scanned documents sent by email. The broad use of electronic means for the transmission of credentials greatly facilitated the processing of the relevant information.

3.  The Committee drew the attention of the governments to the importance of respecting article 1, paragraph 7, of the abovementioned *Rules*, according to which credentials must be deposited at least 21 days before the date fixed for the opening of the Meeting (in other words, by 12 November 2019). The Committee noted with regret that the credentials of only 24 of the 49 Members that were accredited at the Meeting as full members had been received within that time limit, 14 fewer than in 2015. Furthermore, two Members (Gambia and Libya) had submitted their initial credentials after the opening of the Meeting, which meant that those nominations had not been included on the *Provisional List* of delegations made available online by the Office on 2 December 2019. As that list provided advance information that served as the basis for possible objections to the credentials of delegates or their advisers, the accreditation of delegations after the opening of the Meeting – and therefore after the expiry of the time limit for the submission of such objections – was a cause of concern for the Committee.

## Composition of the Meeting

4.  At the time of the adoption of this report, and as reflected in the table in Annex A, out of the 54 full members invited to attend the Meeting, 49 had sent credentials in due form. The Meeting was composed of 94 Government delegates, 48 Employers' delegates and 47 Workers' delegates, amounting in total to 189 delegates. In addition, the Meeting comprised 81 Government advisers, 30 Employers' advisers and 51 Workers' advisers, amounting in total to 162 advisers. Persons appointed as both substitute delegates and advisers were included among the advisers. The total number of accredited delegates and advisers thus amounted to 351. The Committee noted that, although that represented a decrease compared to the 13th African Regional Meeting, the level of participation remained high.

5.  Regarding the number of registered delegates and advisers, there were 73 Government delegates, 31 Employers' delegates and 31 Workers' delegates, amounting to a total of 135 delegates. The total number of advisers was 137, of whom 69 were Government

advisers, 20 were Employers' advisers and 48 were Workers' advisers. Annex B to this report contains more detailed information on the number of delegates and advisers registered to the Meeting, which amounted to a total of 272.

6. The Committee observed that the delegation of one member State (Libya) accredited to the Meeting comprised only Government delegates. Further, the delegation of one member State (Guinea) included one Employers' delegate but no Workers' delegate. The Committee noted that no satisfactory explanation had been provided by the two governments concerned. Moreover, the Committee wished to emphasize that, under article 1(4) of the *Rules for Regional Meetings,* the acceptance by a member State of an invitation to be represented at a regional meeting implied the obligation to appoint a full delegation so as to ensure a balanced representation of employers and workers at the meeting. The failure of governments to send full tripartite delegations to regional meetings was a matter of serious concern. As the Credentials Committee of the 108th (Centenary) Session of the International Labour Conference had stated, the continued occurrence of incomplete delegations, which negated the most basic principle of ILO tripartite governance, warranted perseverance in the search for possible solutions. The present Committee also wished for the matter to remain under review so that it could continue to be considered within the Organization.

7. The Committee observed that a number of Members, despite having accredited full tripartite delegations, attended the meeting with neither Employers' nor Workers' delegates (Angola, Eritrea, Gambia, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sudan), without one of the two (Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Namibia), or did not attend at all (Comoros, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia). The Committee was of the view that, owing to the scale of the phenomenon at the present meeting, an analysis of the causes was warranted. The Committee considered that Members in such circumstances should spontaneously provide an explanation.

8. Five member States of the region were not accredited (Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sao Tomé and Principe), compared with six in 2015. The Committee wished to emphasize that failure to respond to the Director-General's invitation to attend a regional meeting prevented employers and workers of the member States concerned from fully engaging in the work of the Organization and drawing benefit from its meetings. The Committee also recalled, in that respect, the resolution concerning the strengthening of tripartism in the overall activities of the ILO, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 56th Session (1971), according to which sending tripartite delegations to the Conference and regional meetings was not only a right of member States but also an obligation laid upon them. The Committee therefore considered that member States, particularly those which had repeatedly not participated in regional meetings or the International Labour Conference (Guinea-Bissau had not attended the Centenary session), should be requested to provide full explanations to the Director-General's inquiries under the 1971 resolution, and make every effort to ensure participation in the future.

9. The Committee recalled that the Governing Body had last examined the matter of incomplete delegations and unrepresented Members at its 331st Session (October 2017) and had urged member States to comply with their constitutional obligations to accredit full tripartite delegations to sessions of the International Labour Conference and regional meetings. Furthermore, it had requested the Director-General to continue to monitor the situation of member States which failed to accredit a tripartite delegation to sessions of the International Labour Conference and regional meetings. [1]

10. The Committee noted that, pursuant to article 6, paragraph 1 of the abovementioned *Rules*, "Members shall make every effort to promote the equal representation of women and men

---

[1] GB.331/LILS/1, para. 15, and GB.331/PV, para. 705.

in their delegations". In that regard, the Committee noted the presence of 50 women among the 189 accredited delegates, and of 45 women among the 162 accredited advisers. Women therefore represented 27.1 per cent of the total number of delegates and advisers. Despite an increase compared to the 13th African Regional Meeting in 2015 (23.5 per cent), the Committee deeply regretted that the percentage remained desperately low. The Committee wished to recall that since 1990 it had been the aim of the United Nations to increase the proportion of women in decision-making and policymaking bodies to at least 30 per cent and that at its 332nd Session (March 2018), the Governing Body had urged all groups to aspire to achieve gender parity among their accredited delegates, advisers and observers to the International Labour Conference and regional meetings. In the light of the available statistics, the Committee was forced to note that the aim was still far from being achieved. The effort required was not the same for the three groups, as while 31.6 per cent of the Government group were women, the figure was 26.9 per cent for the Employers' group and only 20.2 per cent for the Workers' group. The Committee deeply regretted that in seven delegations (Congo, Eritrea, Eswatini, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone) there were no women delegates or advisors, which was a lower rate than at the previous African Regional Meeting, where there were four such delegations. The Committee called on the constituents to strive to meet the target of gender parity in delegations to regional meetings.

