

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 25 May 2022

▶ Statement by Ms Corinne Vargha, representative of the Secretary-General

I. Preliminary remarks

As the representative of the Secretary-General for your Committee, I would like to welcome you to this International Labour Conference. In the exceptional context of continuing challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Labour Conference, including your Committee, is meeting in a hybrid format combining in-person attendance and remote participation by videoconferencing technology. Special arrangements had to be introduced to make this possible. I would like to welcome the delegates who were able to join us in person in Geneva and greet those who participate online. My team and I stand ready to provide you with all necessary assistance to ensure that the Committee functions as smoothly as possible once again this year.

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge Judge Graciela Dixon-Caton, Chairperson of the Committee of Experts, and Professor Evance Kalula, Chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association who will address your Committee this morning in order to present the annual reports of the respective supervisory bodies that they represent.¹

My brief intervention will cover two main points: (i) the constitutional mandate and work of your Committee; and (ii) the ILO's normative work.

II. Constitutional mandate and work of the Conference Committee

1. Mandate of the Committee

Your Committee is a standing committee of the International Labour Conference. It has met every time the International Labour Conference has been in session since 1926 and its mandate, which lies at the heart of the ILO's action,² consists of examining and bringing to the attention of the Plenary of the Conference:

¹ GB.341/INS/12/1(Add.1).

² Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Constitution of the ILO, and article 10 of the Standing Orders of the Conference.

- (i) the measures taken by Members to comply with their obligations to communicate information and reports under articles 19, 22, 23 and 35 of the Constitution and to give effect to the provisions of Conventions to which they are parties; and
- (ii) the information and reports concerning Conventions and Recommendations communicated by Members in accordance with article 19 of the Constitution. Under the terms of this article, your Committee examines at every session of the Conference, a General Survey on the law and practice of Member States in a specific area.

This year, your Committee has before it the report produced by the Committee of Experts at its 92nd Session (November–December 2021) along with the 2022 General Survey entitled *Securing decent work for nursing personnel and domestic workers, key actors in the care economy*.³ These documents form the basis of your Committee's work. You are likely to explore once again this year the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and decent work including in frontline sectors such as nursing, care work and domestic work, in which women are over-represented and non-standard forms of employment are practiced. Your discussion on this year's General Survey will be particularly relevant and timely in light of the fact that the Governing Body decided to place on the agenda of the 112th Session (2024) of the Conference an item on decent work and the care economy for a general discussion.⁴

The Committee also has before it this year the report of the 14th Session of the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (the Joint Committee). Established in 1967 after the ILO and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted a far-reaching Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966), the Joint Committee meets every three years to review major trends in education and teaching, and to make relevant recommendations to the ILO Governing Body and the UNESCO Executive Board. The Joint Committee's report is submitted to the ILO Governing Body with a request that it be transmitted to the Conference Committee.

2. Work of the Committee

Now, a few words about the work of your Committee. Document D.1 details all the adjustments that will allow your Committee to discharge its constitutional obligations within the framework of a hybrid session with a reduced number of sittings. These exceptional adjustments reflect the outcome of the informal tripartite consultations on the Committee's working methods which took place on 7 April and 23 May this year. Detailed information on these consultations is available on the [Committee's website](#). I invite you to read document D.1 carefully in order to facilitate your participation and the proper conduct of the Committee's work.

As provided in document D.1, the Committee will operate on the basis of a compressed working schedule which will result, among other things, in:

- specific time allotment for the various items on the Committee's agenda;
- strict time management with some reduced speaking time;

³ ILO, [Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations](#), ILC, 110/III(A), 2022; General Survey on *Securing Decent Work for Nursing Personnel and Domestic Workers, Key Actors in the Care Economy*, ILC, 110/III(B)2022.

⁴ GB.344/INS/3/1/Decision.

- enhanced possibility to provide written inputs to complement the oral debates;
- longer deadlines for the submission of written statements; and
- early registration on the speakers list.

The Chairperson will provide more information in this regard.

