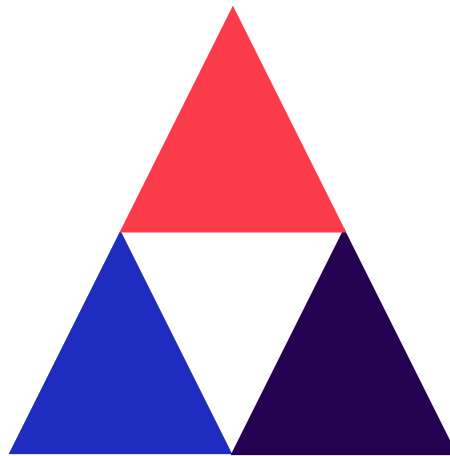




▶ Final report¹

The Technical Meeting on the Future of Work in the Context of Lifelong Learning
for All, Skills and the Decent Work Agenda
(17–21 May 2021)



Sectoral Policies Department (SECTOR)
Geneva, 2021

¹ In accordance with established procedures, this Final report will be submitted to the 343rd Session of the Governing Body of the ILO (November 2021) for its consideration.

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► Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	5
II. General discussion	7
III. Consideration of the proposed points for discussion.....	11
1. What challenges and opportunities have arisen regarding work in the education sector as a result of technological advances, climate change, globalization, demographic shifts and other drivers of change, including the lifelong learning agenda and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic?	11
2. Which policies and practices have worked, which have not worked, and what needs to be done further to address these decent work challenges and opportunities?.....	14
3. Taking into account the great diversity in different countries in the organization of education, what recommendations can be made for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members (governments, employers' and workers' organizations) regarding the promotion of decent work and quality learning in the education sector, in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda?.....	22
IV. Consideration and adoption of the draft conclusions	27
Decent work opportunities and challenges in the education sector.....	27
Proposed paragraph 1	27
Proposed paragraph 2	27
Proposed paragraph 3	28
Proposed paragraph 7	28
Ensuring effective lifelong learning and quality education for all: Investing in the capabilities and decent work of educators.....	28
Proposed paragraph 9	28
Proposed new paragraph following paragraph 10	28
Proposed paragraph 11	28
Proposed new paragraph after paragraph 11	29
Proposed paragraph 22	29
Recommendations for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members.....	29
Proposed paragraph 23	29
Proposed new paragraph following paragraph 23	29
Proposed new subparagraph following subparagraph 23(c)	29

Proposed new subparagraphs following subparagraph 24(iii)	29
	Page
Proposed subparagraph 26(h)	30
Proposed new subparagraph 26(f).....	30
Proposed new Annex	30
V. Adoption of the conclusions	30
VI. Closure of the meeting	30

▶ I. Introduction

1. The Technical Meeting on the Future of Work in the Context of Lifelong Learning for All, Skills and the Decent Work Agenda was held from 17 to 21 May 2021. The Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) decided at its 335th Session (March 2019) to convene the meeting and at its 337th Session (October–November 2019) that it would be held over five days in Geneva in October 2020. In light of the travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was postponed and held in a mixed face-to-face and virtual format from 17 to 21 May 2021. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss labour and professional issues concerning education personnel in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda, with specific focus on the impact of technology, labour market demands and global trends in work in the education sector.
2. The Chairperson of the meeting was Mr Chad Blackman, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Barbados to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. The Government Vice-Chairperson was Ms Mahlet Hailu Guadey (Ethiopia), the Employer Vice-Chairperson was Mr Santiago García Gutiérrez and the Worker Vice-Chairperson was Mr Jelmer Evers. The working party on conclusions was chaired by Mr Ricardo Kellman, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Barbados to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. The Secretary-General of the meeting was Ms Alette van Leur, Director of the Sectoral Policies Department (SECTOR), the Deputy Secretary-General was Mr Shinichi Akiyama, Deputy Director of SECTOR, the Executive Secretary was Mr Oliver Liang and the Coordinator of the secretariat services was Mr Mohammad Taher.
3. The meeting was attended by 185 participants, including 133 Government representatives and advisers, as well as 15 Employer and 19 Worker representatives and advisers, and 16 observers from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and invited international non-governmental organizations.
4. The Chairperson welcomed the participants to the meeting, where they would be discussing one of the most important topics in the world of work, which was critical for economic growth, job creation and a sustainable future. Education, training and lifelong learning were key to preparing learners for life and the world of work. Governments, employers and workers depended on quality education and training to ensure productive economies, the growth of value chains and the creation of decent jobs. Education and training were also essential for peace, democracy, health and well-being, the promotion of human and labour rights, gender equality, and the transition to sustainable and green economies. Changes in recent decades meant that teachers and trainers could now draw on unprecedented technologies and information sources to support learning, learners could connect to others around the world and new and vast areas of knowledge had been opened up to all those engaged in lifelong learning. However, there was now increased pressure on students and teachers, and the role of educators had become more complex. Technology, with all its benefits, also raised questions of equality, governance and the well-being of educators and learners. The COVID-19 pandemic had increased the urgency of the topic. The latest figures showed that almost half of the world's students were still affected by partial or full school closures, and over 100 million children would fall below the minimum proficiency level in reading as a result of the health crisis. Decent work for educators would be a crucial strategy for building back more resilient education systems across the world. He called on all the participants in the present unique forum to share their insights and experience on such

critical issues with a view to identifying key areas in which all constituents could work together to make progress. Noting that certain technical issues had arisen in the organization of the present meeting, he indicated that such technical problems were illustrative of the difficulties faced by teachers and students in the context of distanced learning.

5. The Secretary-General welcomed all the participants to the meeting, where they would be discussing one of the central issues of present times. The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019) called for effective lifelong learning and quality education for all with a view to “promoting the acquisition of skills, competencies and qualifications for all workers throughout their working lives as a joint responsibility of governments and social partners”. For the ILO, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning was the only viable path to the achievement of SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. The meeting offered a unique opportunity to discuss the future of education through the angle of decent work. The vital questions to be considered included the impact of changes in the field of education on the millions of teachers, education administrators and education support personnel in their daily work and lives, and the skills that educators would need to address future of work challenges. While many international conferences dealt with learning and learners, the present meeting was intended to address the opportunities and challenges facing those who made education happen. It therefore offered the opportunity to look at education through the framework of decent work, as set out in the ILO’s fundamental principles and rights and work and the relevant standards. That approach had become even more urgent with the COVID-19 pandemic as work in education, in the same way as in many other sectors, had been irrevocably changed by the pandemic. In line with the call made by the Centenary Declaration for a human-centred approach to the future of work, she therefore hoped that the meeting would take the opportunity to set out a common vision of education and training that provided for both quality education for learners and decent work for all those who worked in the sector.
6. The Executive Secretary introduced the issues paper prepared for the meeting (TMDWA/2021). He recalled that in 2000 the ILO had held a tripartite meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Twenty-first Century: The Changing Roles of Education Personnel, which had been organized at a time that marked the cusp of changes that were shaping the world of education and skills. Over the past 20 years, those trends had had a profound impact on the work of education personnel, who included teachers, administrators and education support personnel. The issues paper mapped out a number of decent work issues in relation to those changes in the education sector and their impact on people who worked in the sector, including: new technologies and the related issues of privacy and data protection; the new social responsibilities of educators in fields ranging from health, sexual health, mental health, career development and labour market entry; and the more traditional challenges of the working conditions of teaching personnel, low wages and difficulties in balancing work and family life, which were making it difficult to recruit and retain teachers, especially in rural areas. An estimated 100 million children were out of school in North Africa and the Middle East due to the pandemic, armed conflicts and other protracted crises. There appeared to be universal academic consensus that educators were the key element in ensuring a quality education system and overcoming such challenges.

