

A large crowd of people in formal attire is gathered in a grand hall. The hall features tall, white, textured columns and a blue carpet. The crowd is dense, with many people in suits and dresses. In the background, a sign above a doorway reads "Mthunzi Mdwaba".

Mthunzi Mdwaba

Demystifying the Jewel Called the ILO: A Labour of Love





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Mthunzi Mdwaba



UJ Press

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Forewords

Dear Reader, you will find that the nature of this labour of love is unique in its make-up, being very diverse, tripartite, consensus-centric and global. This would not be possible without the numerous relationships I have been blessed with, and for which I am eternally grateful. I asked a few global friends to review the book and provide me with their feedback, which they have lovingly permitted to be incorporated into the book. These are shared with you in the form of multiple forewords. Here goes!

Foreword by Professor Evance Kalula

It is a great pleasure and privilege to write a brief foreword to this book, “Demystifying the Jewel Called the ILO” by Professor Mthunzi Mdwaba.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a remarkable agency, in several critical ways: in its history, tripartite structure mandate and enduring relevance. The ILO is undoubtedly the United Nations’ premier specialised agency. It pre-dated the UN itself and was founded based on hope for lasting world peace and social justice. The world peace that was hoped for in 1919 unfortunately did not endure, but the ILO and its mandate to strive for social justice, in the workplace and broader human endeavour, survived. Its mission has remained as relevant as it was when it was founded, and its role has been heightened with continuing world crises, of which the COVID-19 pandemic is a potent reminder.

It is a pity that the ILO and its mission are not as widely known as they should be, despite their enduring relevance. This book sets out in a succinct way the fundamental tenets of what the ILO stands for, its history, its past and current role, and the continuing efforts for its renewal to continue its mission in a changing world. It needs to be made clear from the outset that although the ILO’s primary focus, as a specialised agency, is the world of work, its mandate of social justice is much broader and is at the centre of human endeavour.

Mthunzi Mdwaba is well placed to write this book; he has participated in the continuing pursuit of ILO ideals for some time, leading up to the significant time when the organisation turned 100 years old in 2019. He has observed and has been “present at the creation” of some significant milestones, including the Global Jobs Pact 2009, the Global Commission on the Future of Work 2019, the ground-breaking and historic Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment, and the Centenary Declaration 2019, among others.

This book is very much a personal testimony wherein, as he puts it, he seeks to «demystify the ILO» in fewer

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than 50 pages. This is a candid account from a committed participant who believes in social dialogue. Mdwaba has been privileged to sit at the ILO's "high table" and closely interact with various stakeholders over the years. There is no doubt that parts will be seen as controversial, but as the author rightly points out, 'common cause' does not mean agreement.

What is most endearing about this short book is that it manages to reflect on the mission of the ILO in a narrative that is accessible to a broad international audience. Many South African readers will be pleasantly surprised to discover that the country's labour laws, more than many other countries, are based on ILO norms, making them probably the most compliant with international labour standards.

There is no doubt at all that this is an invaluable contribution to the dissemination of the ILO's work. It is informative, easy to follow, and readers who are not familiar with the ILO will find it a good «primer» of the organisation's mandate and its works. It will equally be useful as a reminder to those readers familiar with the ILO. Needless to say, the book will assist the ILO in the spreading of knowledge about its mission and its work. I therefore gladly recommend it to all readers who need and want to have some basic knowledge of this important organisation.

Emeritus Professor Evance Kalula

Chairperson, ILO Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA)

Cape Town, June 2023

Demystifying the Jewel Called the ILO

Foreword by Her Excellency, Ambassador Ms. Carla Rodriguez

Professor Mthunzi Mdwaba shares in this short and amazing book how his personal life and own experience led him to fall in love with the International Labour Organization (ILO), becoming its first African global spokesman and vice-chairman, as well as the first African vice-president of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) since its creation in 1920. After his tripartite endeavours and important contributions, he became a candidate for the ILO DG position and although he was not elected, his love for the ILO remains intact and he is resolute to continue fighting for the world of work to change and transform, to achieve social justice and dignity for all.

“Demystifying the Jewel called the ILO: A Labour of Love” is intended for present and future generations to understand how tripartite dialogue, tripartite decision-making and tripartite implementation are relevant to everyone’s daily life and to inspire the changes and transformations required to address the many challenges that the world faces in post-Covid times, while considering different national realities.

I am proud of my brother Mthunzi’s background and professional career as an outstanding lawyer, professor, businessman, innovator, writer and conciliator, as much as for his love for family, working colleagues, friends and humanity, including ancestors and those who are still guiding us in spirit, such as our common friend Alberto Echavarria, Employer’s Colombian representative who recently passed away.

I thank Professor Mdwaba for sharing his thoughts with us in this understandable and inspiring manner and look forward to the next books he intends to write.

Ambassador Carla Maria Rodriguez Mancía

Guatemala Ambassador to the UN

New York, June 2023

Foreword by Ms. Mavis Koogotsitse

This is a unique introduction to the often-obscure history and function of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In its first hundred years, it emerged from a world damaged by the First World War and the global influenza epidemic. From these difficult foundations, the ILO had to distinguish itself from the communist internationalism of the young Soviet Union and its doctrines of labour in a worker state as the principle of social change and renewal. To be truly international, the ILO had to find a position in a world torn into three parts by fascism, communism and American capitalism in the north, and split into coloniser and colonised in the south. Again, the patient work of achieving social justice through legitimate collective bargaining was thrown into turmoil by a Second World War in which sheer survival took precedence over the rights of labour.

