



► Record of proceedings

7C

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Plenary sitting: Outcomes of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security)

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Saturday, 19 June 2021, 1.10 p.m.

President: Mr Zniber

Presentation and discussion of the outcome of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security)

The President

We now turn to the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security) and its proposed resolution, which contains the Committee's conclusions, the text of which can be found in *Record of proceedings No. 7A*. The summary of the Committee's proceedings can be found in *Record of proceedings No. 7B*.

It is my pleasure to recall that the Officers of the Committee are: Her Excellency Ms Catalina Devandas Aguilar (Costa Rica), Chairperson; Mr Guido Ricci (Guatemala), Employer Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Magnús Norddahl (Iceland), Worker Vice-Chairperson; and the Reporter is Mr Mauricio Rubiano Bello (Colombia).

I now give the floor to Mr Rubiano Bello so that he may present to us the Committee's report.

Mr Rubiano Bello

Reporter of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security) (Original Spanish)

I have the honour of presenting to the Conference for adoption the report and conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security) and the corresponding resolution.

The report of the Committee and the accompanying conclusions are the result of the Committee's strong commitment to its objectives, tripartite approach and hard work over the last 13 days. We held eight plenary sittings and the drafting group held five sittings. We had interesting debates, and while there were some differing views and opinions at times, we were able to find common ground, in the true spirit of social dialogue.

A decisive factor that allowed our Committee to accomplish its work was the guidance of the Chairperson, Her Excellency Ambassador Catalina Devandas Aguilar, and the resolve of the two Vice-Chairpersons, Mr Guido Ricci and Mr Magnús Norddahl, and the representatives of the regional Government members to find consensus. I thank all members of the Committee for their commitment and constructive inputs, often late into the night and early morning for some. I wish to thank the drafting group members, who proposed to the Committee for discussion a set of draft conclusions that reflected the deliberations of the Committee.

I would also like to acknowledge the work done by the Secretariat to facilitate the work of the Committee. Its competence and dedication were fundamental to the success of our work. In particular, I wish to thank the representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Moussa Oumarou, and the deputy representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Shahrashoub Razavi, and of course all of the staff of the Secretariat.

Social protection remains an integral part of the ILO's mandate and a key contributor to decent work, social justice and sustainable development. However, despite significant progress in the extension of social protection in many parts of the

world, the COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed the gaps in social protection coverage. The human right to social protection is not yet a reality for the majority of the world's population. This is why the work of this Committee is particularly timely and relevant, and it had an important task in providing guidance to the ILO and allowing it to reaffirm its mandate and leadership in social protection. The timing of this second recurrent discussion on social protection facilitated the refinement of an ILO strategy for the achievement of universal social protection in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and efforts to promote an inclusive recovery from the devastating effects of COVID-19, in line with the priorities set out in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

I would now like to turn to the proposed conclusions. They start with a section on guiding principles and context, which indicates that social protection is essential to social justice, decent work and the human-centred approach to the future of work advocated by the Centenary Declaration. It highlights the urgency of establishing universal social protection systems adapted to developments in the world of work that are resilient, effective, adequate and sustainable, and the role of the State in establishing such systems and guaranteeing their proper functioning.

The conclusions then provide a framework for action, which requires both Members and the Organization to take action to give effect to them. The framework for action puts forward a set of measures in three main areas. The first area calls for the promotion of universal social protection, and includes to this end a range of measures to realize universal social protection, strengthen social protection systems and ensure sustainable and adequate financing of social protection systems. The second area underscores the need to mobilize the ILO's means of action to give full effect to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Centenary Declaration and to assist Members in achieving universal social protection, consistent with international labour standards, as a core element of a human-centred approach to the future of work. The third area calls on the ILO to reaffirm its mandate and leadership in social protection in the multilateral system and to promote policy coherence by further engaging in international cooperation mechanisms and partnerships to advance the achievement of the vision and principles embedded in the ILO's updated social security standards. It also calls on the ILO to explore options for mobilizing international financing for social protection, and to hold consultations with ILO constituents to allow a more coordinated implementation of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), and the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fundamental importance of social protection and the need for all societies to ensure access to universal, adequate and sustainable social protection for all. I believe that our conclusions provide clear guidance for the work of the Organization and all of its Members in this regard. The resolution requests the Director-General of the ILO to prepare a plan of action giving effect to the conclusions for the consideration of the Governing Body. I now have the honour and privilege of submitting to the International Labour Conference for adoption the report of the Committee together with the conclusions and resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security).

Mr Ricci**Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security)
(Original Spanish)**

It has been a great honour for me to participate in this Conference as the spokesperson of the Employers' group. On behalf of my group, please allow me to begin by congratulating Her Excellency Ambassador Devandas Aguilar for her skilful, patient and orderly leadership in search of solutions as the Chairperson of this Committee. I would also like to offer my thanks to Mr Magnús Norddahl for his commitment to our common objective of drafting a clear resolution for the recurrent discussion on the important issue of social protection. I would further like to recognize the contributions of the Governments, which offered interesting points of view and positions that reflected the various focuses on the needs and challenges facing social protection systems in each of our regions. Overall, despite some differences of opinion, which of course are to be expected, we achieved a result that we can all be proud of, overcoming the constraints of working in different time zones and the challenges resulting from the unprecedented format of this Conference session.