Given that speaking time will be limited, I invite those delegates who so wish, to communicate written statements to the Office sufficiently in advance so that they can be released on the Committee's website 24 hours before the sitting. These statements will be translated and included in the Committee's report in the three working languages. Written statements submitted will be clearly differentiated in the Committee's report from oral interventions made during the discussions.

It is proposed to frame the **discussion of the General Survey** on *Securing decent work for nursing personnel and domestic workers, key actors in the care economy* around three generic questions on the understanding that interventions do not have to be limited to these questions only. The three generic questions are:

- progress made and problems encountered in the implementation of the instruments examined;
- measures to be taken to promote the ratification and application of these Conventions in the light of good practices and the obstacles identified;
- avenues for the future in terms of normative action and technical assistance.

These generic questions could, to the extent possible, structure your interventions so as to facilitate a discussion conducive to an action-oriented outcome.

In order to organize the **discussion of cases of serious failure** to report this year, the governments concerned were invited to communicate written information in advance and three governments have done so. A document compiling this information along with the general remarks of the Employer and Worker spokespersons, has been published in the three languages on the Committee's dedicated website. During the sitting, the governments concerned may, if they wish, present information concerning new developments, with a reduced speaking time, before the Employer and Worker spokespersons present their final remarks.

Once again this year, based on the consensus reached during the informal tripartite consultations of 7 April and 23 May 2022, the adoption of the final list of **"individual" cases to be discussed** by the Committee has been scheduled at today's opening session. This year, the Committee will examine 22 cases as indicated in the provisional working schedule (Document D.0). The Officers and the Office will introduce reasonable adaptations to the usual practice of planning the discussion of individual cases following an alphabetical order, taking into account the different time zones and the complexity of the cases to be examined.

Just like last year and due to the tight working schedule, all conclusions to the examination of "individual" cases will be adopted in two dedicated sittings at the end of the Committee's session. As a result, it will not be possible to reflect the conclusions on the examination of "individual" cases in the first part of the report as per the usual practice. The conclusions will nevertheless be integrated in the second part of the report at the end of each individual case to which they relate.

In addition to this year's special arrangements, allow me to recall the many improvements made to the methods of work of your Committee since 2006 which are reported in detail in Document D.1.⁵

I would like to recall in particular that governments on the long list of individual cases were able to submit, on a purely voluntary basis, written information to the Committee on recent developments not yet examined by the Committee of Experts. This year, 16 governments have taken advantage of this opportunity and have provided information which is available on the web page of your Committee. If a case is included in the final list of cases to be discussed at the Committee, any additional written information that governments may wish to communicate should reach the Office at least two days before their case is discussed so that it can be translated and posted on the Committee's website 24 hours before the discussion.

Furthermore, following recent practice, the discussions of your Committee will be reproduced in extenso in verbatim transcripts. The Chairperson will provide you with fuller information on this subject.

The first part of the Committee's report will consist of a consolidated document in three working languages which will be presented for adoption to your Committee's final sitting.⁶ Both Parts One and Two of your report will be submitted to the Plenary sitting of the International Labour Conference for adoption on Saturday, 11 June. The full report translated into the three languages will be made available online 30 days after its adoption by the International Labour Conference.

As this Conference is organized in a hybrid format, all documents will be produced in electronic format only and released on the Committee's web page which will be our means of sharing important documents and complementing the oral proceedings of the Committee.

III. Updates on the ILO's normative work

In the second part of my intervention, I wish to refer to the continuing relevance of the standards mandate of the Organization.

1. Labour Standards to support an inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery from the ongoing crisis

This is the first session of your Committee since the International Labour Conference adopted a [Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient](#) (Global Call to Action). Together with the [ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#), the Global Call to Action places the ILO's normative work at the heart of human-centred recovery, reaffirming that international labour standards and the ILO supervisory mechanism play an essential role in safeguarding social cohesion and universal peace, reinforcing resilience and finding a better normal on the way out of the crisis caused by this global pandemic. In the words of the ILO Director-General, the Global Call to

⁵ Document D.1 has been available for consultation on the website of the Committee since 27 April 2022.

