

EPILOGUE

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PRESIDENT OF THE STAFF UNION

Interview No 13



It is up to me to close this wonderful series of interviews, speaking not as a current president, but rather as someone picking up the baton. I have had the good fortune and honour of knowing some of the presidents interviewed. From them I learned a lot and worked with conviction, always in a great spirit of camaraderie. Some of them even became friends. For the presidents of another decade, their actions have remained in the living memory of the Union and have often served, at least for my part, as models to be followed.

I also take up the pen to mark the end of this year of the centenary of the Union which was definitely a year out of the ordinary! It was of course the time for celebration and commemoration as I said in my speech of 3 November 2020 before the Governing Body, entirely virtual.

This trade union culture, which is so present and so characteristic within our organization, is something the Union is proud of. Thus, despite the difficulties encountered in celebrating this event, the Union was nevertheless able to organize most of its statutory meetings, culminating in a fully virtual Global Meeting last September, bringing together all its representatives to update its vision and mission and adopt its five-year objectives. It has also been able to fully honour its mission within the organisation over the past 10 months: to represent the interests of the staff in a constructive social dialogue".



"A century of struggle and solidarity. This is the slogan that the Union, founded in September 1920, chose to pay tribute to its first elected representatives (9 men and 2 women). It is also to pay tribute to the staff representatives who have succeeded one another and tirelessly relayed at headquarters and in the field to represent the interests and rights of ILO staff members and to remind the Organization and its governing bodies, at times, of the principles and values of the ILO in which they deeply believe.

In any case, what will remain engraved in my memory forever is that this year will also be the year in which, as COVID-19 obliges, the Staff Union had to face, from one day to the next on 16 March 2020, the consequences of an insidious pandemic on all ILO staff, and in which it had to reinvent itself in the face of adversity and at great speed in order to give all the necessary moral and trade union support to the women and men it had put its trust in. It was certainly a very unexpected way to celebrate a centenary, but isn't being there in difficult times alongside the staff the ultimate *raison d'être* of a trade union?



As I write these lines, the pandemic has not yet had its last word, and you'd have to be very clever to predict what the future of work will look like for my colleagues. But history has repeatedly shown that innovation is born out of chaos, and no one can deny that the current period has also allowed us to refocus on the essentials: the need for permanent social dialogue, and the protection of workers, especially the most vulnerable and precarious.



So, with many new challenges still ahead as we enter our second centenary year, the Union needs more than ever members who are brimming with conviction, well-equipped and full of new ideas. In closing, I would urge newcomers and young people to join our Union to continue to write its history in keeping with the times and in which everyone, as an employee of this organization, has a role to play.