▶ II. General discussion

7. The Worker Vice-Chairperson welcomed the holding of the meeting at such a crucial time, when the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were accelerating the longer-term challenges of inequality and political unrest and providing a glimpse of how global society would be able to respond to global threats such as climate change. It was clear that global society needed to do so much more and that quality public education for every child would be crucial in facing the challenges. Teachers and education support personnel were well aware that their role as educators would not exist without the students they taught. Teachers were committed to providing quality education for every child in every country and required support from the State to do so. But their ability to do that was intimately related to their status in the national setting and their working conditions. Job security and stability, with decent salaries, were crucial to enable them to fulfil their vital role effectively. The 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers and the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel were now more relevant than ever. However, they did not offer a sufficient basis to ensure that teachers could continue to lead their profession, engage with their students and ensure growth and lifelong learning opportunities for all, as outlined in the Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140), and the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195). Moreover, it was necessary to ensure the effective enjoyment by teachers of their fundamental rights at work, including freedom of association. While the issues paper rightly made reference to blended and hybrid learning, which were having an extreme impact on the working conditions of teachers and were crucial in the pandemic response, they were merely another tool in the pedagogical pallet of teachers. Over the past 20 years, a discourse had emerged that was creating a false dichotomy which was alien to educators. It was not a question of skills versus knowledge, instruction versus project-based learning or classrooms versus community-based learning, as they were all part of the trade of teachers. Education was a social and relational endeavour, and the pandemic had served to highlight the crucial role of physical interaction, with schools and classrooms offering a place of belonging and social cohesion that was crucial to learning. Evidence from many countries and from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showed that student learning had dropped off during lockdowns for all students, especially for poor students, while work had intensified for teachers. It was clear that presential learning not only ensured better education, but also resulted in a better society. Moreover, recent research that would soon be published indicated that when certain countries had switched to full online delivery during the pandemic, fewer than 20 per cent of the population had internet access, meaning that most children in those countries had been entirely deprived of education. The digital divides that persisted across countries and across regions had resulted in an unacceptable number of children being denied their right to education, and showed that access to technology was now a human right.
8. Moreover, as indicated by the Commission on the Future of Work, skills did not represent the full picture. A human-centred future would require a deliberate focus on the well-being of children, which was symbiotically connected to the well-being of teachers. The education of students with the human capabilities to become full citizens would require them to be taught with care, and their teachers should also be afforded the same level of care. And yet, certain approaches and measures made it difficult for teachers to ensure a conducive environment for students. For example, as indicated in Paragraph 124 of the 1966

Recommendation, no merit rating system for purposes of salary determination should be introduced or applied without prior consultation with and acceptance by the teachers' organizations concerned. No union supported merit-based pay, and yet it continued to be used as a divisive and flawed policy approach with no evidence of a positive impact on students. Teachers were committed to a collegial, collaborative and aspirational profession in which all teachers supported all students to engage with learning across the continuum, from those committed to an academic path through to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) students who were working to develop practical skills. Governments needed to improve their monitoring and support for marginalized students. The 1966 Recommendation still offered important guidance, although conditions had changed. In the 1960s, teachers largely taught content based on the use of paper materials and, while they had a duty of care for students, they had not been expected to cover the range of support structures and cross-professional arrangements that were available in society today. Advances in technology had led to greater standardization of assessments and curricular and educational policy across countries, at the expense of local approaches. The march of standardization had produced certain perverse and debilitating effects.

9. And yet, the pandemic had shown that nothing was set in stone. Teachers had demonstrated their ability to adjust to changing realities, often at great personal cost, with a nimbleness and flexibility not often seen in other professions. The professional autonomy of teachers had been enhanced by necessity and they had immediately become responsible for student assessment in a way that could not have been imagined a year earlier. Such professional autonomy should be enhanced and nurtured. Although the Centenary Declaration emphasized the importance of collective bargaining and social dialogue, in practice governments often talked to technology companies about their educational requirements, but rarely consulted teachers' organizations. The disastrous results could be seen in one country that had tried to use an algorithm to determine exam results based on parameters set without any consultation with teachers, and where that approach had had to be abandoned and replaced by teacher assessment. Moreover, as classrooms became digitalized, at a speed that had increased significantly during the pandemic, protections needed to be put in place for both students and teachers, and governments had a responsibility to ensure that data were not being monetized or sold. That should be done in full collaboration with worker representatives to ensure full clarity and transparency. Technological issues had ironically been managed more carefully in the private sector, where elite schools had set stringent limits on the technology consumed by pupils. Such protection should not be confined to the rich, but must be available for all. Another important issue on which education authorities were not doing enough was climate change. School infrastructure accounted for a significant part of building stock, and the meeting should insist on high priority being given to climate-friendly school buildings. Green alternatives offered an educational approach that was aligned with ILO goals, and the issue of climate change could not be left to future generations. Moreover, the development of students into full citizens could not be ensured unless they were taught to think critically about society's approach to the future. Faced with fake news, right-wing populist approaches based on lies, the stubborn denial of science and the development of anti-democratic approaches, teachers were in the front line in protecting the future. To fulfil that vital function, they needed the support of strong institutions, good initial teacher education and continuous professional learning and development (CPLD) throughout their careers. Indeed, the teaching profession could be a model for lifelong learning, for which tripartite commitment would be required on a number of important points, including: improving on the 1966 Recommendation and the ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work

for early childhood education personnel, which should be connected to the ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART); and ensuring policy coherence by recognizing the joint Education International (EI)/UNESCO [Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards](#) as a means of ensuring the enhanced professionalism of teachers, an improvement in their status and increased responsibility. There were already many points of agreement between the parties set out in a series of ILO instruments, which could be built on to achieve tangible gains in line with the Decent Work Agenda.

10. The Employer Vice-Chairperson considered that the tripartite meeting offered a valuable and timely opportunity for the tripartite constituents to take stock of how the current health and economic crisis was affecting the education sector and to lay solid foundations for ensuring that the sector was not only able to cope with the current situation, but also to seize the opportunities that arose to improve education systems in the long term. He emphasized that education was the backbone of economies and societies overall, as one of the most powerful drivers of development and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, productivity and stability. The world had been experiencing what some referred to as a “learning crisis” even before the pandemic. Literacy rates had risen over the past two centuries, mainly as a result of increased enrolment rates in primary education. Secondary and tertiary education had also seen drastic growth, with the global average number of years of schooling now higher than in the past. Nevertheless, 258 million children of primary and secondary school age had been out of school in 2019, thereby demonstrating the enormous challenges that remained in terms of expanding access to education for all. The world was far from being on track to achieve universal primary completion by 2030, as set out in SDG target 4.1, with some countries lagging well behind. There were also serious concerns regarding qualitative aspects of the education system, as shown by the ever-increasing skills gap faced by many industries worldwide. The skills gap, which stemmed from the discrepancy between the competencies needed by the labour market and those with which the young workforce were equipped, emphasized the need for better integration between the education system and labour market institutions with a view to aligning the curricula and teaching approaches of educational and training institutions with the skills needs of enterprises. The skills gap was frustrating for teachers, students, educational institutions and enterprises, and represented a serious misallocation of scarce resources that had grave economic and social consequences. The improvement of education systems, in terms of both numbers and quality, was therefore already a priority, which had been made even more critical by the pandemic. According to World Bank statistics, COVID-related school closures could be pushing an additional 72 million primary school aged children into learning poverty, which meant that they would be unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10. The pandemic would also have profound and long-standing consequences on public and private financing, education delivery, the mobility of students and the operation of educational institutions. The entire education ecosystem was being transformed in a way that had been unimaginable even one year ago.
11. Despite the difficulties entailed by the virtual nature of the meeting, it was the responsibility of the tripartite constituents to show that the ILO remained relevant and was able to continue its work under the circumstances. The draft conclusions discussed by the meeting should therefore be concise, precise and, above all, short, which would help to ensure that negotiations were productive during the short time available and would offer clear guidance to national social partners. Employers were strongly committed to engaging in the important discussion and demonstrating that social dialogue, even virtual, remained

the best tool available to overcome the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities arising out of the pandemic.

12. The Government Vice-Chairperson emphasized the crucial role of education, skills and lifelong learning for sustainable development. Education provided young generations with the skills necessary to live in peace and good health, and with skills that were essential to enter the labour market. Decent work and sustainable development depended on quality education and skills. It was clear that good education and skills systems depended on qualified and motivated education personnel, including teachers, administrators and education support staff. The human element in the provision of good education was the most important and challenging aspect of education systems. Education personnel were the costliest part of investment in education, and it was important to encourage talented and motivated young people to enter the education sector. They needed to be trained well and to receive continuous training after entering service, and to be provided with support to fulfil their growing responsibilities in relation to teaching, guidance and other care duties. They increasingly needed training and support in the use of technology, which had become a major part of education today. Financing such an ambitious agenda was a challenge and funding for education in many countries remained inadequate to ensure sufficient numbers of qualified teachers, which made it difficult to recruit and retain talented young people in the profession. The added cost of technology was increasing the strain on public budgets to provide adequate resources and prevent a digital divide between well-resourced and poorer schools. Education systems around the world varied widely and were often decentralized. One-size-fits-all solutions rarely worked in education and countries needed the flexibility to apply principles and solutions adapted to local contexts. However, the representatives of governments, workers and employers present in the meeting would undoubtedly be able to agree on the importance of education in a common vision that could provide a basis for constructive social dialogue on solutions to the financing and development of a high quality education workforce in every country. Elements of the path forward would include constructive relations with education unions, partnerships with the private sector and public investment in education, including through appropriate development cooperation. Governments would also need to exercise adequate regulation and control over education technology to ensure that curricula and teaching remained driven by countries and their educational vision.
13. An observer representing the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) emphasized the importance of lifelong learning in offering opportunities for upskilling, retraining and professional development so that workers could stay relevant and progress in work, and well as achieving fulfilment and personal development in their lives. Innovative solutions were required in response to the changes created by technology. Significant trends in the labour market included more frequent changes of jobs and vocations by individuals during their careers, by choice, out of necessity or due to technological advances. Employability was now determined less by general qualifications and more by the ability to demonstrate the necessary skills for the job. While it was difficult to forecast the future with any certainty, it was clear that education systems were taking on increasing importance in preparing people for the work of both today and the future. When people were confronted with experience that conflicted with their previous understanding of the world, they had to find new knowledge and new ways of doing things. What was therefore needed was a learning-integrated life, or a learning mindset, with ongoing opportunities for learning and skills development as enablers of employability and success. When easily accessible and delivered effectively, lifelong learning had been shown to increase earnings and help the unemployed return to work, while improving performance, productivity and

employee retention. It also promoted decent work and was beneficial to mental and physical health, self-confidence, life satisfaction and civic participation. Inclusive access to learning should be a foundational principle for systems of lifelong learning. It was therefore necessary to address such barriers to participation as lack of time due to work, family reasons, financial resources, location, lack of support from employers and/or governments, access to information and technology and lack of social dialogue. Finally, more should be done to identify the unique and specific challenges of the various regions, particularly in Africa.