⁶ Due to the special arrangements which had to be introduced for this session, the first part of the report will contain:

- a verbatim report of the general discussion;
- the outcome of the discussion of the General Survey;
- the conclusions adopted at the end of the examination of the "automatic" cases;
- the verbatim record of the discussion concerning the adoption of the report and the concluding remarks.

Action places “before us the task of building a future of work which tackles the injustices that the pandemic has highlighted”.

The Global Call to Action relates to the ILO’s normative mandate at both national and multilateral levels. At the national level, it covers measures to be taken by national governments and their employer and trade union social partners, to achieve an inclusive job-rich recovery that substantially strengthens worker and social protections and supports sustainable enterprises. In particular, it calls for “the promotion of legal and institutional frameworks based on international labour standards, including fundamental principles and rights at work, and a particular emphasis on occupational safety and health in the light of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic” and notes developments in the areas of child labour, discrimination, occupational safety and health and social protection, including social security.

At the multilateral level, the Global Call to Action calls for ILO leadership in promoting increased policy coherence to achieve a human-centred recovery that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, and support for its implementation. In order to exercise this leadership, a [Global Forum for a Human-centred Recovery](#) took place on 22–24 February 2022. In the context of the follow up to the Global Forum and prompted by the UN Secretary-General’s “Our Common Agenda”, the ILO is leading the Interagency Task Team on the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection at UN system level.⁷

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts⁸ welcomes the adoption of the Global Call to Action and encourages the Office to engage with the UN system with a view to ensuring that international labour standards, including supervisory body comments, continue to inform the recovery process in consonance with the UN human rights mechanisms. The Committee also emphasizes the importance of updating ratification records to enable international labour standards to be guideposts to COVID-19 recovery. It notes that in light of the disruptive impact of the pandemic on the world of work as well as unprecedented transformational pressures arising from climate, digital and demographic factors, it is crucial for its own effectiveness and authority, for it to be able to focus on the application of standards that are the most up to date and address the changing patterns in the world of work.

The Committee of Experts also reiterates that:

- (i) The crisis does not suspend obligations under ratified international labour standards; any derogations should be exercised within clearly defined limits of legality, necessity, and proportionality and non-discrimination;
- (ii) Consistent with lawful measures to protect the health of the public, every effort should be made to prevent a downward spiral in labour conditions and pursue a virtuous cycle of recovery and development with the support of the Office and development partners fully respecting rights at work;
- (iii) Social dialogue is critically important in all aspects of the development, implementation, monitoring and review of COVID-19 policy responses to ensure that these are grounded in respect for rights at work, tailored to national circumstances and benefiting from local ownership.⁹

⁷ [GB.344/INS/7](#) and [GB.344/INS/7/Decision](#) and [Concept note on the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transition](#) (GB.344/Concept note).

⁸ General report, paras 24–41.

⁹ General Report, para. 42.

2. Ratifications of international labour standards

Since the Committee's last meeting in June 2021, 52 ratifications of ILO Conventions have been registered confirming the continuing commitment of Member States to engage in a multilateral system of cooperation based on international labour standards in pursuit of social justice, including in times of crisis. Forced labour, violence and harassment in the world of work and occupational safety and health were the lead normative areas attracting ratifications.

The discussion taking place at this International Labour Conference on inclusion of occupational safety and health in the fundamental principle and rights at work framework is likely to result in the designation of a number of occupational safety and health instruments as fundamental, something which should prompt further tripartite reviews of national ratification records in this domain, which has been placed under the spotlight during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, as a follow up to the Recurrent Item Discussion on social protection (social security) which took place at the 109th Session of the Conference, the Governing Body approved a campaign for the ratification of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) to achieve universal social protection through awareness-raising, capacity-building and technical support to governments and social partners. Convention No. 102 celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. It sets the basis for a comprehensive, integrated system of social security that is a key component of social protection floors. The latter are promoted by the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. These two social security instruments set the foundation for the ILO's leadership of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transition.