The difficult times that we are living in have placed social protection at centre stage of our political agendas. It is more relevant than ever for us to take decisive measures on this issue. It is imperative for our policies to adapt to current circumstances, trends and the development of the future of work, taking due account of the pressure on our economies at present.

The development of comprehensive social protection systems requires strategies and policies that focus on sustainability. Getting our economies back on track and continuing to build the future calls for new paradigms and open-mindedness. The right to social protection cannot be viewed in isolation. We need to look ahead to the future boldly and with a clear sense of responsibility as we seek out solutions. It would be a mistake to think that we could have an approach based on the right to social protection if we do not also make available the means to make that right a reality.

While achieving universal and appropriate coverage should be an objective, many countries, particularly developing countries, can only make progress step by step. Reforms are necessary, however the development of social protection schemes will happen at different speeds and in different circumstances. Each country needs to develop its own social protection model and to establish the policies and appropriate policy frameworks to achieve sustainability in accordance with the relevant ILO instruments. In doing so, an environment that allows enterprises to develop and to create decent jobs is an underlying condition for the sustainability of social protection systems.

Although the formal economy is the major source of funding, it is still important to focus on the transition towards the formal economy. As long as over 60 per cent of the global labour force works in the informal economy, it is going to be difficult for us to make decisive progress. There can be no appropriate social protection until we have healthy enterprises to drive thriving economies. We need to use social protection floors as an incentive to move towards formalization and to empower vulnerable persons, such as women, migrants, persons with disabilities, young people and older people. Efforts must be made to offer support to persons who are most at risk. At the same time, we need to avoid poverty traps or incentives to remain in the informal economy.

We also need to be aware that current challenges must be met in a way that avoids placing undue pressure on enterprises. A large part of our economies is driven by small and medium-sized enterprises. If we do not ensure that these enterprises are resilient and sustainable, we are going to fail in our efforts to achieve appropriate and sustainable social protection systems.

It is only going to be through effective social dialogue and good governance that we will find policy responses that adapt to changing realities. It is crucial to focus our efforts on solutions that prepare workers and employers for change, that benefit from labour transitions and that promote employability and create jobs. In this context, coordination between employment policies, labour market policies and active inclusion policies to promote decent work and the formalization of employment continues to be of utmost importance.

We should take advantage of new and different forms of work, digitalization and new business models to build economies that are better aligned with a fast-changing world of work. Focusing on challenges without taking opportunities into account can jeopardize the successful design of policies to drive entrepreneurship, facilitate labour transitions, promote economic growth and, consequently, enable the realization of universal social protection.

Consistent policies are needed to achieve long-term solutions. Designing and implementing sustainable social protection schemes is only possible if there is coordination with other policies, in particular employment policies, also taking into account the factors that put pressure on social security systems, such as aging populations, youth unemployment and informality.

Furthermore, we should pay close attention to good practices in countries that have been successful in meeting the challenges resulting from these structural changes. Considerable thought should be given to using existing means to broaden and strengthen social protection systems. In order to progress, we need to make use of complementary schemes, both contributory and non-contributory, compulsory and voluntary. An appropriate combination of policies will help to address these new realities. All financing options should be explored, without prejudice. The Employers consider it appropriate to use various approaches to financing that recognize the different capacities of different groups to pay their contributions in a fair and consistent manner and that help to optimize the objectives of social protection schemes.

The use of a multi-pillar approach, seeking an appropriate balance between the non-contributory and the contributory approaches, has shown that it is relevant and effective in many countries and that it is in tune with the ILO's normative framework. Consequently, this is one of the possible ways of achieving more equitable financing.

Moreover, with regard to recourse to international financial institutions, particularly for the countries that are most in need, it is important to strengthen collaboration with the ILO, in a coordinated manner and taking due account of the policies and recommendations of the international financing institutions. The ILO can also gain from their assessments to work towards the common objective of achieving the realization of social protection.

By way of conclusion, tripartism is key and it must be part of any decision-making process, both in respect of the development of policies and the elaboration of global strategies and responses to tackle current and future challenges. The diversity of national contexts calls for strong commitment from every region. It is only by encompassing the vision of each region that we will find appropriate solutions for their

specific needs. The Employers' group would like to reiterate our commitment to building stronger social protection systems and to providing the countries that are most in need with the appropriate tools to ensure the sustainability of their systems. On that note, we support the adoption of our report, the conclusions and the resolution.

Mr Norddahl

Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security)

In 1919 the world realized that there would never be a lasting peace if social justice was not secured. On that basis the ILO was formed and its constitutional mandate was reaffirmed and strengthened to that end at the end of the Second World War. And now the world has given us another wake-up call. The conclusions before us are a clear and robust answer to that call. They reaffirm the importance of universal social protection and underline the critical role that social protection must play in supporting economic recovery for everyone and building resilience against future crises, thus supporting peace, a just transition and inclusive economic growth and development.

First and foremost, the conclusions acknowledge social protection as a human right that all people should enjoy. But sadly not all do, as the excellent ILO report that formed the basis of our committee work shows.

