

Plenary sitting

High-level section: Visits by Heads of State and Government and other distinguished guests on the occasion of the Centenary of the International Labour Organization

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Tuesday 11 June 2019, 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr Elmiger

High-level section

The President

(Original French)

I hereby open the third plenary sitting of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference.

In order to mark the Centenary of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Conference will be addressed by Heads of State and Government and other distinguished guests, who will gather to reaffirm their commitment to the principle of social justice upon which the ILO was founded 100 years ago and to share with the Conference their own experiences and their vision for the future of work. To begin this high-level section, we have the honour and privilege today to receive the visits of six of these guests. Without further ado, I give the floor to the first of them, Her Excellency Ms Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia

Statement by Her Excellency

Ms Salome Zourabichvili,

President of Georgia

Ms Zourabichvili

President of Georgia

One hundred years ago, in the midst of chaos, but at the dawn of rapid social and technological change, the world witnessed the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This institution was to help the world bounce back from the destruction and despair inflicted by war, and to make human dignity and social justice the driving force for reconciliation and development. And it did.

In 1918, just over 100 years ago, Georgia gained its independence. As early as 1920, the Parliament of the young Democratic Republic of Georgia, among the first package of legislation, adopted its law on labour contracts, which defined all the fundamental rules for employment, protecting workers' rights, allowing for collective agreements, labour courts and labour inspection. In fact, the 1921 Constitution was one of the oldest constitutions to ensure labour rights comprehensively. It established the right of assembly and the right to strike, as well as the obligation for the State to create employment agencies and unemployment support. Hence, it is no surprise that Georgia applied to join the ILO that same year.

I cannot resist reading here the letter that was sent by the Georgian Government at that time:

(The speaker continues in French.)

“On 17 December 1920, the Assembly of Geneva decided to reserve for the Government of Georgia the right to participate on the same level as other government members of the League of Nations in the technical organizations of the League. Given the particular situation occupied by the International Labour Office, of which you are the

President, I have the honour, on behalf of the Georgian Government, to hereby request from your Excellency, the urgent admission of Georgia as one of the States represented in that Office”, signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Mr Gegechkori.

(The speaker continues in English.)

Tragically, the well-known historic event – Soviet occupation – postponed our plans for 70 years, and replaced labour rights with labour camps. Yet, history gave us a second chance, and in 1993, right after regaining independence in 1991, Georgia applied and joined the International Labour Organization.

Over the past 100 years, the ILO has changed the rules of the game for the labour market, and the world is seeing the results of the universal protection of workers’ rights and improved social justice through social dialogue. The guiding principles we all adhere to require each of us to ensure that every person has the possibility to enjoy humane working conditions based on the principles of freedom and dignity, economic security, and equal opportunities.

These principles are still, in most countries, goals to attain rather than objectives reached. We are all aware that economic growth and prosperity stand on the efforts, creativity and dedication of our citizens, as well as on inclusiveness and equality. We all know how much effort the ILO and each Member country has put into promoting proper working environments and dignified conditions for the labour force. Nonetheless, we still have a long way to go. Together we agree on the rules, adopt Conventions. These principles are then translated into national legislation and we strive to implement them. That is the hardest part. Georgia is no exception.

As I am the first President of Georgia to address this Conference, I will use this opportunity to boast a little about our achievements, but also to recognize our challenges for the future. Since joining the ILO, we have ratified 18 Conventions, including all the fundamental ones. In 2018, Georgia ratified the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). The new Constitution of Georgia, adopted last year, guarantees the economic and labour rights of our citizens. Article 26 guarantees the freedom to choose work, occupational safety and other labour rights, the right to create and join trade unions, the right to strike and the right of entrepreneurship. The Labour Code is continuously being improved to harmonize it with the principles of the ILO and European Union (EU) regulations and best practices.

Among our most recent achievements is the adoption of the new law on occupational safety. It establishes high standards of protection, effective sanctions, enhances a mandate of labour inspection, and aims to change the working culture. The law reflects the ILO recommendations and the corresponding EU directives. The Government is now working on enhancing labour inspection in order to ensure the proper implementation of standards. The Parliament and the Government of Georgia are working on further amendments to the Labour Code, on the laws of trade unions, labour mediation and a minimum wage. The law on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, adopted in 2014, was also an important step towards guaranteeing the rights of our citizens to equal treatment, including in labour relations. Finally, we are proud that Georgia, among the few that have moved in that direction, has taken an important step towards ensuring equality in labour and pre-contractual relations, employment and occupation, by, a month ago, defining and prohibiting sexual harassment. Equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women are principles that require constant attention. I, as the first female President of Georgia, consider those to be my special responsibility. The legislation needs refining, including with regard to the wage gap, collective redundancies, the fixed duration of temporary employment relationships, and certain aspects of the organization of working time.

Tripartite cooperation in Georgia is in the process of development. The Tripartite Social Partnership Commission was set up in 2013. The Government is taking steps to increase the role of the new Commission in the process of developing and implementing new initiatives, including at the regional level. The achievement of fast, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, based on the creation of new jobs and the promotion and enhancement of full and productive employment opportunities, has been high on the agenda, and one of the main priorities of Georgia's economic policy, as declared in its Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2020.

Despite these achievements, despite progress in legislation, and despite a clear political will on the part of the authorities, we still face challenges: a high unemployment rate, a lack of skilled workers, work safety – which is yet to be achieved – and inclusiveness, which remains a goal. Working with the ILO, sharing experience and applying new standards, is the way to make a difference. One of the answers is to focus our attention on vocational education and training, to ensure that all jobseekers in the professions in demand have improved qualifications. The Georgian Government has decided to make education, vocational education and training in particular, its top budget priority for the coming years.

Circular migration is another of our top priorities, as an instrument to tackle illegal migration and promote temporary legal employment abroad. Circular migration benefits migrants in both the country of origin and the country of destination. Georgia has used it as a mechanism to transform and reduce irregular migration, and thus to protect the rights of labour migrants, as well as promoting skills enhancement and human capacity development. In recent years, the Georgian Government has been actively working on the development of bilateral agreements in this field. In December 2018, such an agreement was signed with France. Circular migration pilot schemes have been successfully tested with Poland, and a number of countries including Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary and Portugal have already expressed their readiness to cooperate in that regard. We will continue to identify opportunities for cooperation in the field of temporary legal employment with all our partner countries.

None of this can or will be achieved without the continuous technical assistance and financial support of the International Labour Organization, the European Union and our bilateral partners, through development cooperation projects. Georgia well understands that compliance with the ILO principles and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will bring our country closer to EU standards, and thus facilitate our prospect for integration. Moreover, fully implementing ILO practices in Georgia will bring a European standard of labour and social protection to our population, thereby reducing the drive towards migration and bringing Europe closer to us. Our goals are common goals.

Our achievements, our progress, and all these new rights, are unfortunately not available throughout our territory or for our entire population. As you know, 20 per cent of Georgia is occupied by Russia. There is a severe security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Labour rights are no exception. There is ongoing military build-up, closure of the so-called crossing points, illegal detentions and kidnappings along the occupation line, intensified ethnically targeted human rights violations, deprivation of the right to life, prohibition of education in the native Georgian language – as well as Abkhaz or Ossetian languages – through an active policy of Russification, and restriction of the rights to freedom of movement, residence and property. International monitoring of the situation is almost impossible: the Russian Federation does not allow the European Union Monitoring Mission that is mandated to operate throughout the whole territory of Georgia into the occupied regions. In its drive towards de-occupation, Georgia depends upon and needs the strong support of the international community, multilateral organizations and its trusted partners.

During its 108th Session, the Conference will adopt the ILO Centenary Declaration, based on the work and the Report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, *Work for a brighter future*. Georgia fully supports these recommendations. The Commission, co-chaired by His Excellency Mr Cyril Ramaphosa and His Excellency Mr Stefan Löfven, with the support of the ILO secretariat, has produced an important Report which outlines the main challenges: the changing nature of work in the context of technological innovations, climate change, migration and globalization. In a way, the ILO is confronted today by the same radical challenges it faced at its creation 100 years ago. A new world is emerging that will determine the new nature of work in the years and decades to come. More than ever, confronted by these changes, the challenge for the ILO and for all of us will be to preserve human dignity and social justice. Each and every challenge, each and every objective outlined in the Report, is shared by Georgia.

We sometimes – often – try to tackle these obstacles to the development of our nations and to the prosperity of our citizens individually. In reality, the extent of this new challenge is such that it can only be effectively met through cooperation and mutual support. That is why the world created the International Labour Organization 100 years ago. We come here and realize that in our struggles we are not alone. Here we share knowledge and best practices. Here we think together and come up with common solutions. The proposed human-centred agenda for the future of work is the only approach to withstand not only the decades but the century ahead. Georgia shares the spirit of the Declaration and fully supports the call upon the member States. Our people and our Government are committed to advancing the human-centred approach for the future of work.