The world post-1945 was formed under the global poles of socialist versus free market economies and kept economically stable by a cold war of atomic weapon development and military spending. The ILO had to shift its perspective to accommodate the decolonisation processes, leading to newly independent states with different markets and labour policies. During all this time, the ILO played the role of internationalising a discourse on rights that applied to groups and classes and paralleled the discourse of universal human rights for individuals propagated by the United Nations. In its seventh decade, the ILO, which had been global in its perspective from the start, found itself in a market that became globalised and took continents rather than countries as its territory. This presented entirely new challenges to upholding the rights of labour, since the workforce was no longer contained by the jurisdiction of a single state, but spanned several states, and was further internationalised by the migrancy of labour.

Today, the ILO is challenged to align its long-standing universalist and internationalist perspective with the global realities of empires without a home or a face, emerging financialised capital, and a labour force nomadically mobile

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in formation networks or in physical displacement from collapsing state economies and failing markets. This is an enormous challenge as well as an urgent responsibility for all those adhering to the possibility of social justice in the 21st century.

It is touching, as well as informative, to read Professor Mthunzi Mdwaba's narrative, which uniquely entwines a history of turning points in the ILO with rich personal anecdotes and wise, as well as witty, observations. I hope that in the next hundred years of its history, the ILO will have many more lively and eloquent minds such as his to bear witness to its trials and triumphs and to testify to the urgent needs it continues to address through social dialogue; and capacitating social partners to develop policies that contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth. This can only be achieved through strengthening tripartism, since the reality is that inclusive and equitable policies are beneficial to the economy and function as a pathway to providing access to decent work.

Ms. Mavis Koogotsitse

SATUCC (The Southern Trade Union Coordination Council)
Executive Secretary (Botswana), June 2023

Foreword by Mr. Rajeev Dubey

It is my honour, privilege and joy to write a short foreword for this remarkable book written by my friend, fellow-traveller and leader in the Governing Body of the ILO, the one and only Mthunzi Mdwaba, a person for whom I have deep respect and admiration.

This book sets out to present what the ILO is and what it does, through a panoramic view of the past, present and potential future of the ILO, in a simple and readable manner. While this concise, yet profound book will add value to all who read it, important target audiences for the author are non-ILO readers and youth. To quote him: “The intention is not to have a comprehensive, detailed and technical introduction to the ILO, but rather an appetiser to get you, the reader, interested and tempted to go looking for more on your own should you decide it is your cup of tea.” Ideally, after reading the book, some will be inspired to be part of the ILO movement and ensure its relevance and contribution to the World of Work.

The book is vintage Mthunzi, full of clarity of thought, passion, energy, sense of humour and the courage to speak the truth as he sees it. I share his view that in the emerging New Normal characterised by

- VUCA, (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous)
- push-back by all stakeholders and
- interconnectedness,

the way forward is to create win-win solutions evolved through open dialogue between the stakeholders, transparency in dealings and commitment to a higher-order purpose. The ILO has always sought to do this from the time of its inception, and going forward its tripartism, social dialogue and normative system has all the potential to stand out as a beacon of light and hope in the pursuit of social justice for all humanity. However, for the ILO to remain relevant and have the desired impact its constituents expect and need, it must continually review its objectives and way of working to align itself with the changing needs of the world of work.

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For me, reading Prof. Mdwaba's book was a powerful experience, during which I reconnected with the concepts, processes, structures and experiences that have been part of my ILO experience over the past seven years. Mthunzi is an outstanding storyteller and there is nary a dull moment in his presence. He has the amazing ability to address not only history, philosophy and the changing future, but also the outer journey and the inner space, in a conversational, frank and sometimes revolutionary manner. That is what Mthunzi is and has always been: true to himself and his purpose. This comes out clearly, both in the section of the book describing the systems, processes and structures of the ILO, as well as the portion describing his journey as a small boy from a village in the rural Eastern Cape of South Africa to being a contender for the position of director-general of the ILO.

I strongly recommend this book, which is the result of what the author touchingly calls his "love affair with the Jewel called the ILO that made it possible for him to shape and actualise his own purpose in life." I have no doubt it will inspire many to join the Movement to create a better world for all.

Mr. Rajeev Dubey

Chairman, Mahindra First Choice Wheels Ltd
Member of the ILO Governing Body (India), July 2023

**Foreword by Her Excellency, Ambassador
Ms. Valérie Berset Bircher**

Reading this book gave me back a lot of memorable souvenirs; good and successful results at the time where Prof. Mthunzi was the spokesperson of the employers at the ILO. It is also a pleasure to write some words alongside Prof. Kalula, Chair of the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) with whom I have had the pleasure and honour to work. I know that another important CFA member was supposed to write something before he left all of us. I have fond memories of him, dear Alberto Echavarria.

Prof. Mthunzi is a passionate man, with a lot of positive energy. I accepted to write some words because I always support all means to promote the ILO and its values. University students don't know the ILO and it is a duty to make them understand the unique value of the first UN tripartite agency. Prof. Mthunzi has always been actively engaged in the ILO, in a spirit of consensus and social dialogue, and he is and was a big lover of negotiations. He cares about social partnership as well as about dialogue between different regions of the world. He was very active in the process of supporting the 1986 Amendment of the ILO Constitution, which was referred to in the Centenary Declaration. Since 2019, a working group on the democratisation of the ILO has been co-chaired by Switzerland and Nigeria.

As of December 2022, 125 ratifications have been registered, of which two were from members of chief industrial importance (India and Italy). A further three ratifications are therefore required for the 1986 Amendment to enter into force. This must include at least three ratifications from members of chief industrial importance (from among Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

Together with African countries, Switzerland will continue to work on ensuring geographical equitable representation and a power balance between the developed and developing worlds.

