



Employers' Closing Intervention

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Dear Ministers, Ambassadors,

Dear Director General,

Dear Delegates,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me again congratulate the ILO Office for organising this European Regional Meeting which is of utmost importance in providing guidance on labour and social policies to the constituents in the 51 ILO Member States of the region.

During the past 3 days we have had open and fruitful discussions on the various aspects of the future of work. We have shared interesting data, research findings and experience. We also noted that our perceptions of future risks and opportunities do not always coincide. The views of the representatives of the academic world of the region have enriched our debates and have helped to make them more holistic.

We started our discussions by acknowledging clear signs of economic recovery in recent times, after the heavy downturn that has affected the whole region in the past decade. This recovery is gradually showing also positive results for labour markets and societies, through improved competitiveness and rising investment and job creation.

We have asked ourselves: What can be done to secure and maintain this growth? And what should governments, in coordination with employers' and workers' organisations, do to harness the full potential of the future of work?

When discussing issues such as education, skills, social protection, labour market policies, integration of migrant workers, advancement of new technologies, diverse forms of work and new business models, we agreed that it was key to seize the full set of emerging future opportunities and to keep new challenges under control.

In this regard, the Employers have consistently emphasised the need to look at the future of work in a fact-bound and unemotional manner, considering both opportunities and challenges.

Undue fear and pessimism is not helpful to understand the evolution of the world of work and to design appropriate policies and rules. In any case, stopping the evolution of the world of work is neither possible nor desirable.

We have all agreed that the demographic changes in the region and the new attitudes of the younger generations force us to rethink education systems so that they are more effective in educating people during their entire life. Skills mismatches need to be hindered to develop from the outset as they are simply too costly, for enterprises, for workers, and finally for the whole society.

Furthermore, we have dwelt upon emerging business models and the need to enable enterprises to grow and operate more sustainably, especially SMEs/start-ups. In order to do so, labour market regulation needs to be adapted to become simpler and more effective.

We have also been referring to the manner in which diverse forms of work can at the same time meet the needs of workers and help enterprises better adapt to changing market demands and become more agile and resilient. A series of interesting videos has been displayed providing concrete examples of the flexibility of diverse forms of work.

We then noted that, within the list of all future of work-related issues that need to be addressed, social security schemes should be given particular attention. With all the changes ongoing in the world of work, social security schemes need to be kept economically sustainable, but also adaptable and accessible, in order to ensure health care and pension to all those that are in need.

Finally, we have been exchanging our views on the future governance of work and new forms of dialogue among social partners. It emerged from the discussion that, in order to stay relevant, employers' and workers' organizations need to follow closely the development of new types of enterprises and employment and adapt their activities and services to changing demands.

Despite divergencies in some respects, we have agreed on one particular point: Social dialogue amongst responsible and representative social partners will continue to be the best way to find adequate and balanced responses to future issues and challenges in the world of work.

Conclusions

In conclusion, let me reiterate the overriding importance of tripartism for the functioning of the ILO. The principle of tripartism makes the ILO the only international structure where decisions are jointly taken by governments, employers and workers. Tripartism is of utmost importance for the acceptance of decisions by ILO bodies at national level and thus for the impact of the ILO in member States.

This European Regional Meeting was unusual in view of the low participation rate of the workers' delegates from ILO member States and the absence of representatives from the International and European trade unions. We have regretted this situation, since ILO tripartism can flourish only when all the three parties are sitting at the table to discuss and negotiate.

We nevertheless noted with satisfaction that it was possible to draft meaningful conclusions as an outcome of this European Regional Meeting. These conclusions, which carefully take into account the findings, expectations and needs of the ILO

constituents, as expressed at this meeting, will determine and guide the actions of the ILO and the ILO Office for the next 4 years.

Let me finally thank the government and worker representatives for their constructive inputs and cooperation, as well as the government of Turkey for generously hosting this meeting.

Thank you, Chair.
