

**Message by Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General
of the International Labor Organization (ILO)**

Mrs. President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Madam Speaker of the Parliament of Serbia,

Mr. Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Unfortunately, I cannot be with you in Belgrade today. However, I am very pleased to be able to send you this message.

Dear Parliamentarians,

The ILO is proudly celebrating its centenary this year, but we are still 30 years younger than the IPU! Throughout the years, the ILO and the IPU have collaborated on various issues, in particular on decent work and fundamental principles and rights at work.

As public opinion-makers, as representatives of the people, as scrutinizers of governments' actions, you are uniquely placed to inspire and guide the journey towards decent work and social justice. Ultimately as legislators, you can give life to the international labour standards set by the ILO, ratifying the instruments and overseeing their application. In the framework of the ILO Centenary ratification campaign, in 2018 and 2019 alone, thanks largely to parliamentarians, 62 countries have ratified at least one new ILO instrument, totalling 98 new ratifications.

Today, I call on your resolve to combat a crime that has no place in our societies: the crime of forced labour.

For centuries, parliamentarians across the world have combated forced labour and slavery. In my home country, William Wilberforce and a group of courageous parliamentarians campaigned relentlessly, until the slave trade in the British Empire was eventually abolished in 1807. But the fight is not over.

Globally, 25 million people are still subjected to forced labour, over 17 per cent are children, vulnerable to severe exploitation and abuse. Forced labour is a crime and violation of human rights, often associated with severe psychological, physical or sexual violence, which undermines the prospects for social justice and lasting peace. This scourge affects all countries, including yours. Some of your constituents may be trapped in forced labour in agriculture or construction, trafficked to another region or country to be exploited in prostitution or domestic work. Others will consume goods and services produced through forced labour.

Your contribution is key to achieve the Sustainable Development goals, and in particular the Target 8.7 to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour by 2030.

Today, I have the pleasure to present to this assembly a new joint IPU-ILO handbook for parliamentarians on eliminating forced labour. It is the third time that the ILO and the IPU join forces to address a critical issue. We publishing a handbook on eliminating the worst forms of child labour in 2002; and a handbook on Migration, human rights and governance in 2015.

We hope that you will find this new handbook useful in your efforts to effectively combat forced labour. It outlines the measures and actions that you can take: enacting legislation; adopting budgets; and through your oversight over governments' actions. Also through the ratification and implementation of the 2014 Forced Labour Protocol, which contains provisions aimed at preventing forced labour, protecting victims and ensuring access to justice and remedies.

Dear Parliamentarians,

It is a question of justice and human rights. Together, we **can be the generation to put an end to slavery, forced labour and human trafficking.**

Guy Ryder

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