Taking this point of departure, our conclusions acknowledge the damaging social and economic impacts of austerity and emphasize the economic and social benefits of social protection being an investment and not a cost. And they affirm that social protection is a critical factor for recovery and resilience against future crises. In a very clear manner, they reaffirm the ILO's leadership role within the multilateral system in relation to social protection, and they give a strong mandate for the ILO to engage with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), including on IMF social spending floors and their policy guidance and lending conditionalities, in order to ensure alignment with ILO standards. Furthermore, they acknowledge the need for greater international solidarity and coherence in financing social protection and in coordination across UN bodies and agencies. And they call for the ILO to "initiate and engage in discussions on concrete proposals for a new international financing mechanism, such as a Global Social Protection Fund, which could complement and support domestic resource mobilization efforts in order to achieve universal social protection". Such a fund or financing mechanism will serve as a vehicle for coherence and effective allocation of financial assistance at the international level as well as facilitate the effective implementation of ILO standards, namely the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and Recommendation No. 202, to progressively build and maintain nationally appropriate universal social protection systems so that everyone has access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable protection over the life cycle in line with those standards, which are the main international reference framework for social protection systems, not the advice of the World Bank, the IMF or other international or multilateral organizations and institutions.

The conclusions furthermore emphasize the need for publicly organized social protection systems, which comprise both floors and higher levels of contributory social security in line with Convention No. 102. This clarifies that while additional pillars of the social security system can exist, they complement those that are publicly organized and do not, and never will, replace them. They underscore the different ways governments should seek to create fiscal space to realize universal social protection, including by strengthening progressive taxation, tackling tax evasion and illicit financial flows,

making sure employers and workers pay their fair share of social security contributions, and reallocating and reprioritizing public expenditure.

In this regard, the conclusions also clearly affirm that social dialogue, including collective bargaining, is an important factor in the design and implementation of universal social protection. And they reaffirm the link between social protection and decent work. They also underline the importance of promoting full and productive employment and strengthening labour market inclusion. They emphasize the need to extend social protection to all workers, irrespective of the nature of their employment relationship, in both formal and informal economies. This is important in all countries, but most specifically in developing countries, where the impact of not being able to access basic social protection has led to a massive loss of life and livelihoods of workers and their families in the face of the COVID-19 crisis.

Our conclusions underline the need to strengthen the transition from the informal to the formal economy and pay special attention to those in precarious and vulnerable situations. Enhancing social protection is a means of reducing economic vulnerabilities and contributing to the elimination of child labour, which we sadly must note has increased as the current crisis persists. They acknowledge the need for the preservation and portability of acquired social security rights to support workers who are changing jobs or even changing countries, and stress the need to conclude bilateral and multilateral social security agreements to secure the rights of all workers, including migrant workers. Strong emphasis is put on ensuring both the adequacy and the sustainability of social protection systems and a solid and fair financing base, and I quote “ensure the adequacy and sustainability of nationally defined social protection systems based on the principles of solidarity, collective financing, well-balanced intergenerational fairness and the achievement of gender equality”.

Last, but not least, the conclusions put a strong emphasis on the need for gender responsive social protection systems, the need for income security during maternity, paternity and parental leave, and access to quality childcare and long-term care services, as well as recognizing care work within social security systems and the need to make provision for that within our respective systems.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging the work of the Government group in our committee, which provided solid support and guidance to all of us throughout the process and played a key role in facilitating consensus on difficult issues. I especially want to thank the Chairperson, Ms Devandas Aguilar, who I sometimes almost called Your Honour, who skilfully and in the most inclusive and diplomatic manner steered the Committee through complex and often difficult discussions and negotiations for a period of 13 days.

I also wish to thank the Office staff, including the IT staff, translators and assistants for their dedication, expertise and integrity, and not forgetting the interpreters, who follow us into the internal and private discussions and tolerate us through the collective debates. We all trust them and we will never know the secrets that they keep, and we never should.

Finally, I extend my thanks to the Employers' group, and specifically to their spokesperson and my co-Vice-Chairperson, Mr Ricci, for recognizing the need for a constructive social dialogue on a matter that is not only key for workers and resilient and just societies, but also for sustainable enterprises and the creation of decent work.

Ms Devandas Aguilar**Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection****(social security)****(Original Spanish)**

I have the honour in my capacity as Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security) to make some observations on the deliberations that took place in the Committee. First and foremost I would like to say that this discussion could not have taken place at a more opportune moment. As you know, this second recurrent discussion of our Committee has been held in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The social and economic consequences of the pandemic have prompted an unprecedented government public policy response right around the world. Governments have turned to social protection as a first-line response to protect the health, employment and income of individuals, thus ensuring social and economic stability. The pandemic has painfully highlighted the fact that the majority of people worldwide still do not have access to social protection and that only a small minority have access to anything close to comprehensive protection. If there is anything positive to have come out of this crisis, it is that it has reminded us all emphatically of the critical need to establish, maintain and strengthen our social protection systems in order to ensure that everybody is protected from systemic shocks and everyday risks in the course of their lives.

As people have already said here, social protection is a fundamental human right. However, there are still enormous gaps in coverage, particularly, but not only, in developing countries. In order to build back better and to make the human-centred approach to the future of work a reality, we need universal social protection systems that provide comprehensive, sustainable and appropriate protection for everybody throughout their lives. The deliberations in our Committee have been an important opportunity to examine how to make headway in the design and implementation of social protection policies. Bearing in mind that there are only nine years to go before we should have achieved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our Committee, working on the solid foundation of the social security standards agreed by the international community and inspired by the human-centred approach to the future of work as advocated in the Centenary Declaration, was well placed to issue an appeal to all constituents to make good on their promises. The arguments in favour of investing more and better in social protection have never been as persuasive to reaffirm the ILO's mandate and leadership in social protection.