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Together with Prof. Mthunzi, we worked on the Future of Work, and Productivity and Decent Work, while he was serving as the leader of global employers and as one of the ILO leaders, and I have continued to work with him after the completion of his term. The ILO Standards MoU between South Africa and Switzerland, signed on the 5th of July 2022, is a direct result of this collaboration.

We have increasing challenges with informality, social security and social protection, as well as the failure to appreciate that diverse forms of work require diverse forms of treatment and response—the creative/entertainment industries are a good example of our confusion. Indeed, in all self-employed work, and digital platforms as they emerge, we punish innovation and creativity rather than embrace it and/or work with it for greater employment creation and realisation. Ballooning unemployment, mental health issues and inequality at local and global levels, all spiralling, are some of the concerns of today. This is also deserving of a unique focus in future books, as the future of work evolves in its different forms. The MoU between South Africa and Switzerland addresses these very issues. Social justice has always been at the heart of his mandate.

I pick on one sentence of his book which is so true: “It is time for all stakeholders to dust off the ILO and to clean and polish it so that it can sparkle. It is time to tweak its very rich legacy of standards and reposition it to create an ILO that delivers and cares for ALL.”

I trust that Prof. Mthunzi will continue with his work in making sure the ILO is understood and used to change the world of work for the betterment of all working people.

Ambassador Valérie Berset Bircher
Deputy Head, International Labour Affairs, SECO
Switzerland, July 2023

Foreword by Mr. Roberto Suárez Santos

I would have liked it to have been Mr. Alberto Echavarría, ILO Employers' Representative for Latin America, our dear Alberto, who sadly left us just a few months ago, to write a foreword on Professor Mthunzi Mdwaba's book. Alberto and I had a conversation about Mthunzi's personal and professional qualities before he became our employers' spokesperson at the ILO. And we agreed that Mthunzi could be a great leader of the employers' group. We were right.

Mr. Mdwaba is one of the most principled persons that I have ever met. He is a personality who fought hard to make ILO governance more coherent. We have never seen him give in to ambiguity, even at times when it might have been more advantageous for him personally to be unclear. Mthunzi is constantly questioning himself, questioning us, continually asking whether we are doing the right thing for humanity.

Supporting Mthunzi has been a luxury and a privilege. He is quick to understand the problems, grasps the nuances, likes to be well-informed and listens to everyone, without exception, before he makes his own judgement. Then, he persuades and convinces, trying again to involve all. He has come to take courageous decisions in the most complicated situations. He also vehemently defends his positions, specially when these decisions are full of reasons, good reasons, with a fresh, young passion. This speaks volumes for his leadership, based on an unwavering passion for what he believes in.

Mthunzi is an open person, who likes to learn, know better, and know more. He innovates and always believes in change. But above all, he believes in and likes people. He treats all his colleagues, regardless of their rank, with the same attention, interest and empathy. He doesn't take a back seat to protocols, grandiloquent words or impressive and distant formalities. This unique and magical human side makes him an attractive character capable of moving mountains.

His eagerness to "translate" UN and ILO language and vocabulary into everyday language is illustrative. He always

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insists that the efficiency of our decisions depends on people who are not in our “bubble”: any worker or entrepreneur struggling to keep up, change or transform their jobs. Because, at heart, Mthunzi is a man with his feet on the ground, a self-made person.

His vision of the ILO, a complex and fascinating organisation, was always that of an ILO on the ground, close to the real problems, to the street language. The purpose of this book, “Demystifying the Jewel called the ILO”, is precisely to understand tripartism, the unique value of the ILO, and the strength and impact of the remarkable consensus it generates. The outcome successfully helps to clarify down-to-earth ILO nomenclature and not-easy procedural aspects.

Mr. Roberto Suárez Santos

IOE Secretary-General, August 2023

Foreword by Ms. Uzile Amani Dyasi

I have never really known or fully understood what the ILO is about, and love the way it has been simplified; this book demystifies it and describes its importance to my uncle. I was able to understand and learn new things about the ILO. I think that this book has true importance and everyone should read it, as it is both amazing and informative.

It was a true delight reading the book, and as a 12-year-old (when I read it the first time, and 13 when I read it again recently to do a review), with a short attention span, I felt so engaged, and did not have trouble understanding the book. I could feel myself smiling as I read the book; it is truly amazing! My uncle made something that would sound so complex, so simple. I am truly excited for and by this book.

I am happy to have learnt new words to use when playing Scrabble, particularly, against my uncle.

I most definitely look forward to reading my uncle's upcoming books, and am truly honoured to have reviewed what I consider to be the first of many to come.

Ms. Uzile Amani Dyasi

Grade 7 pupil at the Lady Grey Arts Academy, Eastern Cape,
South Africa, Ms. Uzile Amani Dyasi, winner of the South
African Spelling Bee National Competition, Grades 7–9,
October 2023 in Cape Town.

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It is not easy to share what the International Labour Organization (ILO) is about, and what makes it one of the most important institutions in the world, without using jargon that completely loses most people who are not part of the environment that makes it function. In other words, these are the people who are the mandate givers, members of constituencies¹ at national level and therefore the intended beneficiaries of the decisions made at the ILO.

Leonardo Da Vinci said, “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”.

Following a number of speaking opportunities and having given lectures in many parts of the world, covering the five regions of the ILO, I started thinking about ways of simplifying the language and explaining its relevance² so that we can have a better appreciation of the ILO by non-ILO actors.

