



Statement of H.E. Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio,
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Office
and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
110th Session of the International Labour Conference
Agenda Item 1: Report of the Director General
Geneva, 6th June 2022

Mr. President,

The Holy See would like to express its sincere appreciation to Mr. Guy Ryder as he approaches the end of his second mandate as Director-General of this esteemed Organization. Your tenure, Mr. Ryder, has seen numerous moments of great import for the ILO, the world of work in general and the international community as a whole. This Delegation congratulates you on your many successes, including most notably the *Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work* which rightly stresses the importance of a human-centred approach to addressing the many challenges facing the world of work today and in the years to come.

I would also like to commend you, Mr. Director-General, for your leadership in the midst of the most recent worldwide emergencies. During the pandemic, under your leadership, the ILO issued a *Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient*. As the pandemic has all too drastically demonstrated, not only are least developed countries (LDCs) and other developing countries disproportionately affected by global crises, but within each country, the poorest and most vulnerable people are the ones who suffer the gravest consequences. While gathering and analysing statistics may be necessary in order to develop strategies to redress negative trends and implement structural transformation, we must never forget that we are not dealing simply with numbers and percentages but with human persons. In this regard, Pope Francis insists that service keep human beings at the centre, “*looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, ‘suffers’ that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people*”.¹

Mr. President,

These last years have been marked by several challenges, the climate and environmental crisis, the Covid pandemic, the protraction of armed conflicts and violence, including the most recent military conflict in Ukraine, all of which continue to threaten peace and stability all over the world.

The current conflict in Ukraine is having devastating consequences on the world as a whole, with LDCs being most affected. As the DG has pointed out in his report, “*in addition to the destruction caused in Ukraine itself and the disruption in neighbouring countries, including through the large-scale displacement of people, the conflict risks provoking a*

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 3 October 2020, n. 115.

triple crisis on a global scale: of food, of energy and of finance"². Indeed, the war has unleashed a dire spiral which is affecting the most vulnerable people on earth, who live mostly in rural areas and are increasingly affected by the expansion of the unequal distribution of natural resources and raw materials, with the consequent worsening of the levels of extreme and moderate poverty and the escalation of hunger. As food scarcity becomes an ever more serious concern, ILO values are more essential than ever. It is urgent to expend all efforts, in a spirit of solidarity and social friendship, to ensure that those in vulnerable situations are protected, supported and sustained throughout these crises.

Mr. President,

At a time of heightened international tensions, we have to strongly reaffirm that no one can be left behind. Yet the only way to achieve this fundamental goal, which is at the basis of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is through a common and universal commitment to putting persons before ideologies, to placing integral human development before military expenditure, to ensuring that the political interests of the powerful do not outweigh the needs and rights of the vulnerable.

This 110th Session of the International Labour Conference is also addressing the question of apprenticeship. While apprenticeships are an essential path to acquiring skills and experience, they must never be reduced to a means of "cheap labour". They must be developed in a human-centred approach, with a clear focus on ensuring every worker's human dignity and inherent rights.

*"In our haste to return to greater economic activity, at the end of the Covid-19 threat, ... let us look for solutions that will help us build a new future of work based on decent and dignified working conditions, that originate in collective negotiation, and that promote the common good, a phrase that will make work an essential component of our care for society and Creation. In this sense, work is truly and essentially human. That is what it is about, being human"*³.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by quoting the address of Pope Francis on the occasion of ILO's Centenary: *"In today's interconnected and complex world, we need to highlight the importance of good, inclusive and decent work [...] We need people and institutions that defend the dignity of workers, the dignity of everyone's work, and the wellbeing of the earth, our common home!"*⁴

Thank you, Mr. President.

² ILC.110/Report I(B), *The least developed countries: Crisis, structural transformation and the future of work*, n. 4.

³ Pope Francis, *Video message on the occasion of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference*, 17 June 2021.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Message to participants in the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference*, Geneva, Switzerland, 10-21 June 2019.