I would now like to highlight a couple of points to complement the excellent report on the deliberations of the Committee that has been submitted by our Reporter, Mr Rubiano Bello, who I would like to thank for his excellent presentation, and to complement, and this will be very difficult, the statements of the Vice-Chairpersons, Mr Ricci and Mr Norddahl. I would like to start by thanking them both very much, my dear Vice-Chairpersons, for their excellent cooperation and kind support throughout the work of the Committee. The two weeks' work in our group have been extremely constructive and productive, and sometimes quite challenging as well. However, during that time a spirit of collaboration and courtesy always prevailed. The conclusions we are submitting to the Conference for adoption are evidence of the sense of commitment that was shown and the excellent work that was done by all members of the Committee. Even more important is the fact that these conclusions are a shining example of the fact that it is possible to build tripartite consensus in order to propose a framework for action

capable of promoting universal, appropriate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems that can be adapted to developments in the world of work.

The guiding principles contained in the conclusions highlight the essential role of social protection in reducing poverty and inequalities. They also underscore the need to extend coverage and to guarantee universal, comprehensive, appropriate and sustainable social protection for all, focusing particularly on those people who are entirely without protection and those who are in particularly vulnerable circumstances. Our conclusions recall that achieving universal social protection must go hand in hand with measures to strengthen decent work. The framework for action establishes specific measures to promote universal social protection, mobilize ILO means of action, reaffirm the ILO's mandate and leadership in social protection in the multilateral system, and promote the coherence of international policies.

The conclusions are based on an integrated approach and on measures that require contributions from all parties involved and that establish a road map for both the Organization and its constituents. This session of the International Labour Conference has of course been very different to all the previous ones. It has been held in very difficult circumstances. I would like to thank the Office, in particular the representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Moussa Oumarou, the deputy representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Shahrashoub Razavi, and all the secretariat staff for their spirit of commitment and for the excellent support they gave me to facilitate the work of the Committee. Our work at this Conference is almost at an end, but our real work is only actually just starting. The Organization and its constituents need to work urgently now to guarantee that everybody is provided with universal social protection in a changing world shaken by repeated crises. We must ensure that the outcomes of this Conference are translated into public policies and national legislation that serve to improve the lives of our peoples. This is something we need now more than ever as we face the challenges resulting from this pandemic.

Mr Arellano

Government (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group

The Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG) wishes to take this opportunity to present our views on the outcomes of this important discussion. We thank our esteemed Chairperson and the Office for their considerable work to support this committee discussion in a virtual setting. We congratulate all tripartite constituents on working together to complete a comprehensive and well-articulated set of draft conclusions, which address the multifaceted role of social protection. Social protection is an effective crisis response that has a critical role in facilitating a framework for inclusive and sustainable growth, a crucial and affordable investment, and, as elaborated in the ILO social security standards, a set of mutual conclusions, core objectives and useful thresholds for all countries to strive towards in accordance with their respective needs, priorities and resources.

It is appropriate, at this critical juncture of history, that the conclusions should help lay the groundwork to begin regaining what we lost during the pandemic by updating the guidance on social protection provided by the ILO in previous recurrent discussions. In ASPAG's view, through our combined efforts we have laid out a strong vision of what adequate and comprehensive social protection should look like in a world permanently changed by COVID-19. In particular, ASPAG welcomes the statement's specific recognition that social protection contributes to an enabling environment for decent work, productivity growth, employment creation and sustainable enterprises. To realize

the human-centred approach to the future of work laid out in the Centenary Declaration, we will need to ensure that social protection is a catalyst for sustained progress towards decent work for all. ASPAG therefore endorses the proposed conclusions.

Mr Lepore

Government (Argentina), speaking on behalf of a majority of countries from the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries
(Original Spanish)

My delegation is making this statement on behalf of a large majority of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. We welcome the adoption of the conclusions of the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security), which were reached during the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference in a collaborative effort stemming from a rich tripartite debate.

We believe that the persistence of the informal economy is one of the main factors hindering the achievement of universal social protection, especially in the context of low- and middle-income countries. The transition to formality is, in our view, a prerequisite for promoting the progressive realization of universal social protection based on comprehensive, adequate and sustainable systems. We have therefore highlighted the need to ensure that Recommendation No. 202, is implemented in an integrated manner with Recommendation No. 204, in accordance with national circumstances. We therefore warmly welcome the inclusion of a mandate for the ILO to hold tripartite consultations to this end. Both of these Recommendations provide guidance to Member States that is complementary and mutually enhancing when applied together.

The achievement of universal social protection, which is given priority in the proposed framework for action, requires the mobilization of the means of action through the combined efforts of multilateral agencies led by the ILO, as well as a strong commitment by Member States, together with workers and employers, to promote the implementation of Recommendation No. 204. This will undoubtedly pave the way for fruitful tripartite collaborative work towards strengthening social protection systems, which is especially critical in the current circumstances when these systems are facing multiple challenges.