Finally, I again congratulate the International Labour Organization and every Member on its 100th anniversary. We have come this far together, so I wish us all every success for the many more years to come.

**Statement by His Excellency
Mr Nicos Anastasiades,
President of the Republic of Cyprus**

Mr Anastasiades
President of the Republic of Cyprus

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Mr Jean-Jacques Elmiger for his election to the presidency of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference and to convey my delegation's full support to him in the exercise of his duties. At the same time, I wish to sincerely thank the Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Mr Guy Ryder, for his invitation and, above all, to convey both my own and my Government's genuine appreciation for his tireless work and invaluable contribution in advancing the Organization's objectives.

For more than a century, the ILO has established labour standards which serve as the regulatory framework for the world of work. They are a means of establishing decent work opportunities for all and achieving social justice through standards such as social protection; the end of forced and compulsory labour; the end of child labour; the right to organize and bargain collectively; strengthening social dialogue; and safeguarding equal treatment among workers.

Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that the challenges the ILO has to address today are much more diverse and complicated than the challenges it had to face a hundred or fifty, or even ten years ago. Challenges such as an increasingly interdependent globalized world; a new digital era; a rapidly advancing research and innovation environment; the development

of new types of business; and economic and environmental changes, especially climate change. These challenges affect the future of work and employment conditions, and in turn, require the constant evolution and upgrading of the Organization's activities and policies in line with our joint aim for each and every worker to benefit from labour protection and decent working conditions.

Consequently, the world of work is undergoing a profound transformation, and we strongly support the aims of the human-centred agenda as proposed by the Global Commission on the Future of Work in its landmark Report. In this respect, we fully adhere to the proposed scope of the Centenary Declaration based on the aforesaid Report and aiming to integrate the Organization's future actions in its social justice mandate. We are also in full agreement as regards the Organization's intention to adopt a Convention and Recommendation concerning violence and harassment in the world of work. At the same time, we fully recognize the need for all member States to implement the ILO Decent Work Agenda, as Cyprus has already done. This is vital in order to achieve our joint objectives in line with this year's chosen theme of advancing social justice and promoting decent work.

Further, the Report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, *Work for a brighter future*, complements and adds value to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Secretary-General's peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda. These three converging agendas and their interactive implementation, constitute a cornerstone of achieving, in parallel, social justice and sustainable development and peace.

Member States are recipients of the Organization's suggestions regarding the way forward in ensuring full and productive employment and providing decent work for all at the global, regional, national and local levels and their goal remains to collectively implement the ILO's agenda. This requires solidarity, reciprocity, a dialogue with social partners and a commitment to proceed with determined actions, both by the ILO and by each member State individually.

The Preamble to the ILO Constitution of 1919 states, "Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice." It is for this exact reason that Cyprus and the ILO share a long-standing and deeply rooted relationship based on upholding and promoting the founding values and principles of the Organization. In this respect, Cyprus has adopted the Organization's tripartite structure, through which representatives of the Government and the employers' and workers' organizations exchange views and collectively draw up labour standard policies. It is also worth recalling that we have ratified 57 Conventions and four Protocols of the Organization. At the same time, the already excellent cooperation between Cyprus and the Organization significantly strengthened following the economic crisis in 2013, with the ILO offering invaluable technical assistance, particularly through the actuarial valuation of our social insurance scheme and on the issue of the national minimum wage.

It is a fact that the severe financial crisis in Cyprus, which started in 2011, and the consequent need to enter into an economic adjustment programme in order to avoid the disorderly bankruptcy of the country, had adverse economic and social effects on the people. At the time, Cyprus was experiencing negative growth of around 6 per cent. Unemployment had increased to around 16 per cent. The Government had budget deficits of €1 billion per year. The economy was in the junk category and was excluded from international markets. As such, what became clear to all the political parties, our social partners and the people in general was the urgency of taking immediate measures and reorienting our economic governance.

To this end, key objectives of our policies included: adopting a prudent fiscal policy with well-targeted expenditure policies; maintaining a stable and competitive tax and legal regime so as to safeguard our competitiveness or comparative advantage as an attractive investment destination for international businesses; promoting, at the same time, measures and incentives which would facilitate economic and investment opportunities; actively supporting the lower and middle class, not only by holding off the enforcement of new taxation but particularly by lowering or even abolishing some taxation levels; pursuing significant structural reforms, among others, as regards pensions, the welfare system, the healthcare system and tax administration; and enhancing the labour market system.

The combination of our new economic and social policies, the resilient and strong foundations of our economy, as well as the sacrifices of the people and, I would like to underline this, above all, the constructive stance of our social partners, led to maintaining labour peace and an impressive recovery. Currently, we enjoy a growth rate of around 4 per cent and government budgets with primary surpluses, while the international status of our economy is at the investment grade. Unemployment has drastically fallen to less than 7 per cent, with a declining trend. There has been a parallel increase in real gross domestic product per capita while income inequalities, as measured by the Gini coefficient, as well as the risk of poverty and social exclusion, have improved considerably.

As a result of the economic growth, it became feasible to implement a series of measures to the benefit of all employees and vulnerable groups, thus strengthening the social safety net, such as: introducing the guaranteed minimum income scheme through which we also increased the number of beneficiaries; establishing, for the first time, a national health system, which entered into force on 1 June this year, as a universal healthcare programme providing the opportunity for all to have access to quality healthcare; twice raising the allowance received by low-income pensioners, including granting Easter and Christmas allowances; introducing, for the first time, 15 days of paid paternity leave; enhancing financial support to non-governmental organizations that provide social care programmes, including day care; increasing the allowances received by disabled persons; reintroducing a special motherhood allowance granted to families with four children; increasing rent subsidies provided to all those eligible; introducing a new housing policy for those in need; abolishing the special contribution imposed on gross monthly earnings of employees, both in the private and the public sector; and restoring a system of annual wage indexation for employees. While following the implementation of a code of conduct in the public sector, based on international best practices on harassment, the social partners also adopted a relevant code in the private sector and decided to establish, for the first time, a Women's House in order to offer protection, psychological and any other support by the competent authorities of the country, under one roof, to women who were victims of violence.

However, despite the progress we have achieved, we do acknowledge that maintaining social justice, further reducing unemployment and enhancing quality and decent working conditions needs the constant attention of our policies in order to adapt to a constantly changing labour market environment. In this regard, we are continuously developing and implementing national plans to address the challenges of the future of work by tackling the skills mismatch through in-work training, reskilling and upskilling, and by promoting entrepreneurship. With the valuable technical assistance of the ILO and the contribution of our social partners, we also intend to engage in a dialogue to establish a national minimum wage once conditions of full employment are in place.

Please allow me to warmly welcome and commend the initiative to establish a European Labour Authority. Based on our continued support for the Authority and our commitment to promoting fair working conditions, social cohesion and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we have offered to host the European Labour Authority in Nicosia. The decision on where to locate the Authority will be taken on 13 June, and we hope that our partners choose Cyprus as the place where it will be established.

I feel privileged to be present at these historic Centenary celebrations. I can only express, yet again, my full support for the principles of the human-centred agenda put forward in the Report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work that is increasing investment in people's capabilities, increasing investment in the institutions of work and increasing investments in decent and sustainable work. And it is my strong and firm belief that it is only by collectively adhering to the aforesaid principles that we can achieve growth, social justice and prosperity for current and future generations.

**Statement by His Majesty
King Mswati III,
Kingdom of Eswatini**

**His Majesty King Mswati III,
Kingdom of Eswatini**

It is a great pleasure for me to have this wonderful opportunity to join the International Labour Organization (ILO) family during its Centenary celebration year in Geneva.

Looking at the historical birth of the ILO, it is evident that mankind was concerned about the welfare of employers and employees, and about job creation through establishing various industries, long before 1945 when the United Nations was founded. The formation of industries to create employment for people has remained at the top of the agenda of our global development because without them, there would be no opportunities. The Kingdom of Eswatini is pleased that the ILO has been able to carry out its mandate, since its inception in 1919, diligently and faithfully for the benefit of employers, employees and governments.

The ILO has successfully created an enabling environment by promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, which guarantee universal lasting peace and are only attainable through a solid foundation of social justice. As members of this universal Organization, we acknowledge that the journey during the past 100 years has not been without hurdles along the way and has certainly not been smooth sailing. But despite all of the challenges, the ILO has remained focused and maintained its core objectives.

