



Restoring Dignity,
Inspiring Change.

108th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 14th June 2019

Statement of the International Catholic Migration Commission during the plenary session of the International Labour Conference (ILC)

Mr. President, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) is honored to deliver this statement at the 108th Centenary Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC), in response to the report of the Director-General.

ICMC is a registered non-profit organization, providing direct humanitarian and other services to uprooted people and advocating for and with them. Its mission is to protect and serve refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, victims of human trafficking, and migrants - regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality.

“Today, we are confronted with a complex global crisis which is both social and environmental” (Laudato si’, paragraph 139). This situation occurs in the context of globalization – affecting not only the economy but also cultures and communities – and of accelerated technological change – in particular, the development of robotization and artificial intelligence. Of the many ongoing trends, the following are worth mentioning: growing inequalities, demographic growth, and growing migratory flows. Urgent action is needed to prevent this global crisis from breeding fear and rejection, nurturing violence between and within communities, and untold suffering for growing portions of humanity.

Decent work for all is not only the cornerstone of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO’s) widely shared philosophy based on the double convictions that social justice is the best path toward lasting peace, and that “labour is not a commodity”. Decent work for all means dignity in all domains of human activity, for workers in precarious forms of employment as well as in formal employment relationships; it means dignity at home, on the way to work and in the workplace; it means dignity in countries of origin, of transit, and of destination. It also means freedom and liberation for people forced to work against their will and children subjected to enduring the harshest form of work conditions.

An extended Decent Work Agenda retains a great transformative power for peace and social justice as well as in the protection of creation. For these reasons, a global group of researchers and opinion leaders, gathered together in the project “The Future of Work, Labour after Laudato Si”¹ and suggest the following set of concrete proposals to shape the “future we want” for the world of work with the goal of building a resource base for advocacy and dialogue with social partners, leaders of the world of work and of other faith communities in the context of the ILO Centenary.

¹ Contributors are part of groups associated with Catholic institutions and organizations (CERAS, Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla, ICMC, Lupina Foundation, Observatoire de la Finance, UNIAPAC, Aggiornamenti Sociali) in dialogue with a group of Catholic Inspired Organizations (IYCW, Kolping international, MIJARC, CIJOC and MMTC).

The first proposal concerns the idea of understating that decent work must include the right to work in a way that contributes positively to integral human development and does not damage humankind and the environment. In other words, work is not decent if its output is death or suffering for people, or pollution and degradation of the environment, even when all standards of protection of workers are met. Fair wage, participation, work safety and the right to unionise are not enough to define decent work.

The second proposal calls for integrating the ecological and the Decent Work Agenda. Among the focus areas requiring attention, we prioritise the following: the improvement of the health and security of workers, their families, and communities; the need to mitigate environmental hazards and to promote investments toward greener and safer forms of production; the care for those in need; and finally, on the promotion of just employment policies to accompany the transition toward a greener economy.

Thirdly, a proposal concerning the role of the ILO and its tripartite constituents in the UN system. The Decent Work Agenda can be promoted through a wide range of alliances and coalitions, expanding based on the tripartite constituents, reaching out to local governments and communities, with the support of civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations. A specific goal is to give space to organizations representing people living and working at the margins, who are often out of reach for the actors of the formal labour market. Their voices need to be heard too.

The last proposal gives attention to migrants and their positive impact on the labour market. An extended Decent Work Agenda must pay special attention to migrants and refugees – internal and international – especially where the interface between urban and rural environments plays a special role. People on the move contribute both to their home regions and countries and well as to their host communities through their work.

Migration today is linked, directly or indirectly, to the quest for decent work opportunities and even if employment is not the primary driver, it usually features in the migration process at some point. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) represent significant non-binding instruments which offer the opportunity for the international community to improve workplace productivity and deliver decent work outcomes for migrants, refugees and national workers, as well as to shift current misperceptions by readjusting migration and refugees policies to effectively include all labour market aspects.

In this regard, ILO has a key role in advocating for greater global governance ensuring a fairer and more equitable labour migration, which has long been one of world's most successful anti-poverty strategies and together, we can positively transform the lives of migrant workers, refugees and host communities. Thus, we call on the ILO during its Centenary year and long into the future to prioritize attention on the positive impact of migrants' and refugees' labour on economic development across the range of high, middle, or low-income countries, and at global through local levels.

Last but not least, we are keenly aware and deeply concerned that women, despite their equal dignity with men, regularly are confronted with inequitable, discriminatory, and stigmatizing policies and practices in the world of work and that is why we expect that the efforts of the ILC conclude with the endorsement of an ILO Convention, accompanied

by a Recommendation, with a strong focus on the gender dimension as a first step to change the narrative for women and men throughout the world.

Let us join forces and advance together to the future we want.

Thank you, Mr. President.