The important gender dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic is illustrated not only in this year's General Survey but also in the resolution and conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference, at its 109th Session (2021) concerning inequalities and the world of work. These point to the urgent need for prompt action to address this universal, complex and multifaceted phenomenon. While the type and extent of inequalities vary by country and over time, gender inequalities are persistent and pervasive, leaving women at the bottom of the scale of those left behind. As a follow up to the Conference resolution, the Governing Body¹⁰ is in the process of considering proposals, inter alia, to:

- promote a positive agenda for reducing inequalities, in line with the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122);
- accelerate the transition to formality in line with the guidance contained in the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204);
- promote skills development and lifelong learning through targeted measures, including a ratification campaign for the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142); and
- foster a fair share of the fruits of progress including by promoting the ratification of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131). Recognizing adequate minimum wages, statutory or negotiated, is a powerful tool to reduce inequalities as acknowledged in the Centenary Declaration.

¹⁰ GB.344/INS/8.

In this regard, I would like to recall from this year's Annual Report on the Follow Up to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work,¹¹ that the two fundamental Conventions on equality and non-discrimination are approaching universal ratification with **14** ratifications missing for the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and **12** for the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Incidentally, the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), which entered into force on 25 June 2021, has received **13** ratifications to date and targeted campaigns are under way for its promotion.

The two fundamental Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining continue to be the least ratified of the eight fundamental Conventions. Thirty (**30**) ratifications are missing for the universal ratification of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and **19** for the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). As indicated in the latest Annual Review, the commitment of the social partners is particularly important for the realization of the fundamental principles and also in relation to the issue of ratifications. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), has become the most ratified Convention outside the category of fundamental Conventions with 156 ratifications. This momentum could help to ensure a solid social dialogue foundation in support of further ratifications of fundamental Conventions, which play a central role in promoting equality in the world of work.

Last year, I highlighted the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) as a seminal achievement while warning against the dangers of increasing incidence of the worst forms of child labour in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, putting at risk progress toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7. I would like to recall in this respect that **13** ratifications are missing for the universal ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), while **8** countries have yet to ratify the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and **11** have yet to ratify the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). With regard to the 2014 Protocol to Convention No. 29, the initial target of 50 ratifications set by the "50 for Freedom campaign" was met in 2021 and the Protocol has so far received 59 ratifications. While this is good progress, it also means that **128** Member States have yet to ratify the Protocol. Sustained efforts continue in order to achieve the target of universal ratification.

Allow me to conclude this section by recalling that in 2023, your Conference will hold a general discussion on just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all. The rethinking of industrial policy and technology and the measures needed to ensure that the transformational changes upon us leave no one behind, are likely to draw heavily on our normative heritage.

3. Standards policy

Work is continuing to reinforce the standards work of the ILO in its second century based on a body of standards that is robust, clear and up to date, and a system of supervising their application that is authoritative and transparent, based on strengthened tripartite consensus.

¹¹ GB.344/INS/4(Rev.1).

Of the 235 international labour standards included in the initial programme of work of the Tripartite Working Group established under the Standards Review Mechanism (SRM), 63 instruments remain to be examined.

After a one year postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SRM Tripartite Working Group met for the sixth time in September 2021 and completed its review of the comprehensive sectoral social security instruments and the instruments concerning unemployment benefit and medical care and sickness benefits. While it made consensual recommendations on the comprehensive sectoral instruments and the instruments concerning medical care and sickness benefits, it made no recommendations following its review of the instruments concerning unemployment benefits. Its seventh meeting will take place in September 2022.

In the meantime, the Special Tripartite Committee (STC) of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006) concluded in April 2021 its review of the status of maritime labour standards concerning seafarers, which were referred to it by the SRM Tripartite Working Group.¹² Its recommendations were followed up by the Governing Body at its 343rd Session (November 2021) with a view to leaving the MLC, 2006 as the up-to-date ILO instrument in the maritime field by 2030. In this regard, the Governing Body placed an item on the agenda of the 111th and 118th Sessions (2023 and 2030, respectively) of the International Labour Conference concerning the abrogation and withdrawal of most of the instruments classified as outdated and requested the Office to launch an initiative to promote the ratification on a priority basis of the MLC, 2006 among the countries still bound by the outdated Conventions.¹³

At its 344th Session (March 2022), the Governing Body undertook its third evaluation of the functioning of the SRM Tripartite Working Group. It emphasized once again the importance of this mechanism in ensuring a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards and stressed the need for timely follow-up action by Member States, social partners as well as by the Office. To facilitate timely follow-up action at national level, the Office has been supporting the development of tripartite national plans of action on international labour standards and has established a Helpdesk which is at the disposal of the tripartite constituents to provide the necessary support.