The Kingdom of Eswatini acknowledges the support that we have received, and continue to receive, in order to enable the Government, workers and employers to work together in a well-regulated environment in our country. Without a committed workforce, it is impossible to achieve sustainable economic development.

The framework of the ILO, which encourages dialogue, is not new to us. Since time immemorial, our culture has promoted constructive engagement as a means of resolving conflicts and enabling progress. Our unity as a nation has allowed us to enjoy peace and stability at times when this has been a rare commodity in Africa and other parts of the world. The tripartite forum that we have developed with the ILO promotes a healthy working environment and relationship between the Government, employees and employers in the Kingdom and for us, this is a win-win situation. We have to work towards the common goal of economic development and nation-building as partners for the benefit of the whole nation and future generations.

The ILO is founded on partnership and social dialogue. For these principles to thrive, they must be underpinned by trust, openness and respect. It is important for the social partners to find a balance among these values. All players in the labour market space must be continuously trained and persuaded to embrace these essential values for keeping the tripartite relationship strong and effective. This year, our nation has embarked on a process of relaunching the national social dialogue mechanism with a view to realigning its current

structure and making it more effective. To demonstrate our commitment, the Kingdom of Eswatini has undertaken a voluntary self-assessment exercise. This is driven by an ad hoc tripartite working committee that has already been initiated, and the outcome of the assessment will help the country to develop more robust policies and programmes in order to deal with delicate relationship issues between and among the stakeholders.

Since we took up membership in the International Labour Organization in May 1975, the Kingdom of Eswatini has reached a number of milestones that have evidently shaped the country's labour relations landscape in a positive way. With the ILO's technical assistance, Eswatini has, among other things, developed and implemented employment programmes, established a labour administration system and enacted the country's labour legislation and relevant legal frameworks.

On the African continent, we always prioritize labour and job creation because the Africa we want, as enshrined in the African Union's Vision 2063, advocates for a decent work environment and equal gender opportunities for all our people. If we are to realize this vision of Africa, we need to ensure that all of the critical elements necessary to the creation of a healthy labour environment are in place and that nobody is left behind. We must ensure that all of us in the global community are able to achieve the universal Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to create a better environment for all mankind to live in. There is no doubt that harmony across the whole spectrum of every country and society will actually benefit the people through peace and prosperity. It is our considered view that the ILO can assist in achieving the harmony necessary to that peace and prosperity.

As we celebrate this Centenary, we are alive to the challenges and realities of the rapidly changing nature of work as a result of technological advances, including, in particular, robotics and artificial intelligence in what is being described as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We wish to thank the Global Commission on the Future of Work, and particularly its Co-Chairs, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of the Kingdom of Sweden and President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa. We also thank the entire Commission for compiling the Future of Work Report with clear proposals to guide member States in dealing with the complex issues presented by the evolving world of work. We are particularly impressed by the Report's emphasis on human-centred development. Eswatini embraces the guidelines presented in the Future of Work Report, the Centenary Declaration to be adopted by the International Labour Conference, the Decent Work Country Programmes and other strategic development programmes.

I wish to draw your attention to ratification of the 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution, which has been pending for so long. When the ILO was established, the majority of its members came from industrialized countries. Over time, its membership has expanded to embrace small and medium-sized economies. The adoption of the Instrument of Amendment would position the Organization well among other institutions of similar stature, particularly in light of its virtues and its respect for equality, fairness and social justice. However, membership of the governing structures of the Organization has not changed over time in order to reflect its geographical spread and ensure fair opportunities for member States to be elected to the Governing Body and exercise voting powers. We appeal to those member States that have not ratified this Amendment to do so.

On this day, we wish to congratulate the past and present administrations – including member States, employers, employees, the International Labour Office and its representatives – for their stewardship and dedication to the work of the Organization. As we celebrate this Centenary, we encourage the ILO to support and embrace our continental Vision 2063 and those of individual countries, such as Eswatini's Vision 2022, which seek to attain developed status for our people. We count on the Organization to help us realize this dream, which is aligned with the ILO's own objectives of equal opportunities and social justice for all. The ILO also has a role to play in building the capacities of employees and

employers and collaborating with developing countries in support of their efforts to achieve first-world status.

In conclusion, as a member country with an identity founded on strong cultural practices, Eswatini upholds best labour practices while blending her traditions with modernity in order to ensure that our values live on for the benefit of future generations. It is important to commend our employers and employees, who are proud to volunteer their labour and services to national cultural activities and thus play an integral part in nation-building.

Lastly, we wish to congratulate the ILO on its Centenary celebration and to endorse the impending Centenary Declaration.

**Statement by His Excellency
Mr Dmitry Medvedev,
Prime Minister of the Russian Federation**

Mr Medvedev
Prime Minister of the Russian Federation
(*Original Russian*)

On behalf of the Russian Federation, let me welcome all participants to the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference that coincides with the Centenary of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

This is one of the oldest and unquestionably most influential global bodies. Beginning from its inception in 1919, the Organization has consistently stood up for workers' interests and their entitlement to decent working conditions, safety at work and social protection. The Conventions produced by the ILO are the foundation of national labour laws in many countries, including of course the Russian Federation. Today, as it embarks on its second century, the ILO is again raising the most important and relevant issues relating to the future of labour relations, and it is proposing that together we seek answers based on the wealth of experience gained from successful non-politicized cooperation and the broad practice of mutual consideration of interests.

The most valuable asset of the Organization is its unique format. Here countries do not have disputes with each other as they do in many other forums but build mutual tripartite cooperation: trade unions, employers and governments. As an equitable system of regulation, tripartism was born and developed effectively throughout the twentieth century. It helped to resolve the most acute social and economic problems of ILO member States. The establishment of the Tripartite Commission on the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations in my country was one of the first legislative decisions taken in the new Russia, and this mechanism helped us to live through the very complicated period of the 1990s and the economic crises which have already occurred in the twenty-first century.

However, in the modern world the tripartite system also requires certain adjustments and the establishment of a new and calculated balance, to which the efforts of the ILO are devoted.

Today's agenda focuses on workers' rights and interests rather than the demands of corporations or States. It focuses on people's career expectations, if you like. Recognizing people, their lives and well-being as the ultimate goal and value of modern development sets completely new parameters for corporate and government policies. It is an important historical process and a challenge to which we need to find an appropriate response together.

New approaches are required as regards working time and study arrangements. First of all, people must have an opportunity to study throughout their careers. This idea was also stressed in the ILO Global Commission Report, *Work for a brighter future*, the key statements from which will be included in the outcome document of this session, the Centenary Declaration.

Training, retraining and acquiring interdisciplinary and completely new knowledge and skills allow one person to live several professional lives, something previously unheard of, to become a recognized expert in a number of areas, and, most importantly, to always remain sought-after by employers. After all, technology is already changing many jobs. Old professions become obsolete while new ones emerge. For instance, experts predict (as is widely known) that in several years, almost 2 million driverless vehicles will be sold annually, and in another five years, the sales will exceed 10 million. One of the reasons is a reduction in the cost of such vehicles and, if the trend continues, we will have to assess what will happen to taxi and lorry drivers. These are far from straightforward processes that will affect almost all countries. It is unlikely that the newly available workforce will be offered jobs by new mass production facilities. These facilities may be big, but chances are they will have very few workers. These are the technological changes that we absolutely must take into account when developing recommendations.

Second, not only the nature of work but its formats are changing. Yesterday I had a fascinating visit to the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). CERN is a self-sufficient town where you can work and live without ever having to go elsewhere.

These research centres are not the only places where the boundaries between professional and personal lives are blurred.

As modern technology develops, for many people their own home is becoming a workplace. I am referring to the increasingly popular teleworking and part-time employment. This is a mass phenomenon which now involves an entire social group, freelancers. This kind of employment transcends all state borders and national labour markets. Digital technology provides almost limitless possibilities for work and self-fulfilment regardless of gender, age, social status and place of residence. This is the new paradigm of labour, and it is a very promising incentive for talented people, especially those who live in developing countries.

With this in mind, employers will have to consider more carefully their workers' interests. Technological progress is not only reducing the number of jobs but also working hours, thus expanding leisure time. It may well be that the future lies with a four-day working week as a standard for social-labour contracts. Let me remind you that 100 years ago, Henry Ford took a chance and cut the working week from 48 to 40 hours, which resulted in impressive growth in productivity.

There are more recent examples. A company in New Zealand introduced a four-day working week. The third day off is paid like the other two. As a result, productivity per working hour increased by around 20 per cent. Employees' stress levels also decreased quite significantly.