► III. Consideration of the proposed points for discussion

1. **What challenges and opportunities have arisen regarding work in the education sector as a result of technological advances, climate change, globalization, demographic shifts and other drivers of change, including the lifelong learning agenda and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic?**

14. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that the pandemic had given rise to huge challenges for the education sector, but also offered opportunities to adapt and transform education and to start realizing a vision of the future of learning. It was important for the meeting to consider both the immediate impact and the long-term consequences of the crisis. One of the major challenges arising out of the pandemic was clearly related to occupational safety and health. As a consequence of the health situation, mandatory school closures had been ordered in the vast majority of countries. Against that background, private employers had constantly made the safety of pupils, teachers and the school community their first priority. As a result of the multiple mitigation measures adopted, studies had concluded that schools represented a low infection and transmission risk for both teachers and students, in comparison with other settings. Widespread school closures should therefore be seen as a last resort and should only be decided upon after consulting the social partners and after other measures had been taken to contain the spread of the virus. Another challenge caused by the pandemic was the great threat to private schools, and even to their existence. Private schools often did not receive dedicated taxpayer funding and relied almost entirely on revenue from tuition fees. However, many families had faced a reduction in their finances or uncertainty and had opted for public schools, leading to a reduction in enrolment in private schools in many countries. The financial pressure on private schools was likely to continue in the medium term in view of the expected fall in enrolment, difficulties in recovering unpaid fees and accumulated arrears. Yet, governments in many countries were not supporting private schools and teachers through the subsidies, paid leave or wage support measures that were available for public schools. The lack of support had forced many private teachers to turn to other jobs and was resulting in the closure of private schools and training institutions. As private schools accounted for almost 25 per cent of total enrolment, that could have dramatic consequences on the learning opportunities of students and a long-term negative effect on national economies. Another key challenge lay in the growing divide between the skills needed by business and those acquired by students from educational and training

institutions. The mismatch, already acute, had become wider as a result of the pandemic. The recovery from the pandemic and the green and digital transitions that were occurring required the vast majority of the workforce to upskill or reskill in order to acquire the competencies needed in a changing world of work and to participate fully in society. The disconnect between the skills available and those that were needed made it more difficult for those without the right skills to obtain and retain employment, threatened the stability of business and exacerbated the social and economic barriers that restrained economies and forced them to operate below capacity.

15. While the pandemic was creating many problems for the education sector, new opportunities were also arising and new doors were being opened for innovation as the entire sector came together to adapt to the new reality. The pandemic had offered an opportunity to build understanding of how distance learning and the use of new technologies could be effective, as new technologies were adopted and curricula and teaching methods adapted to the new situation. It had been necessary at the same time to address the emotional and psychological aspects related to such changes, put in place new systems and mechanisms to facilitate the transition from face-to-face to online learning and keep teachers, students and parents committed and motivated. Distance learning solutions and the use of new technologies offered a number of benefits, including personalized learning adapted to the needs of students, easier access to a variety of subjects and the professional development of teachers in classroom management and in offering different learning experiences to different students. However, it was also important to recognize the limitations of online classes and the use of new technologies, and particularly the digital divide, with an estimated 360 million children lacking access to the Internet. Closing the digital divide was critical to ensuring educational equality. Unless there was significant investment in connectivity solutions and digital literacy, as well as bold policy changes to promote the use of new technologies in classrooms, the digital divide would result in an ever-widening learning gap. The physical closure of schools had forced them to set priorities for the content of learning, with emphasis being placed on certain subjects and on knowledge and competencies that were meaningful, of the greatest interest to students and applicable in the real world. Governments should adopt supportive public policies to help bridge the gap between the skills and competencies taught at school and those required on the labour market. The pandemic had offered the sector an opportunity to pilot and embrace changes that might otherwise have taken many years to implement. There was now the opportunity to develop and strengthen pedagogical techniques for the enhancement of human and social skills in children, such as critical thinking, effective communication, problem solving and relationship building, which would help to develop the mindset needed to manage evolving digital transformations in life and at work. Private institutions, such as universities, technical training institutions and distance learning centres, had been at the forefront of the new opportunities and were creating an enabling environment for innovation in the sector.
16. The Worker Vice-Chairperson welcomed the agreement by all participants that education was vital for society as a whole. It was necessary to explore what the skills gap entailed in practice and to acknowledge that it was not only confined to technological skills, but was very broad and also included civic skills and knowledge of the world. The importance attached to social dialogue was also to be welcomed. Social dialogue was one of the most powerful tools available and it was important to share good national practices in that regard. For example, in the Netherlands, a tripartite agreement on the workload of teachers had given school teams a say in the allocation of funds for the recruitment of teachers and support personnel, which had proved to be very successful. The strategy was currently

being considered in relation to a major investment by the Government to close the learning gap following the pandemic. It would be very beneficial to consider other successful examples of tripartite cooperation. The objective of ensuring qualified and motivated personnel was also key and, in view of differences in national conditions, could require measures tailored to local contexts. While it was clear that the regulation of technology was necessary, the meeting should consider the content of such regulation. Teachers were keen to explore technology, on condition that the aim was to assist classroom education, not replace it. The introduction of technology should be based on the sharing of knowledge and sound research involving teaching personnel. The response to the pandemic could offer an opportunity to evolve, on the understanding that the disruption caused by the crisis was not misused to transform the very nature of education, which was and should remain a public institution. It was important to give priority to the vaccination of teachers as a key measure to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the implementation of adequate safety measures in schools, although experience showed that the safety measures adopted varied widely between countries. The evolution of the sector in the wake of the pandemic might offer opportunities to move further towards the public provision of education. It should be recalled that tertiary education was also a public good and that many public institutions were involved in its provision.

17. The Government Vice-Chairperson emphasized that the pandemic had taken a huge toll on the education sector. It had served to demonstrate the inadequate preparation for and transition towards digital transformation, hampered in particular by a lack of skills, digital tools, infrastructure and resources. Further challenges included the strain placed on the private school system, difficult working conditions, job insecurity, the emotional toll of the pandemic on students and teachers, and the increased and irregular workload. Many teachers had been reluctant to engage in the digital transition. There was also a gender dimension to the digital divide, as shown by the priorities of households with insufficient technical tools, where precedence was often given to the head of the household, and then to boys, with girls coming last. The opportunities offered by the pandemic included the sudden necessity to embrace the digital transition, with the possibility of developing ICT skills and of adopting more flexible teaching methods, including blended education. Ministries of Education and employers should come together, including through public-private partnerships, to better identify the skills sets that would be required by youth to confront the challenges they would face in competing on the labour market of the future, including the necessary soft skills and mindset.
18. A representative of the Government of the Philippines strongly supported the call for the vaccination of education personnel, who should be classified as essential workers who were vital to ensure the uninterrupted supply of appropriately skilled human resources. Giving teaching personnel priority in national vaccination programmes would help to ensure the minimum possible level of disruption to the education system.
19. Representatives of the Government of Guinea emphasized that the pandemic had added to existing challenges in education in Africa, particularly as many people did not use digital tools and did not have access to the internet. Training in the use of technological tools would be required for an effective digital transition. In the case of technical training, the physical presence of learners and teachers was often necessary for skills to be acquired effectively. Another challenge concerned the high rate of illiteracy of young persons engaged in traditional apprenticeships. Formal apprenticeship systems were more conducive to ensuring an effective learning process. Despite all the challenges faced in

relation to vaccination campaigns, it was important to ensure the access of all teachers to vaccines.

