



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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## Speech by Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**Delivered at the 108<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference  
Palais des Nations, Geneva  
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address this 108<sup>th</sup> International Labor Conference, which coincides with the centennial celebration of the ILO. I use this opportunity to congratulate the ILO on this auspicious occasion.

Let me also say how much the IPU is appreciative of the productive and fruitful cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and ILO in mobilizing parliamentarians behind labour issues.

Indeed, over the years, the IPU has benefited greatly from ILO's support in implementing campaigns and in providing capacity-building to parliaments on such issues as child trafficking, child labour, and violence against children. Among other things, we have developed a series of handbooks for parliamentarians to sensitize them and guide them through the legal aspects of these issues. Through these practical tools but also some of our political resolutions, we have encouraged parliaments to adopt and enforce effective decent work legislation, put in place relevant programmes, monitor progress towards the elimination of abusive practices and allocate the necessary financial and human resources to support workers well-being.

The IPU and ILO are currently working on a handbook on combating forced labour which will be launched at the 141<sup>st</sup> IPU Assembly in Belgrade in October 2019.

*Building a future with decent work*, the main theme of this ILO Conference, strikes me as very timely in the face of so many changes in the world of work and in the economy over the past few decades of poorly regulated globalization. This preoccupation with decent work is not new of course, and in fact goes as far back as the beginning of industrialization. As we know, there have been some highs and some lows, since then.

We also welcome the essential work on the agenda of your Conference on the adoption of international standards on ending violence and harassment in the world of work. We support the adoption of this much awaited convention and recommendations on this issue and, as the global organization of parliaments we are currently working with our Members to make parliament a respectful, gender-sensitive and inclusive workplace free from harassment and violence, especially against women.

Overall, I would say workers everywhere are experiencing a protracted low moment. Globally, the majority of workers still operate in the informal sector where labour rights and working conditions are most tenuous. Growing numbers of workers, particularly in the industrialized countries, depend on short term, precarious contracts with few or no benefits, and low pay. Women are particularly affected as they continue to be paid less than men for similar work and continue to bear the brunt of domestic work that is unpaid and scarcely recognized.

New technologies are only partly to blame for the brave new world in which we find ourselves. The real problem is that workers' power to improve their own conditions has been diminished as a result of policies that, on balance, have weakened collective bargaining and with that a broad spectrum of labour rights, have favoured a shift away from the real productive economy toward financialization and an "extractive model" of the economy, and have unleashed a global race to the bottom with regard to wages and social protections. In the process, what has been sacrificed the most is any notion of work as self-fulfillment.

We should strongly advocate for decent work and stronger safety nets for all, particularly displaced workers. In the process, we need to address the new reality of growing flows of migrant workers and of the sustainability of social security systems.

The IPU calls also for an adequate and up-to-date regulatory framework and special measures to help young people, women, older workers and people with disabilities enter the labour market as entrepreneurs or workers, and to be granted competency-based treatment.

We should make sure that new and innovative policies aim to organize work more effectively to foster production that is likely to meet the real needs of our populations.

To this end, I concur with the need for an effective governance of work— as part of the centenary conversations— whose guiding principles, objectives and modus operandi should be agreed on through an inclusive approach involving different stakeholders of work. No one should be left behind.

I would like to commend ILO's vision as the only tripartite international organization bringing together governments, workers and entrepreneurs. This culture of tripartite dialogue needs to be strengthened more around the world as it is a key precondition to sensible economic policies that benefit the whole of society and not just a few. While we need to look toward the future of decent work in a totally new economic context, let's not forget the not-so-distant past (post-war period) when governments, workers and entrepreneurs worked closely together. Ultimately, it was precisely that social dialogue that laid the foundations for the prosperity of the post-war in the industrialized countries.

As for today's economic context, we need to think beyond growth as an end in itself and as the only way to support employment. We have followed with keen interest the work of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, which has engaged in rich and profound reflections on key themes — including work and society, decent jobs for all, the organization of work and the governance of work— to feed this necessary and ambitious reform. Its conclusions and recommendations should serve as a guiding line in the implementation of this reform.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Parliaments, as key actors in this reform, must be mobilized to meet these challenges. Parliaments have a great responsibility. They can influence debates, decisions and, of course, more crucially, implementation. They adopt legislation, oversee government policy, allocate financial resources, and raise awareness in communities. Most importantly, as representatives of the people, workers and entrepreneurs alike, parliamentarians have a duty to help foster the culture of social dialogue I referred to. Therefore, let us join forces to engage all parliamentarians on this crucial matter of the future of work and a global economy that works for all.

I thank you for your attention.