This is particularly significant for the youth who are looking for different ways of improving a world that has proven to be more and more difficult to fathom, and more complicated. How does the ILO continue to serve a world that needs it, and that is increasingly placing demands on it?

1 The ILO constituencies are governments, employer organisations and worker organisations. An explanation can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/tripartite-constituents/lang--en/index.htm>.

2 “The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission that social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.” This can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/lang--en/index.htm>.

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How do we sell our normative system,³ tripartism⁴ and social dialogue,⁵ which is our product, to newcomers, particularly the youth? Another question would be, how do we ensure that the ILO remains relevant post-COVID-19, as the thought leader in the world of work, which permeates every facet of human existence, irrespective of the nature of work or the form it takes?

Therefore, following the centenary celebration of its existence (1919–2019) at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2019, culminating in the adoption of the Centenary Declaration, and as the International Organization of Employers (IOE) turned 100 years old in 2020 (1920–2020), I thought it fitting to write this hopefully simplified and demystified introduction to the ILO. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its devastating health and economic impacts, made the ILO more imperative as the pandemic unearthed and exposed pre-existing flaws in our global socio-economic structures that we had all collectively failed to address.

In my humble view, there is no building a better future for the world without the ILO. Equally, though, the ILO

3 “International labour standards have grown into a comprehensive system of instruments on work and social policy, backed by a supervisory system designed to address all sorts of problems in their application at the national level.” More information can be found at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/lang--en/index.htm>.

4 “The ILO is based on the principle of tripartism - dialogue and cooperation between governments, employers, and workers—in the formulation of standards and policies dealing with labour matters.” More information can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/tripartite-consultation/lang--en/index.htm>.

5 “Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.” More information can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/social-dialogue/lang--en/index.htm>.)%20%20a.

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cannot be sustainable and/or seen to be relevant without and by a world that is not aligned with it. This starts with understanding the ILO.

The intention of this book is not to present a comprehensive, detailed and technical introduction to the ILO, but rather an appetiser that should get you, the reader, interested and tempted to go looking for more on your own, should you decide it is your cup of tea.

For years, I have been urged to write books about my experiences, having had the privilege and blessing to always operate at the highest management and leadership levels of everything I have decided to embark on, in every aspect of my life. This will be the subject of another book or other books.

The time has never seemed right—somehow procrastination has always stolen the time (paraphrasing my maternal grandfather, who named me Perry-Mason, and whose favourite quotation was “Procrastination is the thief of time” by Edward Young⁶)—well until the 28th of June 2018, when I was finishing my term as the council chairman at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), a university fondly referred to as the university of the Left.

I felt moved by my experiences of the last few years spent at UWC, particularly those that were integral to our cleaning up its governance, while battling its cancer⁷ that came in the form of people who wanted to run it like what we call a “spaza shop”⁸ in South Africa; at the same time, the catalytic

6 “Procrastination” is a poem by Edward Young and can be accessed online at <https://www.thereader.org.uk/featured-poem-procrastination-by-edward-young/#:~:text=Be%20wise%20to%2Dday%3B%20%27push%27d%20out%20of%20life.>

7 A few individuals who do not merit being mentioned by name, led by a highly manipulative ringleader, and who were feared, were holding the university to ransom for years and wreaking havoc.

8 “Southern African slang for a small informal shop in a township, often run from a private house” as found at <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/spaza-shop>.

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and revolutionary country-wide #FeesMustFall protests were occurring across the country. This will also be dealt with more substantially and substantively in another book, I had started writing, which revealed the necessity to write this book first. I elaborate below.

I decided and felt it was time to write a book. At the time of starting to write this book, I was also in the process of getting used to having been appointed an Adjunct Associate Professor of Law in the Labour Department of the Law Faculty at UWC. I am yet to get used to being called Professor Mdwaba, and find this quite hilarious and unreal; this will be the subject of another book as well.

As I contemplated the different paths my life has taken, to get to that point in the book I had started writing before this one, I kept bouncing back and forth to my participation in the ILO; to the last 13 years or so of my life where I was involved in global social dialogue.

It soon became apparent to me that, as with the talks, chats, conversations and lectures I have had the privilege of giving, there was a need to demystify and simplify the ILO, as well as the different players associated and attached to it, such as the IOE⁹ and ITUC.¹⁰ I decided that only through simplification of the ILO's role would it be possible to comprehend the roles played by the bureaus for trade unions and employers, namely, ACTRAV¹¹ and ACTEMP,¹² respectively, as well as the ILO Office¹³ itself. Believe it or not, I felt that social dialogue and tripartism needed some simplification and explaining, to ensure that the other book I had started writing,

9 International Organization of Employers (<https://www.ioe-emp.org/>).

10 International Trade Union Confederation (<https://www.ituc-csi.org/>).

11 Bureau of Workers' Activities (<https://www.ilo.org/actrav/lang--en/index.htm>).

12 Bureau of Employers' Activities (<https://www.ilo.org/actemp/lang--en/index.htm>).

13 International Labour Organization (<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>).

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and subsequent books, would be fully understood. I am also writing at a time when multilateralism is severely threatened and challenged.¹⁴ I have therefore pressed the pause button on the book about my life until I have published this one.

Being understood is very important to me.

Simplifying communication so your audience can be on the same page, or, as the youth of today would say, the same WhatsApp group, is very important.

Let me be clear though.

Being understood should not necessarily mean that one agrees with me. Robust, and even passionate engagement, while remaining civil and respectful, is always part of social dialogue as it journeys towards consensus and decision-making.

Understanding makes it easier for communicators to agree or disagree and to make their way towards solution-seeking or consensus.