**11.** A total of 50 ministers or vice-ministers of member States of the region (compared to 40 in 2015) were accredited to the Meeting. The Committee expressed satisfaction at that high level of participation and noted that 13 of the ministers and vice-ministers were women (as compared to six out of 40 in 2015).

## Observer

**12.** One member State (France) attended the Meeting as an observer invited by the Governing Body, in accordance with article 1, paragraph 3, of the *Rules for Regional Meetings*. In that regard, the Committee noted that the distinction between full member and Member from another region invited to attend as an observer, which was introduced for the first time in the Rules adopted in 2018, was the culmination of a review process begun at the previous African Regional Meeting in 2015. It was part of a broader desire by the member States of the region to modernize the governance of the Organization.

## Representatives of official international organizations

**13.** Of the official international organizations – universal or regional – invited to attend the Meeting, in accordance with the relevant agreements or decisions of the Governing Body, the following were represented:

–    United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

–    United Nations Population Fund

–    UN Women

–    Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

–    World Health Organization

–    International Telecommunication Union

–    International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions

–    African Union

- African Development Bank

- African Regional Centre for Labour Administration

- Southern African Development Community

- Economic Community of Western African States

- West African Economic and Monetary Union

- Inter-African Conference on Social Security

- Arab Centre for Labour Administration and Employment

- European Union

## Representatives of international non-governmental organizations

**14.** The international non-governmental organizations that were invited to participate at the Meeting, in conformity with article 1, paragraph 12, of the *Rules*, and were represented, were:

- International Trade Union Confederation

- World Federation of Trade Unions

- International Organisation of Employers

- Organization of African Trade Union Unity

- Federation of West African Employers' Associations

- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

- Panafrican Institute for Development

**15.** The Committee noted with interest the important presence of official international organizations, both universal and regional.

## Objections, complaints and communications

**16.** The Committee did not receive any objection, complaint or communication.

\* \* \*

**17.** The Committee adopts this report unanimously. It recommends that the Meeting request the Office to annex it to the report of the Meeting and to bring it to the attention of the Governing Body, in conformity with article 9, paragraph 4, of the *Rules for Regional Meetings*.

Abidjan, 5 December 2019
*(Signed)* Mr Fassoun Coulibaly
Mr Khalil Ghariani
Ms Amal El Amri

## Annex A

### Accredited delegates and advisers
(Updated as of 11 a.m. on 05.12.2019)

| | Government Delegates | Employers' Delegates | Workers' Delegates | Government Advisers | Employers' Advisers | Workers' Advisers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Algeria | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | - |
| Angola | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - |
| Benin | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Botswana | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Burkina Faso | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | - | - |
| Burundi | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Cameroon | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Cabo Verde | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Central African Republic | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Chad | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 2 |
| Comoros | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Congo | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 2 | 1 | 1 | 19 | 12 | 14 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | - | 4 |
| Djibouti | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Egypt | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | - |
| Equatorial Guinea | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Eritrea | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Eswatini | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Ethiopia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - |
| Gabon | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Gambia | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Ghana | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Guinea | 2 | 1 | - | - | 2 | - |
| Guinea-Bissau | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Kenya | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | - | 1 |
| Lesotho | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Liberia | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Libya | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Madagascar | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Malawi | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Mali | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Mauritania | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Mauritius | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Morocco | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Mozambique | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Namibia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - |
| Niger | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Nigeria | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Rwanda | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Sao Tome and Principe | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Senegal | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Seychelles | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Sierra Leone | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Somalia | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| South Africa | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | - |
| South Sudan | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Sudan | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | 3 |
| United Republic of Tanzania | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Togo | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 6 |
| Tunisia | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Uganda | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | - |
| Zambia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Zimbabwe | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | 1 |
| **Total** | **94** | **48** | **47** | **81** | **30** | **51** |

## Annex B

### Registered delegates and advisers
(Updated as of 11 a.m. on 05.12.2019)

| | Government Delegates | Employers' Delegates | Workers' Delegates | Government Advisers | Employers' Advisers | Workers' Advisers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Algeria | 2 | 1 | - | - | 1 | - |
| Angola | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Benin | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Botswana | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Burkina Faso | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | - | - |
| Burundi | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Cameroon | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Cabo Verde | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Central African Republic | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Chad | 1 | - | 1 | 2 | - | 2 |
| Comoros | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Congo | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 2 | 1 | 1 | 19 | 8 | 14 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | - | 4 |
| Djibouti | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Egypt | 2 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - |
| Equatorial Guinea | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Eritrea | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Eswatini | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Ethiopia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Gabon | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gambia | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Ghana | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Guinea | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| Guinea-Bissau | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Kenya | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | - | 1 |
| Lesotho | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Liberia | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Libya | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Madagascar | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Malawi | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Mali | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Mauritania | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| Mauritius | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Morocco | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Mozambique | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Namibia | 2 | - | 1 | 2 | - | - |
| Niger | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Nigeria | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Rwanda | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Sao Tome and Principe | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Senegal | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Seychelles | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Sierra Leone | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Somalia | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| South Africa | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - |
| South Sudan | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Sudan | 2 | - | - | 3 | - | 2 |
| United Republic of Tanzania | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Togo | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 5 |
| Tunisia | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Uganda | - | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| Zambia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Zimbabwe | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 1 |
| **Total** | **73** | **31** | **31** | **69** | **20** | **48** |