With regard to the implementation of the work plan on the strengthening of the supervisory system, the Governing Body continued its consideration of further steps to ensure legal certainty at the 344th Session (March 2022) of the Governing Body. The Governing Body emphasized that settling disputes relating to the interpretation of international labour Conventions in accordance with article 37 of the ILO Constitution is fundamental for the effective supervision of international labour standards, and decided to continue its discussion at its 347th Session (March 2023).¹⁴

The various supervisory bodies have continued to discuss their working methods and to introduce innovations wherever necessary.

¹² [GB.334/LILS/2\(Rev.\)](#), paras 16–17. At its 109th Session in June 2021, the International Labour Conference abrogated eight Conventions and withdrew eight Conventions and ten Recommendations on the recommendation of the STC MLC.

¹³ [GB.343/PV](#), para. 62.

¹⁴ [GB.344/LILS/4](#).

4. Technical assistance, development cooperation and capacity-building on international labour standards

Allow me to turn now to the important question of Office technical assistance focused on the achievement of tangible progress in the implementation of standards at the national level, guided by the comments of the ILO supervisory bodies.

In line with previous decisions taken in the framework of informal tripartite consultations on the Committee's working methods, the Office regularly places on your Committee's web page information on the measures taken by the Office to give effect to the recommendations of your Committee. As can be seen from this information, the Office resumed missions as soon as travel restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted, with a view to following up on your Committee's conclusions. The Office succeeded in making up for the delay caused by these travel restrictions and has followed up on almost all conclusions and recommendations reached by your Committee at its 2019 and 2021 sessions.

Furthermore, the Office continued to provide reinforced assistance on reporting, including to Member States which find themselves in serious failure to comply with their reporting obligations. Some of these Member States have since fulfilled their reporting obligations, at least in part.¹⁵

The Office, in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, continued to deliver capacity-building activities at a distance through online courses. The International Labour Standards Academy has adopted a regional focus in order to reach out to as many participants as possible from a selected region while ensuring more targeted discussions, including the sharing of good practices, among countries with geographical, economic and legal ties. As a result, the third regional International Labour Standards Academy was delivered in 2022 at a distance to 70 participants from Asia and the Pacific region, including tripartite constituents, judges and law professionals. The Turin Centre is also providing tailored training on international labour standards to the constituents and other stakeholders such as judges and labour inspectors in all regions.

As a result of this targeted assistance, reporting to the Committee of Experts which had declined sharply in 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, largely recovered to even exceed pre-COVID levels: 67.6 per cent of reports under article 22 of the ILO Constitution were received in 2021 as opposed to 42.9 per cent in 2020, including 65 of the 111 first reports due. Still, the Committee of Experts expressed concern at the fact that only 41.9 per cent of reports due were received by the 1 September deadline. The Office is following up in collaboration with the regional offices and the Turin Centre in order to sensitize Member States on the need to submit reports on time.

In the framework of the ILO's Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25 and Programme and Budget for 2022–23, the Office has continued to consolidate its current partnerships and is exploring initiatives to strengthen links between standards and development cooperation even further.

As noted earlier on, in the context of a repositioned UN development system and prompted by the UN Secretary-General's Common Agenda, the ILO is leading the Interagency Task Team on the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection which is to develop, as one of its initial tasks, common programming frameworks underpinning country level action

¹⁵ Document D.2 contains more information on this subject.

aligned with international labour standards and human rights. Moreover, in the framework of the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, the ILO joined the Human Rights Mainstreaming Trust Fund Steering Committee in order to reinforce partnerships and alliances for the promotion of international labour standards and human rights. The *Surge Initiative*¹⁶ partially supported by this Trust Fund, is a good example of potential synergies that can be created between international labour standards and human rights through greater collaboration within the UN system. These types of initiatives allow the ILO and its three constituents to support human rights at work within UN Country Teams through their own normative instruments and supervisory processes.

