

Covid-19- 4th week – Easter spirit

These days, every long drawn-out week is beginning to resemble the last, and a situation that only two, three or four weeks ago seemed almost unimaginable may well already be becoming a kind of routine.

Teleworking, for example? Piece of cake!

Whether it's a 45-person videoconference, Zoom or a quickly assembled webinar, it's all beginning to seem like child's play! Still, all this demands quite an effort of concentration, and it's never quite going to take the place of human contact. Who, for instance, hasn't recently felt a stab of loneliness after talking into a microphone and coming up against 10 interminable seconds of silence (and 10 seconds can feel like an awfully long time) without the person you're talking to sending the usual smileys (☺, ☹, :-o) or without seeing them scribbling away in their notepads or stifling an ill-timed yawn? Who hasn't watched someone or other frantically waving their ballpoint pen about like a majorette's baton because he or she can't wait to interrupt the discussion and say his or her piece? And of course the opposite is true, too, and I am prepared to bet right now that there are times when every one of you has desperately wanted to click on the « End session » button so that you can get down to sending all that stuff you are supposed to send in writing before the end of the week to the exact person who is going on and on just for the sake of it. In fact, we keep discovering new qualities that we would love to show off to a selection board, such as our patience, our readiness to listen to what other people have to say, our empathy, our resilience, and our readiness to overlook other people's quirks and foibles.



Let's take on board the ILO's response to facing the challenges posed by this damned virus, for example.



COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
Portail d'information

We are all so keen on social networking and completely hooked on the webpage that has been specifically designed with that in mind. Anyone can see that we know all there is to know about it. And isn't our

Director-General always telling us just that every few days? Isn't it music to our self-centred ears. Right, then let's make the best of this precious situation while it lasts, because it is not likely to last forever.

At the same time (and now I am beginning to sound like my President, who like so many other heads of state has got into the habit of speaking to us on TV every day or so), if we – and by we, I mean the hundreds of experts who are working their fingers to the bone for this worldwide organization of employers, trade unions and governments, backed by the administrative staff that is needed to ensure that it all runs smoothly – if we can't come up with the answers, then who can? The ILO has already built up a steady momentum on the international scene and within the United Nations system as it stands today, and that is something that we have every reason to be proud of. So don't let's be cowed by the steady stream of facile criticism which, if my well-informed sources are to be believed, has already begun to appear among certain ILO constituents. What is it they want? Are

they setting out to trample underfoot all the values and safeguards that the Organization has patiently built up over the past hundred years and more on behalf of the world's workers? Are they suggesting that those values, those safeguards, should not apply to the international public service and that we should go back to working as if we were still in the Middle Ages?

Take the resilience and adaptability of the ILO staff, for example? Aren't these a tremendous achievement?

So in order to break the monotony of the routine - and to fight against the doom and gloom that is caused by all the uncertainty, panic and discouragement at the magnitude of the tasks that sometimes manifest themselves during the day, or night, for that matter – ILO staff have shown that they have inexhaustible hidden resources to keep their spirits up. Whether it is aperitif time on Skype (are we all going to end up at Alcoholics Anonymous?) or a coffee break at the “Chitralli Café”. Whether it is a song on You Tube about the daily grind faced by our colleagues, or those dozens of funny drawings and photos of workstations that look like gardens. Or the video of that cramped home workstation where the end result is generated by a set of dominoes knocked over by a series of artfully positioned toilet rolls (believe me it exists, I'm not making it up!). Anything that can contribute to social bonding is worth taking advantage of, never mind how inappropriate it may seem in these difficult times.

So let's keep up the good work!

A Happy Easter to you all!

