**European Semester Conference – Inter-parliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union**

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***“Just transition to Green jobs: A global perspective”***

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I thank the European Parliament and the Croatian Presidency for the opportunity to speak to you today. It is an honour.

Throughout our shared history, the International Labour Organization has been encouraged, empowered, and inspired by our cooperation with the European Union. It has been possible and successful, only because it is based on shared values – social justice, solidarity, equity -, on shared methods – social partnership and dialogue -, and on shared readiness to embrace new challenges and new opportunities.

Today, as the ILO moves forward from its Centenary dedicated to the Future of Work, and the European Union - with a new Parliament and a new Commission - embarks on a new and ambitious programme, we are called upon to renew that cooperation and to address the challenges of building a better and sustainable future in Europe and in the world.

It was extraordinarily important that, last October, the European Council welcomed the ILO Declaration for the Future of Work adopted by our Conference in June and noted “with great satisfaction” the human-centred approach at its heart.

And simultaneously, the Commission has made the European Green Deal the reference point of its new overall growth strategy and its external and internal policies.

So let me, in turn, warmly welcome the commitment to European Climate neutrality by 2050. There are few who still deny that climate change is the result of human activity. But it can be forgotten that most of that activity is work, or work-related. So this is truly our shared business.

Chair,

The fact of the matter is that we are already behind schedule. The United Nations Secretary-General misses no opportunity to remind us that climate change is advancing more quickly than our efforts to stop it. COP 25 in Madrid meant only that we dropped further behind.

The effects on the world of work are already there to be seen. Between 2000 and 2015, some 23 million working-life years were lost annually because of environment-related hazards linked to human activity. And, looking ahead, ILO projections up to 2030 suggest that with ‘business as usual’, two per cent of total global working hours could be lost because it will simply become too hot to work in some places and at some times. That’s an equivalent to 72 million full-time jobs.

Chair,

Just as our planet is on the brink of a tipping point when climate change will inflict catastrophic and irreversible damage, so is public opinion at a tipping point. Not very long ago, the prevailing view of the ILO’s constituents -governments, employers and workers- was that we would need to choose between jobs, growth and development on the one hand, and environmental sustainability on the other.

There is some good news, because today we have broken free of that paralyzing, false, zero-sum dilemma. Not only is it understood that there are no jobs on a dead planet, but the potential employment dividend of the transition to carbon neutrality is increasingly apparent.

The ILO’s own estimate is that there is a net dividend of 18 million jobs by 2030 available to us – 24 million created and 6 million lost – if we do the right thing, whilst in Europe meeting the 2°C temperature rise target of the Paris Agreement could generate two million new jobs, mostly in construction, manufacturing and renewables.

This alternative scenario to an apocalypse is seductive. It is what we all want to believe in. But we will not bring it about simply by a leap in faith. We need also a leap in policy, and that is where the Green Deal comes in.

And I want to underline two features of the Deal which I believe are crucial to its success.

Firstly, it commits Europe to a “just” transition. President Sassoli has stressed that Europeans are not all equal in the face of ecological crisis and that the challenges of climate and of inequality can only be solved together. And this is why Europe’s strategy explicitly puts people first, with priorities to the regions, industries and workers who will face the greatest challenges.

I cannot overstate how fundamental this is. My view is that if the climate transition is not “just”, it simply will not happen, because it will run up against popular and political opposition, which will stop it. We have seen events in Europe and elsewhere in recent months that illustrate the point.

We can dismiss that resistance as irrational and self-harming – even suicidal. But, is it really so surprising that millions of people, whose primary concern in life is getting to the end of the month, prioritise their jobs and livelihoods above action to prevent the end of the planet? Citizens simply must not be abandoned to that impossible dilemma.

Globally, that message has been heard and is being acted upon. Last September, at the UN Global Climate Action Summit, the Secretary-General launched the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative with the ILO taking the lead and 46 countries have already signed up to make just transition an integral part of their sustainable development plans.

So, what Europe is doing through its Green Deal, the world is doing too. It is an essential part of delivering the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to which Europe happily is so strongly committed. And if the overall aim is to leave nobody behind in the transition to climate neutrality, nobody should be left out either in designing the road forward. Here, Europe has excellent tools to hand in the Pillar of Social Rights, with particularly its strong emphasis on the role of the social partners who are also part of everything that the ILO does.

Secondly, the Green Deal recognizes that climate transition is going to require massive investment, and it makes provision for financing it. It does so, moreover, through a combination of public and private funding and the Just Transition Fund for those facing the toughest challenges.

It will be for European decision-makers to judge whether the resources proposed are sufficient to the task. But here too, global action needs to mirror European initiatives. The fact that Mark Carney has become UN Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance is as good a guarantee as we can get that this is happening. You have heard his expert testimony.

I will add to it only a basic political point, which looms large in the ILO’s own debates on work and climate. It is simply that the developing and emerging economies, which make up a big majority of our global membership, see Europe, and others, as having reached current levels of affluence and prosperity by taking the carbon intensive, planet-hostile paths, which are now denied to them. The need for that denial is, I think, understood not least because developing countries are the hardest-hit by climate change. But with this goes the very strong conviction that Europe cannot simply pull the development ladder up behind it, but must help construct – and finance – alternative ladders.

And this is why the Green Deal will need to be a priority for Europe’s external as well as its internal policies. There is nothing to be gained from a carbon-neutral Europe in a world, which continues to be powered by fossil fuels.

Chair,

By combining climate justice with climate finance, Europe’s Green Deal can do something, which has not always been possible to do up to now. It is simply to pass the test of credibility; truly convince people that they have the prospect of a better future in a climate neutral world of work.

I want to give you one concrete anecdote of why this is so important. In 2008, on the margins of COP 14 in Poland, I met with coal mining trade unionists in Silesia, at a now defunct coalmine. I put the case for transition to climate neutrality and the phasing out of fossil fuels. I can say with absolute certainty that I did not convince them. I am pretty sure I did not really convince myself either. Why? Because there was no credible alternative on offer. No just transition; no investment; and really no future for them.

That is the type of mistake we cannot afford to repeat. We need credible transition blueprints to a better future.

The ILO Centenary Declaration offers support for that blueprint with its programme of investment in human capacities, in the institutions of work and the jobs of the future. With that, I am sure that the European Union and the ILO will have a very solid basis upon which to deepen their long and historic cooperation in tackling this fundamentally important question of climate change.

I thank you for your attention.