Finally, the ILO is facilitating greater policy coherence within the multilateral system by intensifying cooperation with multilateral development banks, many of which are currently strengthening their social safeguard policies.

5. Maritime matters and the COVID-19 pandemic

Before I conclude my statement, a special mention to the situation of seafarers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and of those affected by the crisis unfolding in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. In its latest report, the Committee of Experts reiterated its deep concern regarding the challenges and the impact that restrictions and other measures adopted by governments around the world to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have had, and continue to have, on the protection of seafarers' rights as laid out in the MLC, 2006. The Committee recalled that its [General observation on matters arising from the application of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended \(MLC, 2006\) during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), adopted in 2020, remains applicable in its entirety. It urged all ILO Member States to designate and treat seafarers as "key workers", to facilitate crew changes, provide access to medical care ashore when needed, and prioritize seafarers for vaccination.

The Office continues to work and to spare no effort to ensure that the dire situation that seafarers faced does not repeat itself in the future and that the remaining current difficulties are resolved. In follow-up to the Governing Body's decision at its 342nd Session, the Director-General liaised with the United Nations Secretary-General to convene an ad hoc UN inter agency task force to examine the implementation and practical application of the MLC, 2006 during the pandemic, including its impact on seafarers' fundamental rights and on the shipping industry. The ILO Director-General also followed-up on a resolution adopted by the ILO Governing Body in March 2022 and liaised with the IMO Secretary-General to urge those concerned in a joint letter to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of the health and safety of seafarers stranded in Ukrainian ports as a result of the ongoing conflict.

Most recently, the Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC, 2006, held its [fourth meeting \(Part II\)](#)¹⁷ in May bringing together around 500 representatives of governments, and organizations of seafarers and shipowners. Drawing from lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholders in the global shipping industry have adopted amendments to the MLC, 2006 to improve the living and working conditions of seafarers. These amendments aim at ensuring that seafarers have appropriately-sized personal protective equipment, in particular to suit the increasing number of women seafarers; good quality drinking water is

¹⁶ Seeding change for an economy that enhances human rights.

¹⁷ The STC further adopted three resolutions related to bullying and harassment, including sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Maritime Sector; the financial security system to protect seafarers in cases of abandonment and the need to adopt measures to ensure that all seafarers have adequate means of contractual redress against shipowners.

available free of charge on board; seafarers have access to appropriate social connectivity and internet access in ports; and they are informed of their rights relating to the obligation of recruitment and placement services to compensate them for monetary losses. The amendments also reinforce the obligation for States to provide medical care for seafarers in need of immediate assistance, as well as to facilitate the prompt repatriation of abandoned seafarers and the repatriation of the remains of seafarers who have died on board. Furthermore, all deaths of seafarers will be recorded and reported annually to the ILO and the relevant data published in a global register. The amendments were presented for approval to this session of the International Labour Conference and, if approved, they should enter into force by December 2024.

Meanwhile, the ILO registered the 100th ratification of the MLC, 2006 in April 2022, reaching a global milestone in the efforts to guarantee universal respect of seafarers' rights and a level playing field for shipowners.

IV. Final observations

A guiding theme throughout my intervention has been the context of unprecedented transitions in which your Committee is being called upon to deliver its work. Rest assured that the International Labour Standards Department is determined to manage any transition by maintaining the tradition of public service devoted to excellence and continuing to place its expertise at the service of your Committee to help you play your pivotal role within the ILO's constitutional framework.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the commitment and professionalism of all my colleagues in the Department, and particularly to Ms Karen Curtis, Chief of the Freedom of Association Branch, and Mr Horacio Guido, Chief of the Application of Standards Branch, who once again this year will accompany me in guiding the secretariat of your Committee.

Once again this year, I look forward to working with you all, Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, Reporter, and all the members of the Committee.