Clearly, these are very complex and not fully developed ideas that will continue to be the subject of serious discussions. At the same time, this is a very important indicator. In constant pursuit of success, people suffer from chronic tiredness and stress, and often simply burn out at work. This leads to lower productivity which, in turn, affects economic indicators. Two weeks ago, the World Health Assembly here, in Geneva, officially recognized burnout syndrome as a medical condition.

We need new approaches to such basic concepts as the working day and the workplace. Working hours can be organized more leniently, with flexible schedules and teleworking so that employees have to be in the office only when necessary.

Also, as life becomes more comfortable thanks to new technology, so should human resources and office management. Labour relations need far less bureaucracy, and the ILO is focusing on that.

In this respect, small and medium-sized businesses are a major response to massive social demand. To avoid basic dissatisfaction (and there were many examples of this in the twentieth century), business has to adapt as of now to new generations of workers. Incentive schemes that used to inspire previous generations, are frequently totally unsuited to the current generation.

It is obvious that our children are going to be wiser than we are. Confucius's words sound like practical advice across the centuries rather than a routine remark, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." Of course, nobody should take this maxim literally.

For its part, the State as an institution, is also looking for answers to the needs of today's population. I will tell you about some of the approaches Russia has adopted. Last year we launched 12 national programmes including a major infrastructure upgrade plan. In essence, they constitute large-scale investment in people and their development. We have concentrated huge financial resources in order to make significant progress in raising the well-being and standard of living of the Russian people in the next six years. We have special national programmes that are devoted, among other things, to labour productivity and employment support.

We are transforming entire areas and institutions to fit people's needs, adjusting the tax system and establishing special rules of taxation for this purpose.

The key here, of course, is mutual trust between a worker, an employer and the State rather than fiscal issues, since it is important not just to collect taxes but also to introduce millions of people to legal forms of employment on conditions which are transparent and attractive to them. This issue also needs to be resolved in our country.

All countries without exception are encountering fundamental changes in the labour market. We live in a globalized world. The regulation of labour relations requires certain general approaches and principles. Yet such matters as illegitimate sanctions, protectionism, trade wars and other artificial barriers have a negative impact including on the labour market and countries' economies in general. Companies and organizations, and consequently people, find it increasingly hard to live outside politics, which is in no sense a positive development.

Some countries' behaviour in trade and the economy is becoming ever more aggressive, virtually bordering on lawlessness.

The world order that has been in place for decades is being threatened. Let me remind you that we are in the building which used to host the League of Nations headquarters. Its grim fate is a reminder to us of how fragile the architecture of international relations is and how important it is to support it in every possible way. Russia is opposed to any new "Berlin Wall" and we adhere to the principles of openness, respect for national interests and mutually beneficial cooperation. These are the principles we used as a basis to establish the Eurasian Economic Union.

I think you will agree with me that the general view of the world is basically being repainted. As a representative of a nation which, 100 years ago, survived one of the most radical revolutions in world history, I would like to convey the following. We know from our own experience about the need to respond in a timely and professional manner to social change, to the need for new requirements in society and to workers' needs. If these challenges are ignored, it always leads to sad consequences not only for individual States but also for the world economy and the overall global system of relations between countries.

Social unrest regularly breaks out in different parts of the world resulting in major consequences for society, whereas the growth of radical, populist political forces in various countries including in Europe in the past decade is nothing more than the expression of people's dissatisfaction with declining living standards and the destruction of a traditional way of life under the impact of a whole range of circumstances. The key is the resulting dissatisfaction with what governments do, since, according to many people, they are to some extent failing to deal with new political and economic challenges, including migration issues, a scenario which increasingly resembles the great Migration Period.

The ILO's Conventions and Recommendations are especially welcome in this context. They are universal and represent a comprehensive code for the best practices in regulating social and labour issues. Of particular interest is the ILO's Recommendation on introducing a comprehensive labour guarantee which must be given to all workers. This guarantee is fundamentally significant from the point of view of protecting workers' rights. I am confident that it can be implemented even though it presents a very ambitious challenge in itself. Many guarantees like this have long been adopted in Russia, some of them are even included in the Constitution, and we must encourage all countries to take the step of introducing a universal labour guarantee.

We attach great importance to practical cooperation with the ILO and consider its standards to be absolute in such crucial fields as social insurance and pension provision. I am very happy to note that the Russian Federation has ratified 77 ILO Conventions and two Protocols. It is also to our country's benefit to apply the Organization's experience in official employment policy in times of economic crisis (this especially concerns young people), fighting poverty and labour migration. This has all been reflected in the 2017–20 Programme of Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the International Labour Organization. We fully share the Organization's mission and tasks as they are presented in the founding documents. We also support the stance of the ILO such that our common challenge in the twenty-first century is to turn labour into a universal factor of personal development, a source of discovery and fulfilment of the potential of all people.

I sincerely hope that the Conference will work in an interesting and constructive manner, and I wish the ILO success as it enters its second century.

**Statement by Her Excellency
Ms Angela Merkel,
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany**

Ms Merkel
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
(*Original German*)

One particular marker of whether a society's approach is human and fair is its working conditions. Are people viewed merely as factors of production or are they able to fulfil their potential and develop their talents? Do they earn enough to make a decent living? What about occupational safety and health?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has always striven to make working conditions decent, and its member States are united in that pursuit. The core tenet that must always prevail – including, or especially, in times of globalization – is that the economy must serve the people, not the people the economy.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General of the Conference for inviting me here today. This is the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference, and a very special one at that, as it is the culmination of the celebrations marking one hundred years of the ILO's existence. Allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you on this special anniversary of the Organization and to all those who subscribe to its goals of social justice and decent work. Incidentally, this is not the first hundredth anniversary that I have had the honour of celebrating with you: I still have fond memories of my visit here eight years ago, on the occasion of the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference.

The International Labour Organization is needed just as much today as it was at its inception 100 years ago. At the end of the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 discussed not only matters of redrawing borders, reallocating territory, war debt and reparations, but also workers' rights. The social aspect was an integral part of the peace process – a decision that showed great foresight. Hence in 1919 the International Labour Organization was established alongside the League of Nations, representing a milestone in cooperation among States.

To the question of how we can secure peace, the ILO's answer is: with social justice. In the Preamble to its Constitution, the partner States viewed themselves as being "moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world". However, this hope was soon dashed when, only two decades later, in 1939, Germany triggered the Second World War. It, and the rupture in civilization that was the Shoa committed by Germany, far exceeded any previous horrors, crimes and loss of human life.

That is why we cannot be thankful enough for the far-sighted women and men who, in the wake of all this horror, established a framework for peace in Europe. Historic good fortune, political prudence and strategic foresight – I cannot overemphasize what happened at that time, as it paved the way for European integration in the decades to follow and set in motion the international framework for peace, above all the United Nations and with it the International Labour Organization as a specialized agency.

Over time, the number of member States grew, from 32 initially to no less than 187 today, and along with it the political weight of the International Labour Organization. The ILO's tripartite structure is what makes it unique. For 100 years now, workers, employers and governments have jointly agreed on standards for decent working conditions and supervising compliance. Germany's model of the social market economy is heavily influenced by this shared responsibility of workers, employers and governments. Despite the fact that not all current member States have workers' organizations and trade unions that feel duty-bound to share the responsibility, I believe that the International Labour Organization has a highly far-sighted, forward-looking approach.

In 1969, on the Organization's 50th anniversary, the ILO was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The then Director-General, David A. Morse, said at that time: "Though this is our fiftieth year as an organisation we are only at the beginning of our task." The same could also be said one hundred years on: a great deal still needs to be done, unfortunately. Today, on the Organization's 100th anniversary, it is apparent that advocating for decent working conditions remains as crucial as ever.

Tomorrow, 12 June, the World Day Against Child Labour, serves as a further reminder. The International Labour Organization has been combating child labour since its inception. Its current campaign states that “children shouldn’t work in fields, but on dreams”. Yet what many children go through is a nightmare. Across the world, 152 million children are forced to work. Almost half of them are only 5 to 11 years old. Some 73 million children are even engaged in hazardous work. That is a completely unacceptable state of affairs, and we must all work together to combat it.

In our closely interconnected world, we must do better at ensuring that economic growth actually does result in social progress in which everyone, including children, can partake. However, many people feel that development is partly going in the completely opposite direction. They have the impression that at the same time as creating many wealthy people, globalization also allows social inequalities to grow.

Labour migrants often face particular hardships in the world of work. According to ILO estimates, there are 232 million labour migrants worldwide. Many millions of them have been and continue to be exploited, be it in construction, agriculture or domestic work. Many of them are abused, live in slave-like conditions and have little to no protection. Globally, around 700 million workers are living in poverty and subsist on less than US\$3.20 per day. It is no coincidence that Goal 8 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development covers decent work and economic growth on an equal basis.