When there is disagreement, it must be based on a comprehensive understanding of the discussion.

Therefore, I have always shied away from being verbose and bombastic, and from using words, terms and concepts that lose the audience (in this case, the reader).

There is nothing more distracting for me than observing that the audience is not with me— a skill that I learnt in my very first year at university, or pre-university to be precise, from a lecturer, a Mr Stodel,¹⁵ who emphasised some of the important aspects to be aware of in public speaking, such as being certain your audience is with you, knowing your

14 “The multilateral system, with the United Nations at its core, provides support to countries in their endeavours to achieve sustainable development.” More information can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/multilateral-system/lang--en/index.htm>.

15 I am advised that he passed on some time ago, May His Soul Rest In Peace - what a smart, unassuming public speaker he was!

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audience beforehand, and always choosing a focal point/s during your address, preferably someone with a smile.

This was also emphasised in a study skills programme that the University of the Witwatersrand¹⁶ offered to students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds/Bantu Education,¹⁷ during which Ms Lynne Slominsky¹⁸ (Slo), the lecturer, inter alia, said that you should never fear to say what is on your mind or to ask, as even “the Queen goes to the toilet”. As the formerly and properly colonised country that we are, South Africa being a previous colony of Britain, one could not ask for better symbolism.

Let me not digress — my London-based Art Psychotherapist daughter, Nina, always tells me that she used to get nervous when I speak, due to my tendency to go off tangentially to demonstrate a point; then she would wonder if and how I would come back to where I was before the tangential tour (LOL). She has always been impressed though that I always meander my way back.

16 <https://www.wits.ac.za/>

17 “Historically Disadvantaged South Africans means any person, category of persons or community, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination before the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993 (Act No. 200 of 1993) came into operation.” More information can be found at <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/historically-disadvantaged-south-africans>. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 created a separate inferior education system for black students. Its purpose was to make sure that black South Africans would only be able to work as unskilled and semi-skilled labourers, even if they were capable and/or resourced enough to become skilled.

18 This was a one-month pre-university study skills course, which though short, when I look back was the best introduction to varsity life and one of the best life skills for a rural boy like me. It was like a transition programme for us to cope with the world we had been deprived from in our up-bringing, that was about to have a beautiful but overwhelming explosion. These two people made an amazing impression on me and left an indelible mark in my Soul. I still quote them from time to time.

Preface

I have observed that, whenever I address audiences, which have varied from 50 to 1000, if lucky, only about 30% of the people know what the ILO is, and consequently, what it is about, and even fewer know what the IOE and ITUC are about; 10% if that. When I spoke at the 15th Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Summit in East London, Eastern Cape, in November 2019, made up of the major private and public sector players in the ICT sector in South Africa, only one person had ever heard of the IOE, namely, the CEO of the organisers, who had known me for years. I was certain this was the only reason he knew of the IOE.

When I observe how people become fascinated by laws such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act or the Employment Services Act (in South Africa and similar dispensations all over the world), social justice,¹⁹ freedom of association, anti-child labour laws, minimum wage principles, occupational health and safety, decent work, sustainable enterprises, the creation of jobs, social protection systems and numerous other workplace/shop floor provisions and laws in the 187 member states of the ILO, without knowing and/or appreciating that this comes from what I refer to as the “mother of the workplace”, I feel we are losing an opportunity to be appreciated more, get more people involved and therefore increase the relevance of the institution, and concomitantly, the positive impact we can have on the upliftment of society.

This book has been written in a manner that will ensure as wide a readership as possible across different ages, countries and regions, and will be translated into as many languages as possible, one of which MUST be an African language. I would like my mother, my aunts, my cousins, my kids (who have been fed with an ILO diet all their adult lives and have had no choice), friends, workers, business people, civil society and

19 “Social justice is a political and philosophical theory asserting that there are dimensions to the concept of justice beyond those embodied in the principles of civil or criminal law, economic supply and demand, or traditional moral frameworks.” More information can be found at <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-justice.asp>.

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all other strata of society, especially the youth, to read this and be inspired to be part of our ILO movement and ensure its relevance and involvement in their lives.

As indicated earlier, I am also writing this book at a highly revealing and fascinating, yet scary time as COVID-19 has gripped the whole world in the most severe health and economic crisis ever known, which some columnists have distinguished as a “train wreck” rather than a “car crash” when compared to the global financial crisis of 2008/9. I have a very personal business experience with the global financial crisis and had to spend much time travelling between Johannesburg and San Francisco, turning around a company in the middle of the crisis, as well as flying in and out of Geneva, having just become fascinated with the ILO. The ILO was also mandated with finding human capital development solutions for the new world by the G20 countries, and convened an ILO summit on the global jobs crisis, which resulted in the Global Jobs Pact adopted by the ILC at its 98th Session in June 2009. I can confirm that at its peak, it was definitely a car crash in comparison. Colleagues from different parts of the world have also talked about Ebola,²⁰ the Arab Spring²¹ and other health and societal challenges, which together are not seen as catastrophic as the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has brought untold pressure on the entire multilateral system, placing one of the sister organisations, the World Health Organization, at the centre of the health crisis. The critical role the ILO can and must play as the world recovers from COVID-19 will be discussed in a later chapter.

20 Ebolavirus disease is a deadly disease with occasional outbreaks that occur mostly on the African continent. More information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/about.html>.

21 The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that enveloped several largely Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain. More information can be found at <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring>.

What Is The Fuss About?

