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**2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council
General Debate**

Building Momentum towards the 2023 SDG Summit. Transformation for accelerating implementation of the SDGs.

International Labour Organization Statement

to be delivered by Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon

Special Representative to the United Nations and Director, ILO-NY

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Secretary-General underlined in his SDG progress report, it is time to sound the alarm. At the mid-way point on our way to 2030, the SDGs are in deep trouble.

This is also true for SDG 8 and related goals across the 2030 Agenda. To quote again from the Secretary-General's report: Progress towards achieving SDG8 has been challenging and the world is far from reaching most of the targets. The lingering effects of COVID-19, cost-of-living crises, trade tensions, uncertain monetary policy paths, rising debts in developing countries, and the war in Ukraine can each significantly set back global economic growth. Combined, these crises are placing the global economy under a serious threat and the risk of further growing inequalities with all its consequences is real.

Indeed, if looking for example at the 2023 ILO World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO), we see a gloomy picture. The global jobs gap that measures the unmet need for employment in the world already stood at 473 million people in 2022. Moreover, global employment is projected to expand by only 1 percent this year compared to 2.3 percent in 2022. Without decisive action, gaps opened by previous crises are not going to be closed rapidly and may contribute to more labour shortages.

However, the ILO is also encouraged by the efforts and progress reported in the face of all these challenges at this HLPF. We can see momentum moving ahead towards the SDG Summit later this year.

In so doing, we need to focus on transformative action which moves the needle on a number of SDGs, such as those embodied in the SDG Summit High Impact Initiatives, notably the initiative on the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions.

We also need to think big: The ILO together with other UN entities and member States is proposing to rebalance the three underpinning dimensions of sustainable development, environmental, economic and social to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda and to realize a vision of a world where every individual benefits from economic and social progress. The transformative concept in this regard is a focus on Social Justice, as enshrined in the ILO Constitution.

Hence, at its 111th International Labour Conference, the ILO convened the World of Work Summit 2023: Social Justice for All on 14 and 15 June. The Summit was a high-level forum for tripartite global voices – including Heads of States and Government – to address the need for increased, coordinated and coherent action in support of social justice. It provided an opportunity to discuss and inform the proposal to forge a Global Coalition for Social Justice,

which was welcomed by the ILO Governing Body at its 347th Session (March 2023).

The two-day Summit highlighted the key role of social justice in creating a more sustainable and equitable world and discussed strategies for increased and better-aligned joint actions to advance social justice and ensure policy coherence. It provided a forum for participants to share their vision of, and priorities for, social justice and to showcase the actions they are taking and they commit taking to advance social justice.

The outcomes of the Summit will inform discussions at other multilateral forums about the centrality of social justice in meeting today's most pressing challenges, such as the 2023 SDG Summit, the G20 and the summits of the BRICS countries.

Allow me to end in again referring to the Secretary-General: The SDG Summit must signal a genuine turning point. It must mobilize the political commitment and breakthroughs our world desperately needs.

The ILO stands ready to support governments, workers and employers alike in this effort towards a world of social justice.

Thank you.