Abusive practices and discrimination in the workplace are a painful reminder of just how topical the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944 remains today. Among its guiding principles are: “labour is not a commodity; ... poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; ... the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort”. It is precisely this unrelenting vigour that the International Labour Organization demonstrates. It advocates for occupational safety and health, and combats discrimination in hiring and in everyday working life. It strengthens gender equality and hence the role of women. It reinforces social dialogue. It fights against forced labour and human trafficking. It is the ILO that continuously raises awareness of abusive practices, combats them with programmes all over the world and monitors the application of decent work and social standards.

Yet despite all the progress, many of the classic problems that the ILO has been addressing for 100 years unfortunately still exist today. At the same time, we are witnessing our world of work evolving rapidly as a result of digitalization, at a rate unprecedented since the era of industrialization. Digital work is often outsourced by enterprises. Tasks such as translation into other languages and editing of image files are increasingly being performed via platforms. Even though human labour will be no less important in the face of technological developments and we will never run out of work, it will nevertheless be different work, requiring new skills. That is cause for concern for many people, including in Germany. They wonder whether they will be able to keep pace with their skills, whether they will lose their job and, if so, where they will find the most suitable work. Those are significant and serious questions, and therefore also significant and serious policy challenges.

But that is not all. Modern technologies are not only changing the possibilities of what we work on, but also how and where we work – whether on company premises, from home or while travelling. That of course gives rise to expectations, on the part of both workers and employers. Working from home, for example, might mean improved work–life balance, but at the same time might also result in increased stress as a result of constantly being reachable. Consequently, there are many aspects of working conditions that have to be completely rethought, also because the classic employer–worker relationship is evolving. How can workers demand rights from a platform? How can or should human and artificial intelligence complement each other? How will the necessary training be provided?

We in Germany have developed a new training strategy, which is being presented today and will soon be adopted by the Cabinet. Many others around the world are doing the same. We therefore welcome the fact that the International Labour Organization is taking these issues very seriously, and has itself set up an independent Global Commission on the Future of Work to find coherent answers to such questions.

Of course, we in the European Union are also working on these issues. In recent months, we have been discussing proposals concerning the social dimension of Europe, such as a Regulation establishing a European Labour Authority and a Directive on work–life balance for parents and carers. The topic of a minimum wage also plays a role in the European Union. Germany has a minimum wage, as do many other Member States. We must now consider how we can achieve comparable minimum wages, taking into account the standard of living in the different countries. It goes without saying that in the European Union, too, minimum conditions of work are essential.

In our economy based on division of labour that has many dependencies, sound international cooperation and joint regulations are indispensable, both to Europe and to the whole world. And I mean that not only in relation to the International Labour Organization but also to the World Trade Organization. It applies also to the G7 and G20 forums, in which Germany is consistently heavily involved, including in connection with conditions of work. The leading industrialized nations in particular undoubtedly benefit from globalization and the international division of labour. It is therefore these countries, the industrialized nations, that each bear responsibility for not only ensuring fair conditions of work domestically, but also pushing for them elsewhere, in other words at every other point of the global supply chains and value chains.

A prime example is the Vision Zero Fund, established in 2015 under the German presidency of the G7 as a global prevention fund for improved health protection and prevention of occupational accidents. I am very grateful that the Vision Zero Fund is being implemented by the ILO. The first projects have been set up, in Myanmar, Laos, Ethiopia and Madagascar, among others. Locally, the governments decide together with the social partners which occupational safety and health projects will be supported by the Fund.

We in the G7 and G20 also pay particular attention to the question of how we can strengthen the position of women in the economy and in society worldwide, and in particular in many poorer countries. That is why the G20 and the G7 have also undertaken to work towards securing equal, and thus improved, access to the labour market for women. That includes further promoting vocational qualifications for women in developing countries. Yet there is still substantial room for improvement in terms of gender equality, including in some industrialized States. In Germany, women now represent a third of members of supervisory boards, but only because a law was passed after decades of voluntary commitments had not produced the desired results. And even now, not one of the largest industrial companies has a woman at the helm. That situation cannot and must not be allowed to continue. Even having a woman as Federal Chancellor will do little to help if the business community does not play its part.

Every year at this International Labour Conference, the ILO shows how much progress we can make with multilateral action, and also how dependent we are on multilateral action. Government representatives from 187 countries and representatives of employers and workers come together in order to develop labour and social standards, and supervise compliance and application.

At the centre of this year's session of the International Labour Conference is the drafting of an ILO Centenary Declaration on the future of work, which I very much welcome. It will lay down the principal guidelines for the world of work, against the backdrop of advancing globalization and digitalization, and also in view of the challenges resulting from climate change and demographic change. I predict that there will be lengthy, arduous discussions before the document is finalized. But it would certainly not be the first time that the ILO has demonstrated the necessary strength in the ability to reach compromise.

This international system of multilateral cooperation is currently in jeopardy, as there are many who say: "We are better off alone". I would respond emphatically that compromise is part and parcel of international cooperation. Compromise should not be attacked; it represents an opportunity to reconcile different points of view and to forge a common position worldwide. Next to no one will be 100 per cent satisfied with a compromise, but it allows us to move forward overall. And it is this capacity to compromise that the ILO has been demonstrating over 100 years and has turned into a model for success.

Time and again, the delegates of the past 107 sessions of the International Labour Conference have managed to transpose values into Conventions and Recommendations. The result is a comprehensive, globally applicable system of standards for a fair world of work. Alongside 189 Conventions, 205 Recommendations have been adopted. Of course, as I said before, much still remains to be done. But without these 189 Conventions, the world would be in an even sorrier state. In them, four fundamental principles are laid down: freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. The fundamental principles were given concrete shape in eight Conventions. More than 140 ILO member States, including Germany, have ratified all eight of these fundamental labour standards, and it would be very much welcome if the more than 40 remaining member States could also see their way to adopting them.

It is certainly true that there are many pathways leading to decent work with decent working conditions to make a decent living. Yet these pathways still remain closed to far too many people. Too many people come up against roadblocks that prevent them from progressing. That is why even now we still need the continued engagement of the International Labour Organization just as we did 100 years ago. I have always advocated strongly to involve this organization and other international organizations as part of the G20 process, so that they remain in direct contact. We need social peace. We need fair conditions of work. We need human dignity to be preserved.

The ILO has accomplished a great deal, for which I congratulate you sincerely. At the same time, much remains to be done. And so I hope and trust that your achievements to date will spur you on to launch yourselves into your work with renewed vigour, in this new landscape.

So, I would like to thank those working day in, day out, often away from newspaper and internet headlines, devoted to the laborious work of negotiating and wrangling with each and every comma (we Germans are always part of the action). I would like to say thank you for doing this work, because it will pay dividends for a great many people, who can hope for better working conditions or have the right to insist on better working conditions. I can assure you that Germany will continue to be an active member of the ILO. You have human dignity as your mission, you have human rights on your side, and thus you are fighting for what is right. I say this to governments, employers and workers alike, and I wish you all the very best. We will be fighting alongside you.

**Statement by His Excellency
Mr Emmanuel Macron,
President of the French Republic**

Mr Macron
President of the French Republic
(*Original French*)

This 108th Session of the International Labour Conference is the occasion to celebrate the Centenary of our Organization, the oldest of the international organizations in existence. As you just reminded us, in 1919, upon the still smouldering embers of the Great War, when the folly of mankind had just claimed 18 million lives, an idea that came originally from the trade union organizations took shape and was laid down in Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles, namely that universal peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.

Born in the mid-nineteenth century of the workers' struggles to achieve dignity and combat alienation, and nourished by the ideals of international solidarity that had just been crushed for a first time by the ravages of war, it seemed absolutely essential. Because it was precisely the workers, from each camp, who had shed their blood. Because even at that early juncture, the pioneering minds of the International Labour Organization (ILO) understood that it would be impossible to build lasting peace on a foundation of such injustices. Before the Armistice was even signed, Justin Godart submitted a resolution to make work one of the keys to future peace. And there were also Arthur Fontaine, Léon Jouhaux and, of course, Albert Thomas, who led this institution and who in the early years poured his heart and soul into the adoption of Conventions and standards so that the ILO could progress from an idea to reality. And, as you said, from the outset, France demonstrated its commitment through these prominent figures, through the engagement of all of the social partners, its trade unions and employers' associations, and also through its commitment as a country. Incidentally, France has currently ratified the second-highest number of Conventions and specific commitments, and hence transposed the body of achievements of the International Labour Organization into the substantive law that applies to our fellow citizens and workers.