The ILO was born in 1919. All who have dabbled in studying a bit of history or who are fascinated by historical events will know that the world has known two world wars, namely, the First World War from 1914 to 1918 and the Second World War from 1939 to 1945. The former gave birth to the ILO, and the latter to the United Nations.

Via a cooperation agreement that was struck in 1946, approved by the October Conference of the ILO and by the December 1946 General Assembly of the UN, the ILO belongs to what is known as the UN Common System and is a UN Specialized Agency that is consequently part of the UN Family. The ILO is the only UN agency that is tripartite, a specialised agency composed of governments, employers and trade unions collectively making decisions on an equal basis. The director-general (DG) of the ILO is answerable only to its governing body (GB), made up of the three constituencies from all the global regions.

The ILO celebrated 100 years of existence at the 2019 ILC, preceded by the Global Commission on the Future of Work (FoW).²² It provided the organisation with a much-needed retrospective and introspective examination, including the roles it has played at key historical points, such as the Great Depression, decolonisation, the creation of Solidarność in Poland, the victory over apartheid²³ in South Africa, the global financial crisis in 2008/9, to mention a few. It continues to attempt to build an ethical and normative framework for a fair globalisation.

22 https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/WCMS_569528/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20formation%20of%20a%20ILO,justice%20in%20the%2021st%20century.

23 “Apartheid (“apartness” in the language of Afrikaans) was a system of legislation that upheld segregationist policies against black citizens of South Africa.” More information can be found at <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/apartheid>.

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Formed as part of the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War, the ILO was designed to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. Its Constitution, drafted by the Labour Commission, was chaired by one Samuel Gompers, who was the leader of the American Federation of Labor. The members of the Labour Commission were Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, the UK and the US. A tripartite organisation was born. It was the first time that representatives of governments, employers and trade unions would be brought together to form part of an executive body to oversee the world of work.

What will surprise most South Africans, given our rather depressing history prior to 1994, because of the apartheid regime, is that Jan Smuts (“Smuts”), after whom the O.R. Tambo International Airport was originally named, was one of the key founders of the ILO and the UN, and is in fact the only person in history to have contributed to and signed both founding papers. These seemingly bizarre circumstances make for a chapter or two in another book. (Look it up and you will be intrigued by how globally in tune as a statesman Smuts was, while failing dismally to uphold the same values at home—although not associated with the National Party, known for all the racist oppressive laws in South Africa, under Smuts black people could not vote, yet he was a global human rights architect at the same time). Quite an intriguing contradiction!! Let me not digress.

When the ILO was conceived, it was born out of a need for social conversations, and robust chats by members of society structured in the form of governments, employer organisations and trade unions.

It is not a well-known fact that a group of industrialists were part of the formation of the ILO.

The driving forces for the ILO’s creation came from a need for security, humanitarian, political and economic considerations. There was a recognition of the importance of social justice in securing peace against a background of

What Is The Fuss About?

the exploitation of workers in the industrialising nations of that time. There was also an increasing understanding of the world's economic interdependence and the need for cooperation to obtain an alignment and provide a benchmark of working conditions for all countries as they competed in trade.

I recommend a reading of the Centenary Declaration, adopted at the 2019 ILO centenary celebration, as it recalls the Preamble of the ILO Constitution and the rationale for the formation of the ILO, while also presenting a model for the future of the organisation for the next 100 years. While this was adopted before the onset of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, all the constituents agreed that the Centenary Declaration is not only relevant given its recognition for change, but urgent in its requirement for implementation and addressing a post-Covid world.

In 1941, US President Franklin Roosevelt, whom I quoted in my speech at the launch of our centenary celebrations on the 22nd of January 2019, depicted the view of many who were in disbelief and very sceptical of how this would work. He described the ILO tripartite governance as a wild dream. This wild dream has quite literally transformed the lives of billions of people for the better and changed the course of history.

This was the birth of social dialogue; tripartite conversations that always end up with conclusions characterised by compromise of the original positions held by the three different constituencies. It is a process characterised not by loss or win for anyone, but by a win-win-win outcome that is then meant to be taken back home for ratification and adoption according to different national realities, circumstances and peculiarities.²⁴

24 <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/international-labour-standards-creation/lang--en/index.htm>.

How Does the ILO Function, and what is its Epistemology?

Now that we have established that the ILO has been instrumental in creating the fabric of the working environment all over the world, to a point where it is assumed that labour laws are like the “air” we breathe and the “water” we drink, taken for granted, and assumed to derive from the wisdom of our governments, I need to share how the ILO works.

I have already mentioned that it is the only tripartite multilateral organisation in the world; the only UN Specialized Agency with this peculiarity of having governments, employer/business organisations and trade unions/worker organisations having an equal say in how discussions evolve towards Resolutions, Recommendations and Conventions.

The ILO has 190 Conventions (the historic Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment and its accompanying Recommendation 206 having been adopted on June 21 at the Centenary ILC), which are the basis for legislation in almost every corner of the world. I have attached a photograph of the spokespersons for the workers (Marie Clarke, a Canadian who has over the years become a friend), for employers (Alana Matheson, an Australian colleague) and the governments (Colin Jordan of the Barbados Government) celebrating together with the Chairman (Rakesh Patry, Director-General, International and Intergovernmental Labour Affairs, Labour Program, Employment and Social Development, from Canada) of the discussions and the rest of the team (including the leaders of the worker and employer groups) at the conclusion of same in the Gallery section at the end of the text.

At the time of writing this book, in the short period of almost four years, an astonishing 31 countries, including my own, South Africa (which finalised the ratification process in December 2021), have ratified the Convention.

