**Remarks by Zhao Li**

**Co-Chair, G20 OSH Network**

**At the XXII World Congress on Safety and Health**

**September 2021 (Recorded July 28, 2021)**

**(as prepared, 4 1/2 minutes in length)**

On June 23 this year, when G20 labor ministers met in Italy, something unusual happened. For the first time since the beginning of G20 labor ministers meetings, the ministers adopted a statement that was not drafted or negotiated by the G20 presidency. Instead, the ministers adopted a statement on work safety and health developed under the leadership of the G20 OSH Network.

The ministers’ acceptance of the G20 OSH Network’s statement reflects the urgency of addressing the ongoing challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also a reflection of their desire to address a pandemic with globally coordinated actions. Having had the honor of leading the negotiation process with co-chair Turkey, I am pleased to share with you the **four principles** embodied in the document.

**The first principle** is a **worker-centered** approach to meeting the challenges. The statement recognizes that workers have a fundamental right to safe and healthy working conditions during a pandemic. The statement also goes further to say that even during normal times, member countries **support** the continuing discussions to recognize work safety and health as a fundamental principle and right at work.

The worker-centered approach is also embedded in the paragraph of what employers ought to do. The statement calls on all employers to place workers’ safety, health and well-being at the center of all operation plans, and to prioritize OSH protection programs as each country recovers from the pandemic. It affirms that protecting workers is in fact protecting their families and the communities, and it is a necessity for economic recovery.

**The second principle** is strong enforcement. While the statement welcomes other approaches taken by regulators to educate and support employers during the crisis, it calls on governments to use all available regulatory and non-regulatory means to prevent the spread of infections at work, including the timely issuance of emergency standards, and the swift adoption of guidance and other protective measures. It says that enforcement of standards and regulations should be of the highest priority during a pandemic across all workplaces.

**The third principle** is enhanced social dialogue and whistleblower protection. The statement affirms that workers and trade unions **must** have a strong voice in developing workplace safety and health protection programs; employers must provide workers with the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process; and those who raise concerns about workplace hazards **must** be protected.

**The final principle** is coordination and collaboration across ministerial boundaries within a country and across national boundaries. For example, ministers of labor and health should work hand in hand, and that countries should work together in multilateral organizations such as the G20, the International Labor Organization or the WHO.

In summary, it was exciting that all member countries gave their consensus to a strong, forward-leaning and worker-centered statement. Our thanks go to all G20 OSH Network members. Their commitment to worker protection is second to none. To read the declaration, please visit [www.g20.org](http://www.g20.org). Thank you again, Joaquim, for your invitation to speak today.

Next, I would like to present my colleague from Turkey, Mr. Selcuk Yasar.