20. The Worker Vice-Chairperson emphasized that reliance on public-private partnerships did not offer many solutions and that governments needed to take responsibility for education as a public good. Care was also needed to ensure that any changes proposed in the functions of teachers in the wake of the pandemic did not impinge upon their labour rights as laid out in ILO Conventions.
21. A Worker representative from Canada, with reference to the economic and social effects of the pandemic, considered that it was very important to take into account the heavy toll that it had taken on students, teachers and education workers in general. Emphasis should therefore be placed on mental health support and on the provision of comprehensive psychological and social support systems in the education sector.
22. A Worker representative from Mexico emphasized the importance of social dialogue in developing responses to the pandemic and in ensuring decent work in the education sector. In his country, successful social dialogue with the Government and employers during the pandemic had led to significant progress in protecting the economic and social rights of education personnel, including in the field of social security, with agreement being reached on pay increases, the recognition of merit-based pay and improved employment stability. Over 400 additional educational personnel had been taken on and many workers with temporary contracts had been offered greater job stability. Good leadership by the Government and the unions had resulted in productive tripartite cooperation.
23. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that many governments favoured the development of public-private partnerships, without which it was very difficult to guarantee the quality of vocational education and training. While agreeing that education was a public good, that did not mean that it should only be provided by public institutions. Many public goods were provided by private institutions. The skills gap also existed among teachers, for example in relation to digital skills. If governments found that teachers were reluctant adapt to new technologies, it was necessary to improve understanding of the reasons for such attitudes and explore possible solutions. While employers were not opposed to the calls made for teachers to be classified as essential workers for the purposes of access to vaccination, it should be borne in mind that many other categories of workers would also lay claim to that status. It was very clear that social dialogue was a crucial means of finding solutions to the challenges faced by the sector.
24. The Government Vice-Chairperson acknowledged the challenges that had arisen as a result of the pandemic. Governments were doing their utmost to ensure the necessary adaptation in the education sector. It was necessary to take into account the overall picture and identify the contribution that could be made by all the stakeholders. While governments clearly had their responsibilities, so did other partners. It was therefore important to work together to identify and implement appropriate solutions.

2. Which policies and practices have worked, which have not worked, and what needs to be done further to address these decent work challenges and opportunities?

25. The Worker Vice-Chairperson welcomed the emphasis placed on social dialogue during the discussions, but considered that insufficient importance was given to establishing the working conditions necessary to ensure decent work for teachers and education support

personnel. Where international labour standards were respected, the results were better for teachers, students and society. The pandemic had highlighted the critical work of teachers in supporting student learning, personal development and connecting the school community. Schools also fulfilled a broader function as hubs for the community, with teacher training and school leadership supporting teachers in the expansion of their professional role. Studies showed a regression in social and emotional skills and the ability to communicate during the pandemic. Learning had been hampered, particularly for students in crowded houses and without access to the Internet and other resources. The TVET sector had perhaps been worst affected, as it was an area where hands-on learning was essential. Although online solutions offered a stopgap solution, they were not a replacement. There was certainly a role for businesses in providing apprenticeships and for strong TVET institutions to maintain relations with businesses to facilitate the access of their students to the labour market. Although much guidance was contained in the 1966 Recommendation on how to ensure decent work for teachers, many of its principles were not being taken up, including the need for permanent contracts, especially in certain Latin American countries. The rise in precarious forms of employment was undermining the ability of teachers to do their jobs. Yet, when unions and governments worked together much could be achieved, as illustrated by the joint work in the Netherlands on professional standards. The ILO should produce guidance on approaches to teacher professionalism that were aligned with the EI/UNESCO Framework, as well as materials to supplement the 1966 Recommendation.

26. Digital fatigue was a very real problem and was giving rise to a form of digital slavery, with teachers being hounded at all hours of the day and night by requests from parents, students and administrators. Work intensification and the need for a better work-life balance were among the most critical issues faced by teachers, and the extension of working hours was contrary to the most basic ILO principles. There was growing consensus on the right of teachers to switch off. Technology needed to take people forward, not backwards to unsustainable working conditions. The importance of the right to data privacy and the right to disconnect highlighted the need to consult worker representatives on any digital tools that were under consideration and to include teachers in the monitoring and assessment of such tools. Public authorities should conclude contracts which as a minimum provided for joint data access and control. The latest EI Report on the Status of Teachers, which would soon be released, found that their status was constantly being undermined by low pay, deteriorating conditions, lack of respect, the intensification of work and precarious employment, with permanent jobs increasingly being replaced by short-term contracts. Such conditions gave rise to concerns that teachers might leave the profession in view of the reduced attractiveness of teaching as a career and, in some countries, the lack of commitment by governments to fund a quality education system for all. However, the pandemic had shown that bigger government was not only possible, but sometimes necessary. Education would be central to the recovery from the pandemic and any reduction in spending on education should be strenuously avoided. Greater security and better working conditions for teachers, based on ILO standards and principles, was the only way to improve their status and develop respect for their complex role in modern society. Teachers were now embracing a dual professionalism in which they were expected not only to be experts in their own subjects and in student learning, but also knowledgeable about the community, parents, local businesses and culture, and increasingly to act as a link with health and social agencies and workers. Renewed recognition and support was required for teachers in their increasingly complex role, with well-resourced schools acting as hubs and beacons for their communities. Social dialogue was needed on the introduction of

technology and data privacy, which should be covered by all collective agreements with a view to preventing the risk of a slide towards dehumanized and delocalized education with increasingly unacceptable working conditions. Well-funded quality education was essential to combat child labour, which had grown exponentially during the pandemic. The key aspect of public-private partnerships was the principle of 'partnership', which meant that teachers should be involved on equal terms, not consigned to the basement. The mandate of education went far beyond the role of private actors. The pandemic had shown that teachers were nimble and dynamic, and not slow to change, but it was necessary for change to be positive, and not a race to the bottom. The professionalism of teachers had to be supported by their ability to organize collectively with their colleagues in unions that negotiated their pay and conditions through collective bargaining, as was the case in some countries, although the system was under threat in many others.

27. The Employer Vice-Chairperson recalled that the education sector was facing a number of challenges directly linked to the pandemic, while others had been present for years and had been accelerated by the pandemic. In the short-term, the immediate priority was to ensure that education systems could continue to operate, not only to guarantee the continuity of education for current students, but also the survival of the education ecosystem. It was therefore essential for governments to extend support, not only for public schools, but also for private education institutions, which accounted for a quarter of students worldwide. It was in the public interest to ensure that all children, in both the public and private education sectors, were provided with equitable access to quality education opportunities. It was therefore the responsibility of governments to maintain a vibrant private sector in the education system. The other immediate priority was to ensure that as many students as possible were using the distance learning tools available. Governments therefore needed to identify students who were falling through the cracks, and implement measures to improve the access to learning of excluded students. In the medium and long term, a key issue for employers was to ensure that education systems continued to deliver quality learning experiences for millions of students through the adoption of education reforms that were supported by strong political commitment and effective implementation. Many countries continued to struggle to make efficient use of the resources allocated, with the result that more spending often did not translate into better learning opportunities. To address such challenges, it was important to engage in multifaceted collaboration with the private sector, which had the expertise, resources and networks to address some of the most urgent problems facing education systems in both developed and developing countries. Evidence showed that strategic public-private partnerships in education could increase learning efficiency and the transparency of public expenditure, improve service delivery, especially to under-served populations, allow quicker responses and overcome public sector restrictions. Yet, the refusal of many governments to recognize the private sector as a partner in social sectors severely curtailed the benefits that it could offer to education systems. Another area of collaboration with the private sector related to overcoming skills mismatches. Greater collaboration between employers and education providers could improve the quality of and access to labour market information as a means of ensuring that persons that dropped out of education were equipped with skills and competencies that were in demand on the labour market. Work-based learning programmes, including apprenticeships, were a cost-effective way of reducing skills mismatches, as they fostered continuous interaction between the education sector and the labour market, as well as offering informal learning opportunities. Public-private partnerships in that area allowed for a new level of communication between employers and education providers that was increasingly necessary for the development of technical

curricula. A further example of collaboration with the private sector involved working with private educational technology companies, which could offer distance learning solutions and address issues in the areas of connectivity, software, hardware and content availability. In conclusion, increasing access, equity and achievement in education should be a key priority for all countries to ensure a resilient and sustainable recovery from the pandemic, based on innovative programmes and initiatives, as well as public resources and leadership by governments, with the private sector as a key partner.