In 1944, there was a further step forward. As the League of Nations here in Geneva had been powerless to stop history unfolding, and at a time when the Second World War had not yet ended, the ILO produced the Declaration of Philadelphia, embodying the idea that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity".

With the world plunged into chaos for a second time, human consciousness grasped hold of the idea of progress as a hope for peace. Refusing to give up, acting responsibly and building international solidarity step by step through law and dialogue: that is the spirit of our Organization and that is the task to which generation after generation of officials in this house have devoted themselves. The Organization's achievements are too numerous to mention here, but they are the fruit of so many struggles. I think that when speaking among ourselves, 100 years on, we must never lose sight of all the ground that the International Labour Organization broke, and all that had been taken as a given at the time but was called into question in order to allow progress to be made.

A hundred years of struggles, a hundred years of social justice, a hundred years of dialogue, along with 189 ratified Conventions that have changed the lives of millions of men and women and 205 adopted Recommendations all contribute to a dual legacy which we must continue. The history of this Organization is precisely the history of all of these struggles. It is the history of all the labourers and other workers who, thanks to a Convention, benefited from maximum daily and weekly hours of work.

It is the history of children who were able to get an education, because their place was in the classroom with a teacher, not in the factory. And I would like to mention at this juncture that, in the coming days, France will take the chair of Alliance 8.7, the global partnership to eradicate child labour and forced labour. With our support, including financial support, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the social partners and non-governmental organizations will work in an alliance with the ILO to put an end to this scourge.

It is also the history of women who are now able to take maternity leave. It is the history of peoples freeing themselves from the worst injustices. As early as 1964, the ILO spoke out against apartheid and, when he visited 26 years later, Nelson Mandela justly applauded the Organization's pioneering role. And it is the history of the struggle fought alongside Solidarność in Poland for freedom of association, which is a pillar of democracy and an indispensable freedom. These are only a few examples of what the ILO has achieved. Yet with so many struggles ahead of us, we should not merely speak of a legacy, as it is now up to us to pick up the baton.

Underpinning all this progress and all these victories lies a methodology, from which, I must say, we undoubtedly have much to learn for ourselves, as we were just discussing with the French trade unions and employers' associations. And that methodology is tripartite dialogue: the coming together, on an equal footing, of States, trade union representatives and employers' representatives under the same roof, in the same room. It is not always easy. I know that it is sometimes necessary to go back to the drawing board – several times, even – and to accept that it sometimes takes somewhat longer to reach a decision, but it does mean that the results you achieve are robust. The very nature of compromise lies in fostering the exchange of ideas, information and knowledge and then taking them on board. Here, too, there is much that I can learn from this methodology to obtain the same kinds of results.

It is now up to us, collectively, to carry on this dual legacy of progress and methodology and keep it alive. This is a defining moment in the history of the Organization on the occasion of its 100th anniversary, as you are preparing to adopt a significant declaration. The ILO has always been a place where consciousness has been awakened amid chaos, and I believe that chaos is reigning now.

In my view, it is up to our generation not to await another war, but to face up to the world as it is now. Looking back at the past century, I can see that many advances became possible. Liberalism and the social market economy, as we like to call it in Europe, have enabled genuine progress. We have lifted hundreds of millions of our fellow citizens the world over out of poverty, and we have a genuine body of achievements, a history of progress that has been accomplished before our own eyes, which we almost take for granted sometimes and do not recall its significance or uniqueness in the history of humanity. The last fifty to sixty years have been unique in this respect, and they are the fruits of all of this joint work and the outcomes that we have obtained.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that these last decades have been marked by a deep economic, social, environmental and political crisis, and hence a crisis of civilization, which demands that we take action. The crisis is palpable; we have all felt its effects on society.

They have been felt in our regions and by our fellow citizens, who were told that opening up to the world was good and would serve the interests of peace. While that was true, the people also discovered the other side to globalization, which goes hand in hand with offshoring, and sometimes with a deterioration in their living, organizational and working conditions. Recent decades have also borne witness to social and environmental dumping. They have been characterized by something that is no longer liberalism and the social market economy, but has resulted from forty years of a neoliberal model and of a capitalism of accumulation which, while preserving the premises of reasoning and organization, has corrupted privacy and organization in our own societies. The pay-off may be justified when it is accompanied by innovation, but can it be justified in these circumstances, when the financialization of our economies has led us to these results? And are we even aware of all of the implications? I believe not.

Over these last ten years, we have not yet learned all possible lessons from the crises we have undergone. The global economic and financial crisis of 2008–10 spurred us into action and we were able to respond to the sovereign debt crisis and the crisis in the financial systems. However, we made no significant changes to the organizational model of capitalism. Adjustments were made in a number of countries – not mine, I have to say, but in many countries in southern Europe and elsewhere. And these were brutal adjustments the likes of which had not been seen since the Second World War. They enabled the economies to make changes that were shouldered by the workers, but brought in their wake regressions never before witnessed in times of peace.

At the same time, the accumulation of wealth in certain corners and by certain individuals has accelerated in recent decades. Personally, I am in favour of an economy of progress. I believe in technological and entrepreneurial innovation, and I advocate it in my own country, in Europe and in multilateral forums. However, the fact remains that there is something that is no longer working in the organization of capitalism. We must all face up to this situation, where such a model is increasingly benefiting the few and leading to regional imbalances that are fracturing all of our democracies. It is no longer something that affects only a few countries; the countries at the forefront of globalization are experiencing it, including those with the fastest-growing gross domestic product. And so we have a system whose macroeconomic progress is being built on microeconomic and regional imbalances. Such is the world we are living in. I won't go into the details or the statistics – with which you will be far more familiar than I – of the regional and social inequalities, the poverty hotspots or insufficient social protection that exist in the world we live in. But what I do want to say here (and incidentally it is also what I said almost 18 months ago in Davos at a forum that is perhaps not quite as open to hearing these kinds of observations) is that this market economy in which we are living is becoming fundamentally less and less social in the way that it was intended at the end of the Second World War. In essence, it is becoming less and less liberal, in the most literal sense of the term, and more and more about accumulation of private income and corporatism. That is the reality we are faced with.

As a political philosophy, liberalism favours personal freedom, in that all people may live in dignity, enjoy freedom and defend their rights. But liberalism does not like it when this freedom becomes the law of the jungle and allows the accumulation of riches by the few, or profiteering as a result of social, fiscal or environmental dumping or of rule-bending. This is the type of travesty of our global economy that we have come to. We have to face up to it, and that is because it has brought about a very serious crisis in our democracies and in our countries. This is what feeds extremism and demagoguery the world over. It strikes at the heart of democracy, and sometimes pushes it backwards. It also plants doubt in our fellow citizens that they no longer have a share in progress, because they see this way of working internationally – this story of openness that has been fed to them over and over – disintegrating before their eyes. That is a reality and also a problem, primarily for those who, regardless of their political leanings, believe in progress and democracy.

I say this here quite emphatically, because the crisis that we are currently going through might not seem so bad, as the victims are dispersed, have little voice and for now are not at war. Yet the crisis is there, and it has set about dismantling the deep-rooted consensus upon which democracy, progress and individual liberties have been built in our countries since the eighteenth century. Admittedly, France, which was at the forefront of the ideas of progress and the Enlightenment – and I say this in a land which also has so many philosophers and made a substantial contribution to the Enlightenment – bears some responsibility. This is precisely what is being overturned by our collective organization at the international level. Democracy was advancing with individual liberties, the social market economy and balances where everyone had a share in progress. When the people, whatever their class, no longer have a share in progress, they can no longer feel allegiance to the political regime that is in power. That is what is happening now in our democracies. That is also what is making authoritarianism attractive to some, as it seems to be more effective in protecting against external threats. It says, “Democracy is no longer protecting you from the inequalities caused by capitalism gone mad! We will protect you, we will close our borders, build walls and leave this weak multilateralism behind. These people are all talk and no action!”

It is our failures that are fuelling the extremes and the rejection of otherness. When things are heading in the wrong direction to such an extent, there always has to be a guilty party. That is why I believe that if we are not careful, we will find ourselves on the brink of war, a war that is right there in our democracies, just as in 1919 and 1944. The crisis we are going through is deep-rooted. We may decide to sleepwalk through it, but if we want to make solid progress, we must make some serious commitments to combat it and consider that the very basis of our lives for decades and decades has been warped to the core.