We highlight the importance of having had a dynamic and transparent discussion process that encouraged the participation of Governments, Workers and Employers. We acknowledge the extraordinary work carried out by Her Excellency Ambassador Catalina Devandas Aguilar in her capacity as Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security), and in particular her outstanding management of the intensive process of discussions and exchanges carried out in the Committee to ensure that we were able to fulfil our mandate in a timely manner. Our thanks go also to the Employer Vice-Chairperson, Mr Guido Ricci, and the Worker Vice-Chairperson, Mr Magnús Norddahl, for their commitment and cooperation in reaching consensus on many important yet complex issues. We would also like to convey our special appreciation to the team from the Committee Secretariat for their sound and expert technical support and guidance during some difficult debates. Finally, we extend our thanks to all regional groups and in particular their spokespersons for their outstanding contributions and dedicated service. We hope that the tripartite constituents will be committed to continuing the work undertaken in the last couple of weeks, contributing to the development of the measures and the application of the solutions that our world so urgently needs to ensure universal social protection as we move forwards with a human-centred approach to the period of recovery from the pandemic and beyond.

Mr Nunes**Government (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia and Albania, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

We warmly thank the President of the Conference, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Committee, and the Secretariat for their tireless work over the last two and a half weeks. Let me again thank the social partners and all other participants for their constructive and engaged discussion in working towards achieving consensus on these conclusions, especially in this unique virtual format.

We recognize that it is of the utmost importance that this session of the Conference is taking place and that these committees are able to proceed with their work, even if it is delayed or reorganized due to the pandemic.

We believe that the final conclusions adopted by the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security) strengthen the principles outlined in Convention No. 102, and Recommendation No. 202. This represents a tangible step forward in achieving the targets set out in both the Centenary Declaration – which calls for access for all to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection – and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets 1.3 and 3.8. We reaffirm our commitment to these objectives and wish to express our strong belief that universal social protection extends beyond just basic income support and represents access to a broader suite of services, which enhances the life of the individual and offers support during critical transitions in the life cycle.

The pandemic has underscored the vital need for adequate, sustainable and comprehensive social protection for all. However, we would stress that the need to address gaps in social protection globally predates the current crisis and that efforts to strengthen social protection systems should not focus on one-off crisis measures, but on bolstering the capacity of existing systems to withstand future shocks. As outlined in the conclusions, this can be achieved through the introduction of equitably financed recovery strategies, long-term measures focused on enhancing policy cohesion and complementary action between the relevant departments and actors at both the national and international levels. In addition, effective and equitable redistribution mechanisms based on solidarity can make an important contribution towards achieving universal social protection and developing comprehensive social security systems.

Women are particularly affected by gaps in social protection. Therefore, we strongly support the development and implementation of gender responsive social protection policies and strategies, which strengthen the capacity of national systems to promote gender equality.

At the Porto Social Summit on 7 and 8 May 2021, the EU and its Member States, along with the social partners and civil society representatives, reaffirmed their pledge to protect people in this new world of work through a fair and inclusive recovery for all. The European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan reinforce this commitment, with half of the principles contained therein dedicated to social protection. In 2019, the Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, which focuses on the provision of adequate and

effective social security coverage. It seeks to address the gaps in protection faced by people outside of standard employment, including new forms of work.

The EU and its Member States acknowledge and support the pivotal role that the ILO plays in assisting our socio-economic recovery from the pandemic. We welcome the actions identified in the conclusions, which urge the ILO to reinforce its leadership role in promoting social protection in the multilateral system, in providing technical assistance to members, including furthering discussions on financing mechanisms, and in mobilizing resources for development cooperation at the country, regional and global levels.

At the conclusion of this part of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference, we believe that there is incontrovertible evidence worldwide that social protection is an investment, not just a cost, which generates high social and economic returns. Social protection acts not only as an economic stabilizer, but as a crucial tool in reducing poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion and inequality.

We hope that the adoption of these conclusions in this plenary sitting today will advance efforts to build comprehensive, universal, adequate and sustainable social protection schemes that will ultimately guarantee that every human being enjoys a life of health and dignity.

Mr Haouam

Government (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Africa group (Original French)

The Algerian delegation has the honour of making this statement on behalf of the Africa group. The Africa group warmly welcomes the conclusions adopted by the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection (social security). These conclusions constitute an ambitious programme of work with a view to attaining universal social protection in line with the vision set out in the Centenary Declaration.

The Africa group underscores the relevance of the conclusions emanating from this second recurrent discussion, which are particularly timely in view of the unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work. It advocates diligent implementation of these recommendations, which are consistent with the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

The Africa group is of the view that considerable efforts must be made to expand social security coverage and guarantee universal access to social protection for all, paying particular attention to those without coverage and persons in situations of vulnerability. In that respect, we are particularly satisfied with the conclusions calling on the ILO to: support Member States in strengthening access to social protection for informal workers and domestic workers; duly assist Member States in overcoming obstacles to the ratification of up-to-date ILO social security Conventions and to the effective implementation of relevant ILO standards; engage with the international financial institutions, in line with each organization's mandate, to assess national social protection needs and priorities, and options towards extending the fiscal space for social protection; and explore options for mobilizing international financing for social protection, including increased official development assistance, to complement the individual efforts of countries with limited domestic fiscal capacities.