28. An Employer representative from Panama described the campaign undertaken in her country, with the support of international agencies, including UNICEF and the Latin American Development Bank, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, to enable teachers and students to return to school under the safest and most healthy conditions possible, with priority being given to education personnel in access to vaccines. The return to school reduced pressure on families and on children. Throughout the process, importance had been placed on collaboration with the stakeholders and public-private partnerships.
29. An Employer representative from New Zealand described the experience in her country of public-private partnership in responding to COVID challenges in education. The national school stimulus package, which had been agreed upon by the social partners in a tripartite forum, included an apprenticeship scheme that built on the existing system. The package addressed employment issues by providing wage subsidies for employers that took on apprentices. The measures introduced had produced several positive results, including a 50 per cent increase in uptake by apprentices. It had been particularly encouraging to see a marked increase in the number of women entering traditionally male dominated sectors, such as construction, and a rise in the numbers of apprentices from categories that were often under-represented, including indigenous groups. More small businesses had been attracted to the system, which was proving to be very cost-effective in providing high-quality training to a diverse range of people. It was hoped that the system would be maintained in future as an important component of future skills provision for the workforce.
30. The Government Vice-Chairperson emphasized the importance of linking education with the labour market and of taking into account the evolution of work. Social dialogue initiatives and public-private partnerships had an important role to play in identifying the skillsets that would be required in future, and it was therefore important to develop links between Ministries of Education and employers. Everyone agreed on the essential role played by education in society. However, blended education approaches would still require further adjustment. There was a need to restore links with the community level and to guarantee working conditions and safety, particularly in the continued context of the pandemic. A strategy of focusing on individuals did not always work out well, and there should therefore be a preference for collective education and engagement at the community level over individual skills development. Educators had a key role to play with respect to disadvantaged learners, who had particularly suffered during the lockdowns. The human-centred approach to education involved the need to focus on psychosocial skills. It was clear that education was not a commodity and it was crucial to empower education workers by ensuring their basic human rights and addressing the burden of their expanding duties. It was also important to place greater emphasis on issues affecting migrant workers, for example taking into account the experiences of the ASEAN model based on social dialogue and the strengthening of public-private partnerships. Coordination was needed between countries with a view to promoting lifelong learning irrespective of the country of employment, including through the recognition of qualifications and their transferability

within and between countries. Other interesting concepts included experiential learning for workers without an adequate training background, which had allowed freelance and gig workers to obtain certain qualifications.

31. A representative of the Government of Guinea-Bissau indicated that many strategies and policy measures had been adopted in his country in response to the pandemic, including lockdowns, social distancing measures and vaccination. However, online education and remote teaching had not been successful in view of the uneven access to technology, and especially the lack of connectivity in remote areas. In particular, there were practical problems in conducting technical training without face-to-face interaction, as practice was an important element of training. Vaccination was clearly the best solution for both students and teachers, although awareness of its benefits would have to be raised to convince those who were reluctant to be vaccinated.
32. A representative of the Government of Ethiopia said that the lockdown was a critical challenge in his country, particularly due to the technological divide, as technological resources were not available to all students and communities and it was therefore difficult to ensure the availability of quality education for all. On the supply side, taking into account the demographic situation in the country, the Government was endeavouring to achieve the new normal, for example by incrementally providing the necessary personal protective devices and vaccinating frontline workers to ensure safety at the workplace in the education sector. However, supplies were limited and more vaccines would be required to achieve that objective. In view of the differences in the societal contexts in which education systems operated, there could not be one-size-fits-all solutions. It was therefore crucial to look at the existing societal situation for the adaptation of education systems. Many African countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, were struggling to develop their education and health systems due to their very limited resources. His Government had adopted an Education Roadmap (2018-2030), which examined the various challenges and gaps as a basis for setting out a way forward to improve education in the country. It would be necessary to analyse education systems in Africa in general, particularly with a view to ensuring a smooth transition from school to the workforce. The population in Africa was young and offered plenty of potential, which was not being harnessed due to challenges relating to the quality of education. The ILO could provide technical support to help member States review their policies and programmes in such areas as education, decent work and the achievement of global commitments, including the SDGs, and could assist in mobilizing resources from multilateral partners with a view to improving the provision of education.
33. A representative of the Government of the Philippines emphasized that teachers and trainers were not only workers, but also the creators of future workers and the labour force through the provision of skills for employment. Although emphasis should be placed on their rights as workers, the adoption of a human-centred approach to education further increased the burden on teachers. During the pandemic, teachers and trainers had had to take responsibility not only for educating students with hard skills, but also for their mental well-being. Most people sought to acquire skills from school and training that would assist their economic survival or expand their choices in work. The inherent asymmetry of power between employers and workers was aggravated by discrimination based on sex, religion, race or ethnicity. Skills focused on basic human rights and the inherent dignity of workers could improve their labour market integration by reducing vulnerabilities, inequalities and social injustice, and improve their ability to assert their rights, negotiate better treatment and prevent domination by employers which, if tolerated, could foster or compound abuse. A human-centred approach to education that recognized the value of psychosocial skills

would be instrumental in promoting fundamental principles and rights at work. There was a danger of education being treated as a commodity, with students and parents as consumers, teachers as sellers and schools as markets. Building the capacity of students and trainees to assert their rights as future workers would contribute significantly to humanizing work, especially in the case of migrant workers from the global south, who were vulnerable to social dumping and at risk of being treated as commodities. The recognition of psychosocial skills as an essential element of human-centred education was therefore of great importance in empowering workers to perform their work in a responsible manner and in contributing to their development as active persons, not passive commodities.

34. A representative of the Government of Morocco, referring to the situation regarding online learning in developed countries, regretted that such solutions could not be easily implemented in many developing countries in view of the technological limitations. It was to be hoped that it would be possible to resume in-person learning in the near future, as trainees needed face-to-face instruction to receive proper training. The professionalization of training staff was crucial to the quality of vocational training. Legislation had therefore been adopted in Morocco requiring initial training diplomas before trainees could go on to higher levels of training as part of the national effort to institutionalize lifelong learning throughout professional careers in accordance with established benchmarks, including on safety, employment stability for trainers and the certification of skills. Training provision would be updated regularly to keep up with technological and pedagogical advances and market needs. The implementation of vocational training to internationally recognized standards was being rolled out in various sectors, such as the automotive industry, and the experience could be shared with other countries, especially in Africa. The establishment of a national institution was also envisaged for the training of trainers, taking into account the diversity of areas in which training was required. The provision of initial and continuous training would be formalized in law in line with a national training plan. In view of the importance of the psychological and material stability of trainers, including social protection, it was important for them to benefit from long-term and permanent contracts. Employers and unions, with support and guidance from governments, had an important role to play in agreeing on a balanced way forward, taking into account such issues as the workload and well-being of trainers, and the need for protection against harassment and decent wages so as to retain educational personnel in the sector.
35. The Employer Vice-Chairperson firmly supported the human-centred approach to education, a central part of which involved ensuring that students were equipped with the right skills to enable them to obtain jobs that offered decent work and career development. While technology was important, it should remain human-driven.
36. The Worker Vice-Chairperson was not opposed to business being involved in education, with the exception of certain providers of social media that were particularly prone to scandals and lack of privacy. What was important with technology was its quality, rather than its quantity. Research, for example by the OECD, showed that recourse to distance and online learning during the pandemic had had a negative impact on students, especially those in poorer families. As schools reopened, students, parents and teachers were all impatient for the resumption of face-to-face education. Technology could augment education, but not replace it. While education was clearly important in equipping students for their entry into the labour market, it was crucial to remain aware of the broader aims of public education in promoting personal development and citizenship, as set out in the constitutions of many countries. The support expressed for the human dimension of education and the importance of a community-based approach was reassuring. It was clear

that teachers should be vaccinated as an essential element of the efforts to emerge from the pandemic, and that vaccines should be made available in all countries. Governments should work with unions to raise awareness among teachers of the need to be vaccinated. With regard to distanced teaching, it should be noted that in the Netherlands the education system had gone online in one week, which had entailed a huge workload for all involved. Everyone wanted to return to face-to-face teaching, which was the only way of guaranteeing high quality education.

37. A Worker representative from Argentina emphasized the principle that education was a fundamental human right for all, but warned that universal access to quality education was impossible unless adequate conditions and decent work were ensured for teachers. Although the 1966 Recommendation set out the basic conditions that were required in the sector, in practice, in both the public and particularly the private sectors in Latin America, there had been a rise in fixed-term contracts with flexible working arrangements and a lack of employment stability (including performance-based pay), a growing denial of the labour rights enshrined in international labour standards, and deepening inequality in terms of access to technology, infrastructure and training in the use technology. The situation had deteriorated sharply during the pandemic, with teachers, and particularly women, subject to inequality, very high workloads and a loss of professional autonomy. They were also faced by a multiplicity of technical problems, including difficulties in access to the Internet and a lack of training in the necessary technical skills. The situation was made worse by the lack of effective social dialogue in many Latin American countries. In particular, in Brazil, there had been a rise in temporary contracts, accompanied by privatization, the defunding of the public education system, rising inequality and the absence of social dialogue, with a lack of recognition of unions by the authorities. In Colombia, the leaders of teachers' unions had long been subject to harassment and persecution. In Argentina, despite the difficulties relating to public finances and foreign debt, social dialogue had continued, with policies being developed for the continuation of teaching and to ensure adequate working conditions, while protecting the health of students and teachers. In the public university sector, several agreements had been concluded during the pandemic reaffirming the rights set out in collective agreements, recognizing the right to disconnect, guaranteeing safety and health conditions in face-to-face teaching and adopting measures to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, in virtual teaching. The responsibility of the public authorities had also been reaffirmed to provide the necessary resources and support for the implementation of the required technical solutions, including training in their use, to ensure the continuity of education. Joint mechanisms had been developed to follow-up the implementation of the pandemic response measures in the sector. The measures agreed upon constituted a fundamental basis for the introduction of the necessary technological solutions without the risk of deepening inequalities and the commercialization of education, while at the same time guaranteeing continued professional autonomy, so that education did not become a commodity.
38. A Worker representative from Zimbabwe described the collective development of a curriculum by the Government, teachers, business and other stakeholders which focused on skills development and lifelong learning. Particular consideration had been given to the exit profiles of learners, inclusivity, transparency based on effective evaluation and monitoring of learners, and the integration of learning areas with cross-cutting skills across the learning platform. In relation to lifelong learning, rather than focusing on the skills required for particular industries, emphasis had been placed on skills that would be needed for the future, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication and teamwork, leadership, technology, initiative and entrepreneurship, planning and organization, and