On top of this crisis, two major legitimate fears are traversing our societies, which we will also have to get to grips with, namely the digital transformation and the environmental transition to greener economies. Their impact is compounding the effects of the quasi-endogenous crisis in our world. Digitalization is a tremendous source of opportunities, wealth creation and innovation. It has transformed our day-to-day lives and our habits, as we have all become regular users. However, it is also a source of fragmentation of work, of enforced solitude for individuals and workers, and of a disintegrating wage relationship. It plunges us into a world where the story we are told is that digitalization is great. Everyone will be able contribute to world progress and wealth. Everyone will be in a contractual relationship with an employer, and we will be like monads and will have to rethink our relationships with each other. But that is a myth. Similarly, ecological transformations, the climate change challenge and biodiversity are forcing us to rethink this model.

We cannot have, on the one hand, a model of production whose impact, as we now know, is negative and has been increasingly so in recent decades and, on the other, public authorities or stakeholders falling victim to it, particularly in the most fragile regions, in Africa, the Pacific or elsewhere, as that would then mean that it would be up to the public authorities, and hence the taxpayers, to somehow repair the damage.

Here, too, we have an obligation and a duty to bring about a transition in the model of production and deploy both an innovative approach and collective efforts to re-inject some form of principle of dignity into its core, so that the fight against climate change and for biodiversity regains its rightful place in our collective efforts, both internationally and in the organization of production. Essentially, the endogenous crisis of our capitalism, the acceleration of the digital transition, the gathering pace of global warming and the increasing scarcity of biodiversity all point to a need to completely rethink the way in which we are organized. And so the multilateralism of your Organization – and of us all – has become more crucial than ever in our world, where we have a twofold fight on our hands: to achieve human dignity and to make our world more inhabitable.

That is the crux of the issue that we are facing collectively. Because for several decades we thought we could go out and be productive on the one hand and then come back and relax on the other. We could forget where we had come from and where we had raised our children to go off and create wealth or take advantage of opportunities in other economies, to later return home to spend happy days where we grew up. But those days are gone. The crisis is shaking up all democracies, including the most ardent proponents of such openness.

So the question is, how do we tackle this challenge now? In my view, we have to have a number of priorities, the first of which being a methodology. I believe that we cannot overcome this challenge alone, and that we need a coherent approach. I am well aware that, although I always try to convey the same message, I and many other leaders may receive criticisms along the lines of: “You’re incredible. There you are making crypto-Marxist speeches at the Assembly and at the ILO, then at home you carry on doing your thing, you carry on with your reforms, things move forward, and so on and so forth.” I do not believe that. I believe simply that this radical transformation of the model of the economy, society, production and civilization that I have just described cannot be achieved in one country alone, just as the twentieth century showed us that socialism did not work in one country alone. Likewise, it is not possible to combat the inequalities of international capitalism or fight for the environment in one country alone. Or, we could try it, but it would lead only to economic downturn and reduced opportunities, and we would be unable to do things the way they should be done.

Looking at France, I think that we can hold our heads high in front of many other nations when it comes to the environment and social rights. We will continue to move forward, together with organizations. We will undoubtedly have to make improvements to them and learn lessons from our own failures and shortcomings. But I think that it is our responsibility to become much stronger together within Europe and through multilateralism, and for us to bring about such transformation within this model that I believe in. This is what we are currently doing through our engagement in the regions, our fight against gender inequality in the world of work, and by specific actions in line with the agenda I am speaking about. Our campaign to have a Europe-wide minimum wage, precisely to restore convergence, is also consistent with this agenda.

In this battle, we must restore multilateralism everywhere and fight to ensure that all nations and their partners are marching forward together. Anywhere that multilateralism makes a retreat, the possibility of radically reforming the agenda I am speaking about is jeopardized. In this regard, I welcome the significant step forward that was made possible only a few days ago in the G7 Social by all of the social partners and the French Labour Minister, who is here today. It is the first time that a tripartite declaration has been issued in a G7 or G20 meeting, and it has produced genuine conclusions. So we have seen that this is possible, and that is what we must continue to work on. I am aware that there are some doubts, that some are threatening to leave and others want us to step up our action on other priorities. It is now absolutely vital that we implement a rigorous multilateral agenda, that we succeed in applying your tripartite methodology to be able to move forward, and that we engage in specific battles and secure victories in this transformation.

Therefore, this is a methodological fight, in which we must manage to involve all stakeholders and become even more ambitious. This is the fight that we will continue within the G7, and not just in the G7 Social; it must also involve the G7 Finance Ministers and the Heads of State and Government at the Leaders’ Summit in Biarritz. I do not just want us to hold a discussion, but to convince all stakeholders that this system can no longer function as it has until now, and that the inherent inequalities that are affecting our societies are such that it is up to us, the economic powers of the free world, to bring about change.

In my view, in order for us to make progress, there are four priority areas.

The first is to combat inequalities in the world of work and, first and foremost, to combat gender inequalities and violence and harassment in the world of work. We are taking stock of the world's most advanced legislation on the subject and will ask each State to develop further its own legislation. This is also an important point for the G7, which France is chairing this year: the idea of a package of legislation that was proposed by a number of non-governmental organizations and lawyers, including Ms Halimi and several others, who inspired us to try to make advances in this battle. Naturally, that will feed into the dynamic resulting from the first universal Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, the adoption of which France clearly and unreservedly supports. Within the European Union, we will also assume our responsibilities in this regard. It is a good text, one which I fully endorse, and we must move forward collectively using it as a basis.

The fight against inequalities is also one that we should pursue collectively within the multilateral framework, taking account of what the wage relationship is in essence. I was just speaking about this with some of you. It is always an imbalanced relationship: it is never contractual just because it is the relationship between an employer and an employee, and it also constitutes the very philosophy of labour law. That is why we must continue fighting in Europe and within the international organizations to ensure that the elements of this relationship are not normalized, if I may say so, and not to consider that the fight against inequalities in the world of work will somehow undermine the fight against economic inequalities. That is not true. It is also why I want us to be able to continue to advocate, in Europe in particular, a genuine social public order with all that that entails, and the idea of a European minimum wage, with each country retaining its autonomy.

If we do not have such a social public order in Europe, and if we do not have this fight against inequalities, we will then see those same effects even in Europe. I say this in front of a number of Heads of State and Government both from within the European Union and who are in discussions to join it, such as the Prime Minister of Serbia. Countries in the East or the South are currently experiencing the effects of disintegrating social law and the lack of an adequate European social public order, with emerging demographic problems that did not exist some years ago in Europe. When countries in Eastern Europe say, "There are no more workers left here, we are losing 20 to 30 per cent of our population as they are leaving to work in France, Germany or elsewhere because there is a minimum wage there and they earn four times as much as at home", there is something very wrong. That is not what we created Europe for. Europe is not a market; it is a project based on freedom, solidarity and convergence. It is bad for the European countries who are playing by the rules, and it is bad for the countries of origin and the workers from there. We must therefore join together to fight for social public order and a minimum wage.

The second priority is the battle for universal social protection coverage. Here, too, we will need the engagement of States, the social partners and civil society. An initiative has been launched by the G7 calling on all countries to honour their commitment to develop social protection systems for all by 2030 in accordance with the principles set out in the Recommendation adopted by the ILO in 2012. We are thus inviting the G7 countries to join the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection that is coordinated by the ILO and the World Bank. This is essential. We know that currently around half of the world population has no social protection coverage. We need a transformation in these rights and to establish universal access to social protection, precisely because of the turmoil we are witnessing.

As I was saying, the ILO has done some remarkable work in this area, including in engaging in an innovative partnership. We now need to push the member States to show the same commitment. We need to continue this work to build universal social protection, because it is also changing in our own countries. The system of social protection that was constructed during the twentieth century for the workforce and the relationship with a productive social organization was a long-term economic policy, intended to leave no one

behind, and went hand in hand with the world of industry. Now, it has been shaken up by the changes in the world, because we are in an economic cycle of innovation, where relationships are becoming increasingly individual as a result of digitalization. And so we must restore universal rights for individuals, while ensuring that the victories and regulation allow the social partners to play an integral part. That is why we must also rebuild a common grammar for action, because making rights more individual again cannot mean that there will no longer be any need to represent workers in society. That is the challenge before us: to rethink social protection so that it is no longer merely about the financial aspect, as it was in the welfare state of the twentieth century. We have to redesign it with a common organization that is ahead of us. Here, too, we must collectively be innovative. And I, too, have a responsibility in this battle along with all of the social partners and the government.

