

**International Labor Conference 111th Session  
Geneva, Switzerland, June 5th to June 16th, 2023**

**Plenary Discussion: Resolution on Measures Recommended by the Governing Body under  
Article 33 of the ILO Constitution to Secure Compliance by the Government of Belarus  
with the Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry**

Chair, I am speaking on behalf of Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. We must once **again** recall that this July marks the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations. We remain deeply concerned by the continued, flagrant refusal of Belarus to implement those recommendations – despite repeated attempts at engagement by the ILO's supervisory bodies.

We reiterate our deep concerns that, as the Committee of Experts most recent report noted, Belarus has implemented a “**policy of destroying the independent trade union movement** and silencing the free voices of workers.” In fact, the situation for trade unionists has continued to deteriorate unabated even since the ILO Governing Body session convened in March 2023 to consider this matter. Multiple trade union leaders and members – including ILO Governing Body member Aliaksandr Yarashuk – have had sentences ranging from one-and-a-half to nine years' imprisonment confirmed on appeal.

Since this was discussed in the March 2023 Governing Body, Belarus also added the three imprisoned top officers of the Belarus Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP) to the regime's list of “extremists.” These leaders joined a number of other trade union officers and activists already on the list. Chair, trade union leaders demanding their right to organize independent unions – rather than reflecting “extreme” actions – reflects their desire to be able to fully realize the rights of freedom of association to which they should be entitled. We recall that the principle of freedom of association is at the heart of the ILO's mandate.

We further reiterate that this is just the latest in the Lukashenka regime's attempts to silence trade union leaders as part of its broader crackdown against the democratic opposition, civil society, independent journalists, and all other sectors of society and everyday life in Belarus. We continue to urge the immediate, unconditional release of all trade union leaders and members, and the over **1,500** political prisoners unjustly detained for participating in peaceful assemblies or for otherwise exercising their fundamental freedoms.

We welcome the Director General's continued efforts to seek access to ascertain the conditions of arrest and detention and welfare of the detained trade unionists.

Chair, we fully support the recommendation of the General Affairs Committee that this Conference adopt the Resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Belarus. The measures proposed in subparagraphs (a) – (d) of the Resolution are both **appropriate** and, in fact, **necessary** at this time to secure compliance by the Belarusian authorities with Belarus' international obligations under article 33 of the ILO Constitution. Indeed, we again

underscore it is the ILO's **responsibility** to use all means of action at its disposal to ensure the respect of the rights which are at the very heart of its mandate.

We commit to use all appropriate tools to hold to account those in Belarus repressing fundamental freedoms, including freedom of association.