- technological skills. The curriculum was currently being implemented, but there were still challenges, particularly in the allocation of the necessary resources.
39. A Worker representative from Norway indicated that social dialogue in Norway had local, regional and national dimensions. The unions believed that most of the challenges relating to the digital transformation could be resolved through tools developed during the analogue age, namely national laws and regulations and collective bargaining agreements, which gave the social partners a real role in codetermination. The basic and supplementary agreements offered a good basis for unions to influence the national regulatory system and the implementation of national plans and strategies at the local level, not only in relation to working conditions and wages, but also the national strategy on digital security and artificial intelligence. Together with the Ministry of Education, research and data protection institutions, the trade unions were therefore engaged in important areas of digitalization in the sector, including training and resources for the continuous education of teachers. Social dialogue involved creating arenas for cooperation in all areas, the exchange of ideas and professional development in which unions were recognized as valuable partners and local leaders and administrators were available for dialogue. An important example was the development and implementation of the new curriculum in the country, in which teachers' unions had been closely involved, with enhanced participation by teachers, school leaders and local government. The resulting curriculum embraced such vital cross-academic subjects as sustainability, environmental knowledge, creativity, cooperation, freedom of speech, human rights, life skills and self-managing skills. The teaching profession had been entrusted with a high level of responsibility in the development of the curriculum. Based on the lessons learned, the union was now producing support materials to guide elected representatives in the workplace. Dialogue had therefore occurred at all levels, including the workplace, which had been important for the success of the measures adopted, which were seen as the product of co-determination at all levels, rather than the outcome of a top-down process.
40. A Worker representative from Canada considered that the manner in which social dialogue was established was fundamental and provided several examples of influential social dialogue in his country. In the province of Alberta, trade unions had collaborated with the government for the development of professional competence standards, setting high standards for public and private schools, while avoiding standardization, as the standards set could be met in a variety of ways. There had also been dialogue with school boards concerning the boundaries of digitalization, the need for multitasking and the right to disconnect, which had involved research by medical professionals, schools and industry, led by teachers. The right to disconnect had been set out in collective agreements. Furthermore, a broad discussion on technological and social change had been initiated with the public, including parents, grand-parents, teachers, schools and indigenous peoples. Teachers and schools had shown that they were very adaptable. However, one of the major considerations in the discussion was that it should not be limited to the short term, but should look at skills development in the long term and how to build lifelong learning in a rapidly changing society. Those examples showed that social dialogue could be effective in equipping schools for the future.
41. A Worker observer from Australia described an example from his country of social dialogue that empowered teachers. Teachers normally exercised control in classrooms, but had little influence at higher levels where policies were decided upon. It was therefore necessary to encourage teachers to be more proactive in policy determination through capacity building and involvement in research, so that they could contribute more fully to policy discussions.

42. The Employer Vice-Chairperson, referring to the comments made during the discussion, indicated that while flexibility had positive and negative aspects, one of its benefits was that it had allowed the continued hiring of teachers in certain countries despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

3. Taking into account the great diversity in different countries in the organization of education, what recommendations can be made for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members (governments, employers' and workers' organizations) regarding the promotion of decent work and quality learning in the education sector, in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda?

43. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that one of the most pressing needs was for the ILO to conduct studies into the impact of the pandemic on private schools. As the pandemic unfolded, there were still many uncertainties in terms of employment on how private institutions had been affected, how many private schools had been closed and the type of support they needed. In the longer-term, much progress would need to be made to achieve universal enrolment, as set out in the SDGs. The ILO could play a key role in that respect and, in collaboration with other United Nations specialized agencies, could help develop a system to monitor the functioning of national education systems, the pitfalls and areas for improvement, as a basis for timely and evidence-based decisions. For example, the OECD had done excellent work through various benchmarking studies on basic education, and the ILO could engage in similar work. Although private schools offered many advantages in both emerging and developed countries, there was still a lack of data on the extent and diverse nature of such schools, the numbers that they employed and their working conditions. The ILO should fill that knowledge gap through research into the positive impacts of private education, not only on education systems, but also in terms of employment and working conditions. There should also be a focus on teacher and trainer development as central elements in ensuring relevant and responsive workforce development. The ILO should become a leader in the skills agenda by undertaking analysis as a basis for anticipating future skills needs, and should compile and disseminate the good practices adopted in countries that had revamped their education systems to fight inefficiencies and increase overall quality.
44. With regard to governments, their immediate priority should be to ensure that their education systems were able to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. To do that, it was critical to provide as much financial support to the private sector and private schools as for public education. The support was not only essential to cover fixed costs, but also to ensure that private schools could survive the crisis and continue to educate students and offer them the best opportunities for their future. Beyond the COVID-19 crisis, governments should strengthen partnerships with the private sector that benefited both parties by improving access to and the quality and relevance of education. Governments around the world should continue exploring various means of involving the private sector in the provision of education, including through vouchers, subsidies, capitation grants, stipends and contracts. In view of the rapid pace of change, it was important for governments to create an agile policy development environment, including regular policy reviews, monitoring and

evaluation to measure impact and adapt measures in response to trends. It was also the duty of governments to maintain close contacts between education systems, training institutions and private sector employers with a view to ensuring that students were equipped with the skills and competencies that were demanded by employers, as well as entrepreneurship skills for self-employment. Although education and lifelong learning were major public concerns, no stone should be left unturned to embrace private initiatives that provided solutions at all levels of the labour market, including new online learning opportunities, real-time labour market information, the certification of competences and vocational training at all ages. The market offered ample innovative solutions that went beyond the current crisis. To mobilize the expertise, resources and information of the private sector, governments should have the political will and institutional potential to incentivize the private sector, through the active engagement of national and sectoral employers' organizations in consultative and decision-making entities in education and skills development systems. Governments should take a leading role by investing in programmes that provided skills training to under-represented groups and underutilized workers. The building blocks of lifelong learning also included an understanding of entrepreneurship, and the importance of the sustainability and productivity of enterprises, which were key for job creation. That could be fostered by putting creativity at the core of learning, and by including project-based learning and other transversal activities. Lifelong learning was a joint effort, for which responsibility should be shared by governments with employers, students and workers. As universities in many countries did not train teachers in twenty-first century skills, governments should revise university curricula to ensure that teachers had the right skills. Finally, the social partners should collaborate to ensure that the private sector could play its full role in the education system, based on complementarity that benefited all parties, while improving access to education and its quality and relevance.

45. The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted the consensus during the discussions on the importance of the 1966 Recommendation, the need to recognize that quality public education was not a commodity, the importance of finding a balance between the opportunities and risks of technology in the education sector and the need for working conditions that enabled teachers and educators to do their crucial job in a decent manner. The ILO should be called upon to develop a handbook on the implementation of the 1966 Recommendation, and to organize regional capacity-building workshops to identify and fill the gaps that had emerged since the adoption of the Recommendation. That would enable ILO regional offices to play a role, as they had done with the implementation of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). The ILO should also promote just transition dialogues on the role that curricula and school buildings could play in addressing climate change and other environmental issues. The ECE guidelines should be moved into the purview of CEART so that countries could be held accountable for their implementation and to offer a means of recourse for ECE educators who were not afforded fair working conditions in line with the guidelines. That should be accompanied by regional workshops on the implementation of the guidelines. There could be no quality education system without freely accessible public education that was available from the cradle to the grave, with a guarantee of lifelong learning. Inequity in ECE led to inequity throughout life and prevented students from being able to develop the complex problem-solving skills and creativity that were crucial for a human-centred future.
46. In the same forum where world leaders, first in 1919 and then at the end of the Second World War, had firmly declared that labour was not a commodity, stringent demands were required to ensure that educational technology systems safeguarded and protected the integrity of educators and learners alike. The discussion had demonstrated a strong

consensus concerning the importance of education technology systems, but also the need to regulate them. The ILO should therefore conduct research on their impact on working conditions, covering: OSH issues; the working time spent by teachers as a result of the impact of technology; the feasibility of providing a digital basket for all teachers (and students) so that they could access technology at no personal cost; and teachers' wages on a regionally representative basis, including an analysis of the impact on their income of the cost of being connected so that they could work. The Office should also undertake further work on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and the manner in which social dialogue enabled education unions to have a role in data governance, particularly in relation to data privacy and surveillance, with a view to ensuring respect for the digital rights of educators and learners. The ILO should carry out specific research on the right to disconnect, exploring regulatory options and holding a tripartite meeting to provide guidance on regulating technology for the benefit of workers and decent work. The ILO should also undertake research on the public procurement of technology with a view to protecting public services, including the education sector, for the benefit of all learners and educators through, as a minimum, joint data access and control over all procured tasks. In that regard, it was important to bear in mind the need for sound social dialogue with teacher representatives on the introduction of new digital technologies, building on the [Labour Clauses \(Public Contracts\) Convention, 1949 \(No. 94\)](#), and the [OECD Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Principles](#), and addressing the challenges related to the Digital Trade Rules, or "e-commerce rules", which could have a severe impact on national capacity to regulate digital services. The overall lack of consultation with teacher representatives on the introduction of new digital technologies and in the ongoing assessment of those technologies was problematic, as it failed to respect the professionalism of educators and their autonomy, and the needs and desires of learners. It was also in breach of Convention No. 94 and prevented the adaptation of, for example, the OECD AI Principles into workplace practices.