The Africa group also welcomes the fact that its proposal to explore the possibility of introducing an International Social Protection Day was taken up. Lastly, the Africa group would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson of the Committee,

Her Excellency Ms Catalina Devandas Aguilar, for her wisdom and open-mindedness, and all members of the Committee. I would like to mention in particular the representatives of the social partners – the Workers and Employers – and of the Governments for their spirit of compromise and selflessness, which enabled us to come up with constructive conclusions that reflect and take into account the specific circumstances and concerns of all regions of the world with a view to attaining universal social protection. I would like to close by expressing the Africa group's gratitude to the Secretariat for its unfailing support for the work of the Committee.

Mr Garcia
Government (Philippines)

As a labour-sending ILO Member State, the Philippines lauds this session of the International Labour Conference for not setting aside migrant workers. There are some 164 million migrant workers, who contribute to the global and national economies, yet face obstacles in accessing social protection, even in those cases where they earn social security benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored that these and other obstacles may be related to their documentation status, nationality or the duration of their employment in one country. The non-portability of social protection benefits earned from years of contribution is also a huge hindrance.

The reports and conclusions on social security respond to these challenges in their call to set up inclusive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems that leave no one behind, and for bilateral and multilateral initiatives to ensure the portability of migrant workers' social protection. Fortunately, addressing these concerns is now also firmly on the agenda of global migration governance and in the Global Compact for Migration and other initiatives aimed at safeguarding workers and allowing them to contribute their full potential to their families, communities, and host and home countries.

In closing, allow me to recall that His Holiness Pope Francis urged this 109th Session to discard the philosophy of exclusion, which prevents vulnerable groups from accessing social protection. We heard him say that the most vulnerable cannot be set aside in the dialogue, which should also bring together governments, businesses and workers. Let us heed such calls.

Ms Middlemas
Government (Australia)

I commend the proposed resolution and conclusions submitted to the Conference. These conclusions are an important step towards realizing the human right to social protection and they acknowledge that comprehensive, adequate and universal social protection is crucial for the prevention and reduction of poverty, inequalities and insecurity.

Our collective experience of the last 18 months has shown us the importance of adequate and universal social protection. While many workers were able to access social protection in the form of unemployment benefits, universal healthcare, free childcare and emergency measures such as wage subsidies to support themselves and their families, the pandemic also laid bare significant gaps in our social protection systems at the national level and inequalities at the global level.

In particular, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as platform workers, workers in low-paid and insecure work, and migrant workers have been left without

adequate social protection coverage, and sometimes have been left out altogether. This is simply unacceptable. These conclusions give us a path towards achieving universal and comprehensive social protection. They note that ensuring universal social protection must go hand in hand with measures to strengthen decent work, and they emphasize the need for governments to extend social protection to include all workers in all types of employment, including by taking concrete measures to extend social protection to migrant workers.

The conclusions also make it clear that solidarity is needed at the global level to overcome inequalities and to finance social protection, and they call on the ILO to initiate and engage in discussions for a global social protection fund. The establishment of such a fund would be a critical step in closing gaps in social protection for the world's poorest countries, and would allow us to realize social justice for all.

Mr Ahmed
Employer (Bangladesh)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a litmus test for the global community to understand how important it is to have a well-structured and sustainable social protection system. Whether the country is developed or developing, all are under the same storm, fighting with the same enemy. The pandemic has shown our fundamental weaknesses. To address the challenges, there is no alternative but to have an enabling business environment along with a sustainable social protection system, which will provide a financial cushion, especially to those who are more vulnerable.

We are grateful to the ILO for holding this discussion, which is very timely and appropriate. The ILO adopted the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102) in 1952, but unfortunately only 59 Members have ratified it so far. The ILO also introduced Recommendation No. 202, emphasizing the importance of ensuring social security, and employers have been very supportive of this framework.

During this current discussion, the Government and the social partners had a two-week prolonged discussion to re-evaluate the call for a universal social protection system. From the Employers' perspective, our primary objective is to have a sustainable scheme for all to reduce vulnerabilities. It was a very tough negotiation. I must congratulate the Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons for their prudent engagement, and also the Governments for their positive support, which paved the way forward for an acceptable outcome document.

Now the main task lies in implementing the commitments made. This will primarily rely on the proactive engagement of the national governments, in collaboration with the social partners. Governments must commit on the ground to carrying out pragmatic reforms and being accountable to their citizens, instead of playing political cards with life and livelihood. As an Employer representative, I can assure you that employers will be ready to commit to establishing a sustainable social protection system to attain greater social cohesion, resulting in the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work.

Mr Serroyen
Worker (Belgium)

I look back on a wonderful digital journey with robust conclusions. But let us walk the talk now. What are the lessons learned in this devastating COVID crisis?

The pandemic has shown the importance of strong social security systems, in the countries that have built it up in line with the ILO standards, in those countries that have not let it be destroyed by four decades of neoliberal pounding on social protection. But at the same time, this crisis has exposed the weaknesses, including in my country, with modern benefits often too low and with too many gaps in coverage.

First lesson: let us fill all the gaps and increase the adequacy of benefits, in line with our conclusions, including for workers for the digital platforms. The European Commission recommended recently in its fiscal recommendations for all EU countries to “strengthen the coverage, adequacy, and sustainability of health and social protection systems” for all. That is a completely different narrative to the one we used to know.

