

Plenary speech: Julie Lødrup, Worker, Norway

Check against delivery

Thank you Chair

First, I would like to thank the ILO for the fantastic job it has done during this difficult crisis.

Covid 19 has highlighted huge weaknesses in our economic system. And we should stop and ask our selves if it is fit for the post-Covid era, and if not, how it must change?

Even before the pandemic, the world was not on track to achieve SDG 8 and the 2030 Agenda. Barely 30 percent of the world's population had adequate social security coverage, despite commitments made in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

Obstacles, such as poverty, inequality, and a lack of trust in governments and institutions, magnified the impact of the pandemic, and are now posing serious threats to the recovery.

But the crisis has also brought hope. Many have understood the importance of being unionised, and have joined our ranks. Collective actions stimulate social solidarity, and we have seen a unique willingness to bear costs and risks for others in order to protect our communities.

It has increased the awareness of the role of the public sector. We have learned that there is a strong economic, moral and public health case for governments to introduce universal social protection.

In Norway the sick pay scheme used to be controversial for providing compensation from the first day of illness. During the pandemic, however, many saw the value of this to fight the virus.

The pandemic has been a wake-up call that it is time to shift mindsets away from only short-term economic profit to long-term thinking that anticipates risks.

In order to rebuild the trust, we must make laws and institutions work for people and democratise opportunities for decent work.

In recent years a number of so-called mandatory due diligence initiatives have sprung up. Recently, the Norwegian government proposed a new Act that will require thousands of the country's largest companies to disclose what measures they take to ensure respect for human rights in their value chains. The proposal also deploys a unique approach to transparency and regulatory oversight.

The Appendix to the Director General's report, on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, brings to mind the words of the UN Working Group for Business and Human Rights, that businesses are not neutral actors, and that there is a need for a *heightened due diligence* for businesses in conflict-affected areas, to avoid being complicit in gross human rights abuses or violations of the Geneva Conventions.

Building forward better will require a human-centered approach based on responsible business and social dialogue and tripartite cooperation, to craft solutions that are right-based, inclusive and sustainable.

But for social dialogue to deliver effective responses to the crisis, the fundamental rights to freedom of association, collective bargaining and right to organise need to be respected.

A few days ago, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the right to strike and the right to organise take precedence over economic rights such as the four freedoms in the EEA/EU agreement. Hence, the ruling in the Holship case, which was brought to the European Court of Human Rights by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, was an important decision for the entire European trade union movement.

To maximise the role and contribution of the social partners to the recovery efforts, the ILO should focus more on strengthening their institutional capacity. After all, engagement with the UN and contribution to the national cooperation framework is an important test of their relevance.

We need to be bold, innovative and committed to achieve the Global Goals. And we must all assume ownership so that no one is left behind.

Thank you

