



Director-General, esteemed delegates,

It is my honour to address the assembly on behalf of Public Services International, the global union federation representing 20 million public sector workers in 150 countries.

PSI welcomes the ILO reform initiated several months ago, which we hope will contribute to a stronger and more dynamic ILO.

However, one of our major employers is missing in the ILO structures. Local authorities and municipalities are completely absent from the employer's group.

And within the ILO, governments are rarely considered as employers.

We thus welcome the fact that at this session of the International Labour Conference, collective bargaining in the public sector was addressed for the first time in more than 30 years.

We hope that this process will have an emancipatory impact on collective bargaining in the public sector and bring the challenges analysed in the ILO Survey on collective bargaining in public services to the forefront of ILO activities in coming years.

While your report is succinct in dealing with the main trends and challenges the ILO is facing, this should also have been used to address the role of public services in a more significant manner.

You state that the world has been transformed. Indeed it has: in 2013, in many countries, 50% of public sector workers are now in precarious jobs and many retiring public service workers are not replaced.

Anti-union tactics have spread from the private to the public sector to impose a new model with reduced workers' rights; this breaks the mould of an independent public service that aims to deliver quality public services for inclusive, transparent and democratic societies.

This situation is leading to a de facto privatization of public services, and the outright sell-off of core services such as public utilities in energy and water.

Privatization leads to higher prices, fewer investments in infrastructure and poorer working conditions.

A democratic society delivers clean water to everyone, through public hands.

A greener economy can only be sustainable with investments in public goods including strong public utilities that serve the people – not through private-public partnerships that serve the interests of private profit.

Public services are essential to meet the challenges of climate change – driven by the biggest failure of the markets. Yet the discussion on sustainable development, which must address issues of production and consumption, fell far short of proposals which we urgently need to save people and the planet. Yet again, our governments are not bold enough to lead the change.

Public health systems have become increasingly inaccessible, in particular for poor people and marginalized groups, due to increased fees and co-payments, closure of hospitals and health care centres and people losing public health insurance.

There are huge imbalances in the doctor/nurse ratios in countries around the globe, which has a major impact on health care efficiency, brain drain and labour migration.

Cuts in the public sector have an important impact on living standards and damage the potential of employment of current and future generations. Critical issues of social cohesion and social protection are being ignored by IFIs, bankers, auditors and legislators alike.

We need a strong Plan B and we need it now!

We need and demand serious social protection. We applaud the ILO initiative on the social protection floor. We emphasise that public services are essential to achieving the SPF agenda. Public services can ensure the universality of the components of the SPFs on principles of access, affordability and quality.

It is not by reducing workers' rights that we will overcome the current crisis. We strongly refute the suggestion that limitations to collective bargaining are acceptable under any circumstances.

While we recognise the need to regulate essential services to protect users and communities, we re-affirm the right to strike as a fundamental collective right and a matter of democracy for all public and private workers.

The role of public services in terms of monitoring labour conditions in all sectors of the economy is pivotal. As well, we highlight that tax departments and finance control bodies are crucial to fight corruption, ensure tax justice and provide the necessary funding for our communities' needs.

The ILO should address the protection, autonomy and independence of public finance control workers through the creation of an ILO standard to that effect.

We request the adoption of a worldwide action program with strong technical assistance from the International Labour Office to strengthen freedom of association in the public sector and ratification of Conventions 151 and 154.

We call on the ILO to address the impact of precarious work in the public sector as a matter of priority.

Finally, we are happy to remind you that PSI was created in 1907, a full twelve years before the ILO.

We therefore suggest adding an 8th idea to the ILO Centenary initiatives: an initiative to underscore the important role of quality public services in economic recovery, the fight against youth unemployment, gender and other inequalities. This would be in line with your commitment to dealing with the impact of growing inequality, its causes and consequences as a new policy area for ILO.

Thank you.