Second lesson: we have partly solved the shortcomings of our systems through temporary crisis measures. Let us not make the mistake again of storing these measures in the attic until a new crisis arrives. The best crisis measures are those that you do not have to take, because they are satisfactorily anchored already in a crisis-proof, resilient social security system.

Third lesson: the pandemic has shown how intertwined the world is and how underinvestment in social protection in other countries also increases the problems in one’s own country. It is a shared responsibility to help countries with insufficient domestic resources to make the step towards the floor of social protection. Our conclusions on the global fund are an important milestone.

As mentioned before, social security is a human right. You do not throw human rights at the altar of budgetary consolidation or for the profit of private insurers.

Mr Zuccotti
Worker (Argentina)
(Original Spanish)

This Committee’s conclusions provide us with a number of elements requiring a great deal of work in the immediate future.

The pandemic has confirmed what working women and men had been warning for a long time: an unequal world is the enemy of social cohesion. The good news in these unprecedented times is that there is now an understanding of the need for and the value of social protection, not only for everyone, but also with everyone. We agreed that solidarity is key to social protection, whereby everyone – but fundamentally those who have the most – must fund the urgently needed investment in social welfare. Can comprehensive and universal systems of social protection really come at a higher cost than the marginalization and exclusion of millions of people?

The primary and overall role of the State as guarantor of the necessary social equilibrium, progressive taxation and, fundamentally, an economy that respects and values people’s work are the cornerstones of the social protection that is called upon to address increasingly diverse and changing circumstances.

The millions of workers in the informal economy whose rights are being violated and other marginalized groups are at the heart of efforts to promote decent work. I am speaking to you today from the subregion with the greatest inequality in the world, where we have been the testing ground for experiments to privatize social security. It is our hope that these conclusions will promote inclusion and dignity for the millions of working women and men who demand social justice.

Ms Veringa Gieskies
Employer (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
(Original French)

The employers' organizations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo support all of the ILO's efforts so far in the context of the recurrent discussion on social protection.

We particularly welcome the fact that the measures proposed in the conclusions take into account the various strategies of our organizations: the implementation of coherent policies to ensure the continuity, sustainability and resilience of enterprises in the hardest-hit sectors and the provision of financial support and tax relief for enterprises with operational difficulties or weakened as a result of the pandemic.

Governments should work to ensure the effective application of the ILO Conventions and Recommendations on social protection and social dialogue and to review the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), to address the known gaps.

One additional approach would be to adopt regulations on telework in accordance with the Buenos Aires Declaration on Telework, adopted at the 15th International Telework Workshop, which emphasizes the need for a general legal framework to protect workers.

Although it was not easy, the organization of this session of the Conference in a virtual format was effective. I would like to thank the Bureau for Employers' Activities for its continued support, and in particular the International Organisation of Employers for its enhanced assistance during the Committee's work.

I would also like to warmly thank our Vice-Chairperson, Mr Guido Ricci, for his dedication, and not forgetting my tripartite colleagues and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, via the Minister for Employment, Labour and Social Welfare, for having come together in conditions similar to those of a face-to-face session in Geneva for the smooth running of the work of the Conference.

Mr Hernández
Government (Colombia)
(Original Spanish)

First of all, on behalf of the Government of Colombia, I would like to thank all of the members of the Committee for their firm commitment throughout to promote social dialogue and to seeking to continue building the much-desired social protection for all. We support the statement made by the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Colombia recognizes that social protection is crucial to promoting decent work and social justice, and that is why it is committed to achieving the targets of the SDGs. The Government of Colombia has demonstrated the political will to progressively create universal, adequate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems, as indicated in the conclusions, under the overall responsibility of the State. Consequently, we have been working to identify points of access to social security, especially for excluded groups of the population, that progressively enable us to expand coverage, both subjective and objective, in order to achieve improved conditions of justice, equality and inclusive development in our society.

As point 14(a) of the conclusions recommends, we have been strengthening our social protection systems. Colombia has made great progress in the direction advocated by the ILO, especially by establishing a universal healthcare scheme, which includes broad scope for a subsidized component, and by enshrining in the Constitution the Periodic Economic Benefits Scheme, which provides for state incentives for low-income groups and those in the informal economy to save.

The provision of benefits consisting of conditional subsidies is also a social policy tool that enables us to advance efforts to mitigate the economic risks of vulnerable and low-income groups. It must be integrated more closely within the comprehensive social security system, by consolidating the universal basic subsistence income regime or similar schemes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again demonstrated the need to make progress by establishing similar, timely subsidies, such as the implementation of the solidarity income programme. The impact must be evaluated taking into account the bigger picture of the most relevant model of social protection for the current and future circumstances.

Furthermore, our National Development Plan established the obligation to expand social protection and social security coverage to workers through the implementation of a social protection floor consisting of a subsidized healthcare scheme, a programme of financial benefits and access to inclusive social security for individuals earning less than the minimum wage.

These actions demonstrate the commitment of our national government to improving working conditions and continuing to protect our workers' rights. We therefore emphasize the critical importance of social protection and the need for all societies to ensure universal access to comprehensive and sustainable social protection. We are certain that the conclusions being adopted today will guide us in the adoption of public policies on the basis of social dialogue.

Ms Lyle Worker (United States of America)

My deepest thanks to the Secretariat, the Chairperson and the members of the Committee, the Workers' group and the Worker Vice-Chairperson, my colleagues from the International Trade Union Confederation and the Bureau for Workers' Activities, and my union brothers and sisters at home.