Having been blessed and privileged to travel all over the world, including something like 30 countries per year (using 2019 as a measure) before the onset of the COVID-19

pandemic, I had to find ways to demystify the ILO, in my speeches and public addresses, as a way of making it understood and known. One cannot talk of the relevance of something that is not known.

As stated in my preface, it is important for me to be understood as a communicator. It is also critical for the youth of the world to get to know this beautiful organisation that has the ability to contribute to even more heightened social justice. To do this, we need to share what it is about in a jargon-free manner, attract diverse groups of people throughout the world to be part of it, have fresh conversations about it and as part of its social dialogue, and strengthen its tripartism. The demystification of this jewel is critical to it being of service to the world of work, without which the world cannot be sustainable.

I can hear you asking, how it is that some countries demonstrate such terrible treatment of people via a lack of good labour laws, or no implementation of laws, when in fact they are members of the ILO? In my humble view, this relates to a lack of implementation of the labour of love called Conventions or Standards. The ILO has a rich legacy of Standards; its normative system being the heartbeat of the organisation. However, there is no way we can through osmosis get Norms/Standards/Conventions to be part of the laws of the member states of the ILO, without the ratification of same. We also cannot achieve any impact without the necessary implementation of those laws, which must be accompanied or made up of enthusiastic monitoring, together with accountability. Ratification does not and cannot, on its own, lead to automatic change, impact and social justice.

For the ILO to be relevant, productive and impactful, and realise its mission of achieving an impact that results in social justice and lasting peace, its member states, together with social partners, **MUST** work together in the ILO and at home. The best marketing for the ILO in selling its SOCIAL DIALOGUE + TRIPARTISM + STANDARDS product, is **IMPLEMENTATION**. Relevance therefore for me, is axiomatic to implementation.

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It is also extremely important not to simply operate on the level of rhetoric when we talk about tripartism. Equality of contribution by the three constituents is a MUST.

When I was the spokesman for the PFA (Programme, Finance & Administration), I spent a lot of time ensuring that colleagues in the GB understood that the programme & budget was an important vehicle for the realisation of impact on the ground, and at national level in ensuring that the member states make the ILO work. In doing so, and in demonstrating the connection between the programme of the ILO and the budget (approximately \$900 Million), I worked with my team and in line with my erstwhile mandate to demonstrate the importance of an equal way, equal resourcing, and equal strength in social dialogue to ensure that we all have solutions and impact.

It was at this time that I decided to use symbology from our part of the world, in Africa, of a three-legged pot that we use for ancestral celebratory feasts. This will be elaborated upon later under Social Dialogue, Tripartism, Constituents and Consensus.

The ILO moved to Geneva in the northern summer of 1920, with France's Albert Thomas as its first DG.²⁵ Nine International Labour Conventions/Standards and ten Recommendations were adopted in less than two years, and included:-

- Hours of work;
- Unemployment;
- Maternity Protection;
- Night Work for Women;

25 The Directors-General of the ILO are: Albert Thomas (France 1919-1932), Harold Butler (UK 1932-1938), John G. Winant (US 1939-1941), Edward Phelon (Ireland 1941-1948), David A. Morse (US 1948-1970), Clarence Wilfred Jenks (UK 1970-1973), Francis Blanchard (France 1974-1989), Michel Hansenne (Belgium 1989-1999), Juan Somavia (Chile 1999-2012), Guy Ryder (UK 2012-2022) and Hounbo Gilbert (Togo and first African ever (October 2022 -)

How Does the ILO Function

- Minimum Age; and
- Night Work for Young Persons.

A Committee of Experts was set up in 1926 to supervise the application of ILO standards. The Committee is made up of independent jurists responsible for examining government reports and presents its reports annually, at every ILC, on the implementation of ILO Standards. At the time of writing this book, the ILO was presented with the opportunity to improve the election of the jurists that make up the Committee, to ensure inclusivity, diversity and equitable representation of different regions; this was tabled at the GB in March of 2021. We got the ball rolling and started overhauling the system to ensure a more comprehensive selection process under my leadership and insisted on this as one of the Officers of the GB (we shall come back to this role later).

In 1951, a Committee on Freedom of Association (“CFA”) was established to study complaints about violations of freedom of association, whether or not the country concerned had ratified the relevant ILO Conventions. Complaints may be brought against a member state by employers or by trade union organisations. The current Chairperson of the CFA, since 2017, is Professor Evance Kalula, who is Zambian; the first African ever; his appointment was the result of good collaboration and social dialogue between Catelene Passchier and myself as the respective leaders of the trade union and employer groups in the ILO.

I can also hear you asking how all 187 member states can be in the ILO and find agreement on anything, given their very diverse differences, large and small; developed and developing nations; different forms of institutional frameworks; and so on. Remember Theodore Roosevelt’s quotation earlier! Well, it is not that easy, but it works...and the amazing thing is that it can still work a lot better if given an opportunity to function as was intended.

Essentially, the 187 member states come from five regions, namely, Africa, Asia/Pacific & Gulf States, Latin America, North America and the European Union. For purposes

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of clarity on how the ILO works, there is a need to break things down. For simplicity, I will use the ILC, which takes place annually, in June, to explain how it functions, separately from how the GB meetings, which take place twice annually, in March and in October/November, function.

The ILC and the GB

The ILC is the highest decision-making body and is traditionally held in June annually, with the exception of 2020 when it did not happen due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in 2021 when it was divided into parts that took place over a few months.

As stated earlier, this is where all 187 member states and their social partners attend the conference and deliberate on pre-agreed topics/discussions, which usually end in a Resolution, Recommendation or Convention. The size of delegations differs from country to country, and this is an area for improvement in my view, where at least a minimum of one person per constituent per country could attend one Committee discussion. This is an area that a keen reader could pursue via research and/or by following the ILO's development over the next few years.