47. All speakers had emphasized the importance of face-to-face education, classroom teaching and a balanced approach to pedagogy, linking direct instruction with other forms of teaching involving exploration, the wider community and sometimes enabled by technology. They had also emphasized the importance of a broad curriculum of human-centred education and preparation for work, which should be linked in the ILO's work with the EI/UNESCO Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards to ensure policy coherence and engagement from the teaching profession on all levels. The ILO should commence work on ensuring that all educators and citizens have access to a lifelong learning guarantee. The recommendations adopted by the meeting on TVET should ensure support and development for that crucial sector based on the employment of qualified teachers with sound working conditions in strong institutions. There should be no language in the meeting's conclusions on the promotion of public-private partnerships, which had no place in the public sector, where the right to education of every child should be guaranteed by the State. However, public-private partnerships could take many forms, some of which augmented State provision, rather than driving inequalities, such as in New Zealand, where Catholic schools belonged to the Vatican but delivered State education. Public-private partnerships could, in some cases, include subsidies to religious schools, or partnerships related to TVET. However, experience showed that they could also be instrumental in increasing inequality in some regions, where there was a vicious circle of defunding the public education system, creating a market for private education institutions and establishing a culture of privilege, in which the poor went to underfunded public schools, and those who could afford it attended private institutions. Well-funded public services

were the best solution for equity from the cradle to the end of the lifelong learning path. In light of the issues highlighted by the governments concerned, it was also essential to work tirelessly to ensure that developing countries had access to funding through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which should not be focused on transferring financing from the State to the private sector, but on ensuring that every child had access to quality education.

48. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that a variety of mechanisms and education roadmaps had been adopted by the different countries with a view to the implementation of international instruments that provided guidance on inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning for all. However, the education sector was in a precarious situation, especially in developing countries, particularly in view of the supply-driven market and the huge underqualified youth bulge joining the labour market. Existing challenges had been further compounded by the impact of the pandemic and the digital divide, further emphasizing the importance of measures and projects to reskill and upskill the workforce. The ILO had a crucial role to play in identifying the skills that were needed, the action that was required and areas in which current measures should be reinforced. The ILO could therefore keep under regular review the implementation of important international instruments in the field of education and the national initiatives adopted. In view of the diversity of situations at the national level, especially following the pandemic, it was important for tripartite or broader consultations to be held to identify and prioritize the issues relating to education and lifelong learning that needed to be addressed. To ensure broad dialogue, it would be important to involve other relevant actors with responsibilities that were related to the education sector, such as Ministries of Education and Finance, in addition to Ministries of Labour and the social partners. Broad dialogue would be crucial in adapting skills development to take into account the needs of industry, and in deepening the conversation on the adaptation of curricula to current and future labour market needs. For example, the engagement of higher education institutions was critically important in mainstreaming skills development in Decent Work Country Programmes. Another crucial issue was to expand the discourse on migrant workers with a view to ensuring the safe and effective mobility of labour. Emphasis in that respect should be placed on labour market linkages and addressing the challenges of labour integration and mobility in developing countries. To move forward and create a perspective for a just and sustainable future, it was necessary to adopt a human-centred approach to investment in peoples' capacities. Public awareness of the need for lifelong learning should be promoted by prominent local and social institutions. There was a need for trust and confidence in the education sector to build resilience and manage the situation in the optimum manner. The ILO should re-strategize its approach to promoting capacity development among constituents by embracing new methodologies to strengthen skills development. ILO support would be important in such areas as research, policy advice and statistics, with a focus on adult learners and future skills needs.
49. A representative of the Government of Guinea said that education systems in the different countries were very diverse. In his country there were three subsectors, basic regular and general education, technical training and higher education. The purpose of TVET was clearly to provide young persons with the skills that were required in the labour market, but many countries needed support in developing training systems capable of providing the necessary skills. The ILO should undertake case studies to analyse measures and systems that had been found to be effective in the various countries, with particular emphasis on TVET. Studies were also needed on the situation of university graduates who were unable to obtain jobs and needed to engage in further technical training to obtain the skills

- required to find employment. The situation of training systems that were already not very effective had been aggravated by the pandemic, with striking differences between countries, especially in terms of technological solutions and connectivity. It was essential to reinforce dialogue and cooperation with teachers, especially in TVET and higher education.
50. A representative of the Government of Zimbabwe said that, in the field of education, it was important for the ILO to go beyond its traditional partners, namely Ministries of Labour and employers' and workers' organizations, and also to engage with Ministries of Education and those responsible for economic development and finance, as well as with trade unions in the education sector, such as the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association (ZIMTA). The ILO should also engage with professional bodies that were involved in development on the ground. Moreover, the ILO should not only work with traditional business associations, but also business organizations in the education sector, which could play a critical role in skills development. Other important partners included telecommunications institutions and companies, particularly in rural areas in developing countries, and especially Africa, where they could collaborate with the government in rolling out digital infrastructure in rural areas, where Internet access was vital for education outreach.
51. A representative of the Government of Burundi said that digital skills and access to education were closely linked to future employment prospects. The ILO and governments needed to address the issue of the inclusion of technology in teaching, lifelong learning and vocational training for teachers. Many countries faced challenges in ensuring access to technology due to infrastructure issues, including lack of coverage of the electricity network. It was important for teachers to be involved in those matters through social dialogue. Government programmes in his country included vocational training centres for the young unemployed to offer them opportunities to improve their skills, especially technology skills, and access to lifelong learning. The Ministry of Education organized further training for teachers, including during school holidays, particularly with a view to updating their technical skills. The Ministry also financed technical training alongside basic education. However, many challenges remained in ensuring that vocational training institutions were properly equipped to fulfil their roles.
52. A representative of the Government of Morocco called on the ILO to disseminate knowledge among the various partners on the real social and economic situation and the need for technological and social progress. The ILO should develop guidelines for higher education that offered a clear vision of the future of work in the sector, based on benchmarks that allowed for some standardization. Cooperation would play a vital role in helping developing countries to improve their education and training systems while preserving their independence. Moreover, the provision of financing on its own was not sufficient to make the necessary improvements, and a reinforced system of governance was required to guide investment in education and training.
53. The Worker Vice-Chairperson acknowledged the contribution that could be made by engagement with the business sector. He re-emphasized the importance of tripartite partnerships and dialogue, as those who did the work could offer extremely valuable input. It was therefore important to move towards a system of high trust and accountability with the full engagement of teachers and education personnel. Education was a fundamental right, not a commodity. It followed that it should be public and accessible for all, so as to ensure that it remained a public good, with appropriate regulation and monitoring of private sector education provision. It should be recalled that the 1966 Recommendation was a joint declaration and that all the related subjects could be addressed by the present meeting.

54. The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that the CEART had the responsibility for the implementation of the 1966 Recommendation, and it was not therefore the role of the present meeting to interfere in its work. Government and Worker representatives from several countries had described good examples of public-private partnerships. Balance was required in the discussion of working conditions, as bad conditions could be found in both the public and private sectors. While education was clearly a public good, that did not mean that it had to be provided by public institutions. The ILO had not recognized the right to disconnect, although other organizations had done so. Work-life balance was crucial for everyone.

▶ IV. Consideration and adoption of the draft conclusions

55. The meeting nominated four representatives from each group to form a working party on conclusions, which met on the afternoon of Thursday, 20 May 2021 to examine the draft conclusions drawn up by the Office on the basis of the discussions held over the previous days. The working party was able to reach agreement on many of the draft conclusions. It highlighted other conclusions on which agreement was still to be reached.
56. The members of the working party on conclusions were: Government representatives: Ms Mahlet Hailu Guadey (Vice-Chairperson, Ethiopia), Ms Roslena Johari (Brunei Darussalam), Mr Pablo Campos (Chile) and Ms Cheryl Daytec (Philippines); Employer representatives – Mr Jobst Hagedorn, Ms Rachel Simpson, Ms Noemi Castillo and Mr Santiago García Gutiérrez (Vice-Chairperson); and Worker representatives – Ms Marianne Brontveit, Mr Jelmer Evers (Vice-Chairperson), Mr Sifiso Ndlovu and Ms Yamile Socolovsky.
57. At its plenary meeting on Friday, 21 May 2021, the meeting confined its discussion to the draft conclusions set out in document TMDWA/2021/6 on which agreement was still pending.