It was gratifying, inspiring and sobering to be a part of this discussion on the critical need we must face together – and face now – to make universal social protection a human right, not only on paper but in reality for every person on earth. The work that the Committee's conclusions have commended to the ILO is to promote this catalyst for ending poverty, improving stability and achieving social justice.

Making this real involves actions to guarantee universal social protection for absolutely everyone, in all types of employment, in both the formal and the informal economy, and to foster transitions from the informal to the formal economy. It also involves ensuring the preservation and portability of social security benefits, which will allow workers to keep their social protection through job transitions; reinforced with bilateral and multilateral agreements, such actions can also help ensure social protection for migrants, no matter where they live and work. Actions are also needed to close gender gaps, with social security credits for caregivers and care credits and income security during maternity, paternity and parental leave, which will reduce poverty among

the elderly, especially women. Care credits will also support gender equality in the division of work and care, reducing financial penalties for men who take up care work.

The conclusions also reinforce the ILO's leadership role in ensuring policy coherence on social protection in the multilateral system. Lending conditionalities set by international financial institutions often run directly counter to ILO standards on social protection and fundamental labour rights. As the lead UN agency on social protection and labour rights and standards, the ILO can initiate discussions to promote greater understanding of, consensus on and alignment with ILO standards.

Finally, the conclusions call on the ILO to play a key role in international discussions on a global social protection fund, to support the efforts of countries without sufficient financial capacity to get started in establishing social protection systems. So, adopting and implementing the Committee's conclusions will help us get much closer to meeting our goal of an inclusive recovery that builds back better, makes us resilient in the face of crises, and leaves no one behind.

Ms Herzog **Employer (United States of America)**

The United States Council for International Business (USCIB) congratulates the ILO and its tripartite constituents on the successful conclusion of its 109th Session of the International Labour Conference, the first session in the ILO's history to be held virtually due to this unfortunate and terrible pandemic. We commend the ILO for nevertheless persisting and hosting this timely recurrent discussion on social protection, and the USCIB is proud to have contributed to this shared effort. We thank the Committee Chairperson, the Worker Vice Chairperson and our Employer Vice-Chairperson, Mr Ricci of Guatemala, for their excellent stewardship and commitment to constructive tripartism.

Social protection systems that are well designed and implemented can support national economies, boost human capital and productivity, reduce inequalities and enhance national, community, family and individual resilience. Such systems should account for both ordinary life-cycle risk as well as extraordinary shocks. At the time that the pandemic hit, however, 55 per cent of the world's population had no access to social protection at all, according to the ILO, and thus the importance of this Committee's work.

Our work has resulted in a framework for ILO action towards universal access to adequate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems that are adapted to the developments in the world of work. We recognized in our Committee that social protection systems should be designed to incentivize growth of formal employment and sustainable enterprises. We called for special attention to the improvement of provision of social protection coverage for women. We called for an approach to social protection systems that aligns with new business models and digital technologies, creating new opportunities for individuals to enter the labour market. We also urged for social protection systems to evolve to allow for the portability of benefits. Importantly, we emphasized the critical importance of identifying sustainable financing models to support social protection systems. We must focus together on supporting national-level capabilities to finance and sustain social protection systems for their own citizens.

With an eye towards our shared future, building back better and the achievement of the United Nations SDGs, well-designed, inclusive and well-implemented social protection systems must be a part of that future. The USCIB supports the adoption of

today's report, and we and our global employer peers look forward to supporting the ILO and its tripartite constituents in its implementation.

Mr Zante

Worker (Burkina Faso)

(Original French)

In Burkina Faso, as in many other countries in our subregion, both the informal economy and the formal economy, particularly production sites, which were already weakened by insecurity and terrorist attacks, are feeling the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: economic slowdown, closure of some production sites and businesses, increased costs of raw materials, inflation and many more. All of these situations have consequences on work, jobs, income, social protection and labour relations.

That is why it is crucial to promote and strengthen social dialogue between the social partners and the State in order to implement appropriate strategies to preserve the economic fabric, maintain jobs and income, take care of vulnerable people and support workers in the informal economy.

Furthermore, the Government must also put in place a genuine policy of universal social protection in Burkina Faso. In that respect, I would like to refer to the conclusions of the second recurrent discussion on social protection adopted at this 109th Session of the Conference, which recall and reaffirm that social protection is a universal right, a social and economic investment and, of course, a contribution to sustainable development.

These same conclusions call on States to guarantee social protection to all workers in both the formal economy and the informal economy. The importance and relevance of international labour standards in the area of social protection have been clearly demonstrated. Accordingly, the ILO recommends that Member States ratify them and implement national instruments on social protection. For these reasons, we recommend this resolution for adoption.

Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security): Adoption

The President

Let us now proceed with the adoption of the proposed resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security), the text of which is contained in *Record of Proceedings* No. 7A.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts the proposed resolution?

(The resolution is adopted.)

On behalf of the Conference, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the members of the Committee and to the Secretariat. I am aware of the fact that the Committee held an extended sitting yesterday in order to complete its work, for which we are very grateful. Congratulations on such a positive outcome to all. The Conference as a whole thanks you for your hard work and dedication.

(The Conference continues its work in plenary.)