The third priority is to support workers through the digital transformation. I know that it lies at the heart of your discussions currently and there is no need for me to tell you that the platform economy, robotization and artificial intelligence offer tremendous opportunities. The talk in the world's major capitals is all about the opportunities. And, it is true, these opportunities do exist. They will allow us to reduce strenuous work, improve productivity, come up with new uses for technology, fight diseases, invent new forms of transportation and combat global warming more effectively. But, if you discuss robotization, artificial intelligence and the digital transformation with 80 per cent of our fellow citizens, they will tell you that they are afraid. They do not see opportunities; they see risks. They say, "This machine is going to put me out of a job", or "My personal data is going to be shared with who-knows-who and my rights and freedom will be undermined", or "These kinds of things are going to dehumanize our society". And so we must jointly develop an ethical and regulatory framework to ensure that our contributions, both substantive and financial, to innovation go hand in hand with social progress.

We have not yet managed to demonstrate the human aspect of digitalization and hence the contribution to social progress that it can make. That is the challenge ahead for all of us: first and foremost for digital entrepreneurs, and also for governments. Innovation of course has its advantages, which must be given more visibility, as some companies provide us with responses to our joint challenges. Digital technology will undeniably lead to a reduction in strenuous work and, coupled with innovation, will enable us to reduce emissions. At the same time, we must also succeed in ensuring that that does not translate into increased precarity or diminished rights, or undermine the history of progress. Essentially, we have to look closely at what digitalization brings with it: a fear of solitude and a fragmentation in the world of work and the after-effects. We must first of all work to address this challenge in each of our countries. We must provide better, lifelong training, transform and expand university education and training, and join together with all of the social partners here today and in the regions of France to invest in lifelong skills. In France, we will be investing 15 billion euros to support 2 million jobseekers and disadvantaged youth in tackling these challenges, because we need to be well equipped to face up to these transformations in the world, and not only adapt to them but take advantage of the opportunities they offer.

Beyond that, we must adopt new rules. Until now, absolute freedom has reigned in relation to the internet and digitalization. However, without a minimum of public order to allow freedom, the law of the jungle will prevail. Hence the need to adopt common rules. In France, we will be adopting a new set of rules to substantially improve the conditions of workers in the platform economy, which is vital. We also initiated dialogue with the major digital platforms as part of the Tech for Good summit to encourage them to proactively insure their workers. At the international level – and your Declaration will be crucial in this connection – we must succeed in building a framework of rights for workers on these platforms, whether they are freelancers or small economic units. We cannot allow our collective organization to be eroded by some sort of new organization of modern-day working made possible by the digital world, because these opportunities will soon become setbacks and will fuel the crisis I was talking about. In France, we have made a start at the

national level; we now need to move forward at the European and international levels and, I believe, in close cooperation with other organizations.

The last substantial challenge we have before us is the transition to greener economies. Many before me in this room today have said that the fight for social justice against this backdrop of crisis is twinned with the fight for environmental justice, because they are one and the same. We have a system that has somehow lost sight of its aim to do good, and whose “negative externalities”, as the economists call them, are apparently large-scale poverty, exclusion and the environment. We must place the fight against global warming and the fight for biodiversity back at the very core of the model of production. We must engage in this fight because it is also a fight for social justice, because the victims nowadays of ecological inequalities are the same victims of social inequality and inequality at work. That is why I want us to work collectively on projects concerning the transition to greener economies. For example, after the decision of the United States to withdraw from the Paris Agreements, we organized the One Planet Summit to decide on the actions we would pursue in the context of the G7 through an ad hoc meeting. And there we mobilized the social partners, entrepreneurs, intellectuals and universities to set up specific projects and to conduct initiatives for the first time with a view to changing the way in which certain funders, funds and economic stakeholders are organized within them. For the first time, a coalition was established some months ago thanks to the involvement of a number of sovereign wealth funds to ensure that they incorporate an environmental objective and make such projects possible. I would particularly underscore the involvement of the Prime Minister of Norway. This is the same approach we intend to take with a number of large international enterprises, precisely some of these large investors, so that they include the environmental and social impact in their investment choices. I would like for us in the G7 to be able to launch an initiative for a fund with a social and environmental impact and to have genuine inclusive growth that incorporates the green transition into its objectives.

This is also what we must incorporate into our regional dialogue in our countries with our enterprises, our workers and our communities, to enable our environmental objectives to be included in and to be in harmony with our social and economic objectives. This will support transitions all over our regions by allowing the enterprises involved, States and communities to fund them. Over a number of years, only these transitions will enable us to shift from regions tied to highly polluting industrial operations and often strenuous work to regions where, thanks to new economic activities, there are better standards of working and living and respect for our environmental objectives. Many have mentioned it here and elsewhere, and this is what we are beginning to implement in France and I hope that it will gather pace. This is also what we must do at the European and international levels in the forums I mentioned.

This is the methodology and the four priorities that I would like us to take on within the G7 that France is chairing. I would also like all of us to take them on board together, given the nature of the crisis we are all experiencing. In recent months, France has gone through very trying times, but I see this as an opportunity, because the French people never allow themselves to become resigned. So when they say what they have said with such force, I believe some humility is needed to be able to listen and take note of what we have done badly, to never stop doing what must be done, and to be able to change methodology all the while listening to what they are saying and the strong signal they are sending.

I have tried to extract the necessary conclusions for France and share them with you today. Our fellow citizens are seeking more meaning, more closeness and more humanity. I believe that they are ready to take on the current transformation that they are seeing, understanding and experiencing. Sometimes our young people understand better than us, and they are now insisting that we do more, and act more quickly, to combat climate change, for example – and rightly so. Perhaps our responses have been good but sometimes too far removed from our constituents, or based on some kind of assumption that “there are some

in the know and the rest must undergo”. I believe that that was a fundamental error. Now, our collective responsibility is to transform our way of doing things, from the most personal level within enterprises, within our regions and within government. We must change our way of being and doing things with all stakeholders and indeed place humans and humanity back at the centre. In this respect, your battle, and our battle, for the coming years is crucial.

As I said most emphatically: I believe that the crisis we are experiencing may lead to war and a disintegration of our democracies. This is my firm belief. I think that all those well-fed people sitting pretty and believing that this is just fear-mongering are wrong. They are the same ones who awakened to people in power whom they thought could never be elected, and they are the same ones who left Europe while thinking that that would never happen. Incidentally, they were often those most enamoured of this form of capitalism and unbridled openness. Personally, I do not wish to make the same mistake with you. So, we must succeed in overhauling our model of production to regain what was once the social market economy: a means of production and vital wealth creation and at the same time a means to provide for justice and inclusion and to organize innovation and openness the world over, while seeing to it that everyone has a share in it.

I will conclude by saying that this calls for us, collectively, to be extremely consistent. We cannot advocate what I have just said here at the ILO and then later at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the European Council say, “You have to adapt because of the financial crisis and cut back on your social rights”. There must be an end to that, and hence the declarations adopted by the IMF two weeks ago mark a historic sea change. We cannot keep saying what I have just said at the ILO and then keep on saying at the World Trade Organization, “Trade is great. We have to negotiate agreements with everyone, no matter what their social or environmental standpoints. And long live dumping: everything will be better and everyone will be better off”. We cannot continue to think of the world as being organized in silos; those days are over. Our fellow citizens do not experience life in terms of ILO declarations and standards on the one hand and those of the IMF or the European Council on the other. They go about their day-to-day lives, which are the fruit of all of that, and also of our aberrations.

That is why I am saying quite emphatically, as I have said before and will say in all forums: I want no more international trade agreements that fuel social and environmental dumping and, as a European leader, I will say no to them, whenever I have no such guarantees. I no longer want us in Europe to believe that economic and financial adjustment and debt take precedence over social rights, as to do so would be to fuel the extremes, foster doubt and feed into precisely the disintegration of the European project itself, as it was our responsibility to define the element of solidarity that was part and parcel of it. This new form of globalization, the reinvented form of multilateralism, is a human-centred multilateralism that is also founded on responsibility – responsibility within enterprises, within our regions and within each of our countries, as well as among all of us.

My commitment to you today is that I will play my full part, both this year when chairing the G7, and also more broadly each time I have battles to fight. Now more than ever, the circumstances that led to the birth of the ILO in troubled times and fuelled your international organization when the Second World War was not yet over are the same ones which must spur us on to enter a new chapter, otherwise we will inevitably face fresh conflicts. This commitment I am making before you today with all of the trade unions, employers’ associations and the government is not mine alone, but also that of France, and I will defend it in all forums with the same vigour.

The President
(Original French)

On behalf of my colleagues from the Office and all Conference delegates, I wish to express my profound gratitude to you for having honoured us with your presence today and having shared your thoughts and your vision.

I hereby adjourn this high-level section, organized in the third plenary sitting of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference.

(The sitting adjourned at 2 p.m.)