Decent work opportunities and challenges in the education sector

Proposed paragraph 1

58. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he could agree to the deletion of the words “public and private”, which had been left in square brackets, and to the inclusion of the text proposed by the Office at the end of the first sentence, namely “in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and the ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work”.
59. With the support of the Government and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed paragraph 2

60. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he agreed to maintain the final sentence, which had been left in square brackets, namely: “Opportunities therefore need to be explored in order to fully harness the potential of online working.”

61. With the support of the Government and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed paragraph 3

62. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he could support the second opening sentence proposed in square brackets, with the replacement of the word “increasing” by the words “the problematic”. The opening sentence would therefore read “Professional autonomy is coming under challenge due to political and economic factors, including the problematic use of standardization in education.” The words “with adequate autonomy of educators”, at the end of the paragraph, should be deleted.

63. With the support of the Government and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed paragraph 7

64. The Worker Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he supported the second sentence proposed by the Office, based on the discussions of the working party, although a reference to information and communication technologies should be included in the middle of the sentence, with the consequent deletion at the end of the sentence of the words “, and by the use of technologies and social media.” The final sentence would therefore read: “Violence and harassment occur in education, including through information and communication technologies, and can increase during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts.”

65. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Ensuring effective lifelong learning and quality education for all: Investing in the capabilities and decent work of educators

Proposed paragraph 9

66. The Worker Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he preferred the words “has a role”, rather than “is a partner”, in the proposed final sentence, which would read as follows: “The private sector has a role in the provision of quality education.”

67. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed new paragraph following paragraph 10

68. The Worker Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation and in light of the text agreed elsewhere in the conclusions, he withdrew the proposal to include a new paragraph following paragraph 10.

Proposed paragraph 11

69. The Worker Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he could agree to the inclusion of the paragraph, which had remained in square brackets, if the proposed alternative wordings of “be adapted to” or “consider” were replaced by the words “evolve in response to”.

70. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed new paragraph after paragraph 11

71. The Worker Vice-Chairperson supported the inclusion of the proposed new paragraph after paragraph 11, which would read as follows: "Social dialogue based on the respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining has a crucial role in the establishment of education policies and in relation to working conditions of education personnel. Consultations, exchanges of information and other forms of dialogue between social partners and with government and other relevant actors are also important."
72. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed paragraph 22

73. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he could agree to the proposed paragraph with the following changes: the replacement, in the first line, of the words "an important role" by the words "a role"; the deletion, in the second line, of the words "at all levels"; and the maintenance of the words "and regulation" and "take up their public responsibility", which had been left in square brackets following the discussions in the working party.
74. With the support of the Government and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Recommendations for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members

Proposed paragraph 23

75. The Worker Vice-Chairperson supported the wording of the proposed paragraph.
76. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed new paragraph following paragraph 23

77. The meeting agreed to the inclusion of the proposed new paragraph following paragraph 23, which would replace the chapeau of proposed paragraph 24.

Proposed new subparagraph following subparagraph 23(c)

78. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed to the inclusion of a new subparagraph following subparagraph 23(c), which would read as follows: "(d) develop policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection and respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work;"
79. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed new subparagraphs following subparagraph 24(iii)

80. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed to the inclusion of a new subparagraph following subparagraph 24(iii), which would read as follows: "explore policies and strategies to promote educators' work-life balance in the context of a digital world of work."
81. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed. It was also agreed not to include a second proposed subparagraph following subparagraph 24(iii).

Proposed subparagraph 26(h)

82. The Worker Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he could agree to the inclusion of the words “, as well as education institutions”, which had been left in square brackets following the discussions in the working party.
83. With the support of the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed new subparagraph 26(f)

84. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that, following further consultation, he could agree to the inclusion of the proposed new subparagraph if it were agreed to include, at the end of the paragraph, the words “, including the skills and knowledge needs of teachers and trainers”.
85. With the support of the Government and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.

Proposed new Annex

86. The Worker Vice-Chairperson proposed the inclusion of an Annex listing the international instruments that had been referred to during the discussions. He said that the inclusion of such an Annex was common practice in the conclusions of such meetings.
87. The Employer Vice-Chairperson indicated that he could agree to the adoption of the proposed Annex if the reference was deleted to the EI/UNESCO Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards. Although he could understand the importance of the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997), the Annex should otherwise be limited to ILO instruments. Employers had played no role in the drafting or implementation of the EI/UNESCO Global Framework.
88. With the support of the Government and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, it was so agreed.
89. The conclusions were then unanimously adopted, section by section, as amended.

▶ V. Adoption of the conclusions

90. The conclusions of the Technical meeting on the future of work in the education sector in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda were adopted.²

▶ VI. Closure of the meeting

91. The Secretary-General congratulated all the participants on the successful conclusion to the meeting, which showed that social dialogue had been able to prevail once again, despite the difficulties inherent in holding a virtual meeting. The ILO and its staff all looked forward to resuming in-person dialogue when it was safe to do so. Special thanks were due to all those participants who had made special efforts to participate in the meeting despite large and inconvenient time differences. The participants could be proud of agreeing on solid,

² The Conclusions of the Meeting are available on the Meeting's [web page](#)

concrete and forward-looking conclusions. She paid tribute to the work of the Officers of the meeting, the groups and the observers, as well as the members of the secretariat and the interpreters.

92. The Employer Vice-Chairperson joined in the thanks to all those involved and welcomed the outcome of the meeting. The good atmosphere in the meeting and the successful negotiation demonstrated once again that social dialogue had a key role to play in the sector and that common ground could be found, despite broad differences, for the benefit of the sector. Those in the education sector did not work for their own benefit, but for that of learners, and they played a crucial role in ensuring the long-term well-being of society as a whole. It was necessary to work together during the present challenging times for the good of the next generation. Everyone needed to bear in mind the requirement for clear guidance on the way forward in a rapidly changing world.
93. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that teaching was a wonderful job, full of joy and inspiration, as teachers had the privilege of working with children. Schools needed to be places of belonging, joy and wonderment, as they introduced children to the world. They taught children about history, great thinkers, stewardship, sciences and art, and prepared them for the world of work. Schools were the essence of communities, as they took responsibility for children, to enable them in turn to take responsibility for the world. Quality education for all was a human right and public education was a common good. Every child on the planet therefore had the right to attend good public schools with qualified and well-prepared teachers and education personnel. Private investment and public-private partnerships could provide resources and important workplace experience, as well as technological knowledge, for education institutions. However, they could also pose a threat to the quality of education, equity and academic freedom, and should therefore be carefully monitored and regulated. It was important to build on the 1966 Recommendation, which emphasized the crucial role of social dialogue in promoting decent work, including job stability, adequate wages, well-being, the management of workloads, education policy and professional autonomy. It was also important for collective bargaining to cover issues relating to artificial intelligence and machine learning, with special reference to data protection and privacy, to ensure that educators had a voice in the rapid changes that were shaping education. Much progress still needed to be made, including on the right of educators to disconnect, on which many countries had already taken steps. The education sector needed to take the lead on that issue in order to set an example. He joined with the thanks expressed to all the participants and the Office.
94. The Government Vice-Chairperson congratulated the participants on the adoption of significant and substantial conclusions which would provide important guidance in preparing the education sector for the future of work. The conclusions emphasized the need to promote social dialogue in the sector to ensure that the needs of the labour market were reflected in education policy, that decent work was a priority in the sector and the principles that were to be followed relating to the development of education technology. The conclusions focused on education as a human right and an indication of human dignity. She thanked the Officers, participants and the Office.
95. The Chairperson welcomed the outcome of the meeting, which would have an impact on the work of the ILO and beyond. The meeting had reiterated that education was not a commodity, but a fundamental human right and a public good. There was a need to invest in education and training to build a more resilient, sustainable and human-centred world of work and a better future. The meeting had emphasized the importance of ensuring that education responded to the needs of society and the world of work. The sector created

opportunities for employment and sustainable development, but faced challenges in such areas as guaranteeing living wages and decent working conditions, ensuring a manageable workload and managing the introduction of education technologies. The need for the professionalism, autonomy and quality of educators had also been highlighted. The meeting had reminded the world that people were central to the achievement of all the SDGs, and especially SDG 4. Educators, together with governments, employers and workers' organizations needed support to achieve equality and decent work in the sector. Emphasizing that it was now time to turn the conclusions into reality, he declared the meeting closed.