The ILC is also the event at which the change of office for the Officers of the GB happens. The vice-chairs (who are also Officers of the GB, together with the Chair) for the trade unions (coordinated via the Trade Union Federation, ITUC, assisted by ACTRAV within the ILO) and employers (coordinated via the Employer Federation, the IOE, assisted by ACTEMP within the ILO) change or get renewed by their groups every three years (with the exclusion of 2020, when due to the COVID-19 pandemic we served for four years due to there being no ILC). The chairperson is normally chosen annually from the governments since inception, with the exception of rare occasions when it was Joseph Morris (1977–1978), Gerd Muhr (1990–1991), Lord Brett (2002–2003) and more recently Luc

Cortebeek in 2017,²⁶ all from the workers' group, and JJ Ochslin (1985–1986) from the employers' group.

The ILC every three years is also where the member states and social partners change or update the GB representation in terms of country and regional members. This, of course, is slightly complicated by some countries that are historically classified as countries of chief industrial importance²⁷ having permanent seats. The structural changes within the ILO, having included Brazil, China, India and Russia (only excluding South Africa so as to complete BRICS), have been significant in moving the decolonisation needle, but there is some way to go to ensure a more democratic, diverse and geographically balanced GB. The attempt to fully democratise the decision-making process happened via a 1986 Amendment to the ILO Constitution. While all the African countries, with the support of India and Italy, are supportive of the Amendment, it may never see realisation because the majority of the very beneficiaries of the imbalance must agree for the Amendment to be perfected. It is a huge opportunity for the ILO to further demonstrate its leadership by ensuring geographical equitable representation and power balance between the developed and developing worlds. This will also be discussed in greater detail and length in my future books.

The GB is made up of 56 titular/regular members and 66 deputies. All in all, there are 122 members. There are 14 titulars each for the trade union and employer constituencies (= 28), and there are 28 government titulars. When there is a vote, which is rarely exercised as consensus is generally the way

26 Mr Cortebeek's biography can be accessed at https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luc_Cortebeek.

27 "Ten of the titular government seats are permanently held by States of chief industrial importance (Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States)." More information is available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/governing-body/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=Ten%20of%20the%20titular%20government,Kingdom%20and%20the%20United%20States>).

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decisions are taken, there is then a consensus vote. Only titular members vote, and when not available, according to agreed principles and arrangements, the deputies then vote.

The duration of the ILC is currently two weeks, following changes eight or nine years ago; this was reduced from three weeks as some felt it would be more productive and optimal to reduce its duration.

The GB, meanwhile, made up of GB members chosen by their constituents, plays the role of being the:-

- oversight providers;
- direction providers;
- executors of decisions made at the ILC, working together with the DG and his office; and
- ultimate and highest authority that the DG must work with to achieve the aims and objectives of the ILO.

The GB meets in March, for a full two-week session; in June, a day after the ILC Conclusions; and for a full two-week session in October, annually.

Social Dialogue, Tripartism, Constituents and Consensus

Tripartism for me is as previously indicated, represented by the symbology of the three-legged pot we use in Africa for important ancestral feasts, paying respect to our ancestors, demonstrating equality of the three constituents, the strength the institution has when the three constituents are all involved, with firmness and balance being key. The three-legged steel pot also illustrates the symbolical carrying of the “important food” (“kos/potjiekos”) that is cooking inside the pot (“potjie”) and takes a long time to cook properly, similarly to the content and the substance of social dialogue, and that ultimately yields consensus requiring the same level of patience. I was later to be informed by a friend from the Dominican Republic that in Latin America, this is a pot they use as well. The three-legged pot is featured in the Gallery pages.

This is the essence and the beauty of the jewel called the ILO. This is what I have developed a huge love affair for, having grown within the system over a period of 13 years. It is a community-based “modus operandi” that is inimical to communal decision-making, designed to provide solutions utilising the collective diversity of thought provided by the community members. It is a tradition that most communities in many parts of the world use for indigenous, home-grown decision-making.

The Rationale for Multilateralism

“Powerful people love unilateralism, hence the attack on multilateralism...” (this has been paraphrased)—Juan Somavia, who is a past ILO DG uttered these words, at the centenary celebration of the ILO, 2019. Powerful people love unilateralism because it gives them the opportunity to do what they want, based on their size, power, and resources without the need to consult anyone else.

Multilateralism has always been about collaboration and doing things collectively. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated more than at any other time in history, that collaboration is the key to finding lasting, sustainable solutions that will yield the social justice and lasting peace we are pursuing.

Social dialogue that promotes an equal say, robust and civil engagement, appropriate and *pro rata* resourcing, listening to all who have a unique experience that is peculiar to their conditions, utilising our demographic differences and diversity, and paying attention to our disparate geographical realities, are the only ways we are going to close the inequality gaps of our world.

The ILO, within the UN family, has the most egalitarian form of constituency engagement, bringing social actors and global governments from 187 countries together to share their experiences, discussing the possible permutations and proposed solutions, and reaching conclusions that are designed to be a win-win-win. Impact, betterment of people’s

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lives, social justice and lasting peace can materialise when the member states of the ILO take the conclusions home to weave them into the fabric of their local national laws via ratification and implementation. This last part has previously been elusive, as already stated. When we get the implementation right, it shall truly bring us closer to lasting peace. You may think that I am being repetitive, but in so doing I am being very deliberate—this is part of social dialogue, ensuring that important utterances are reiterated, till they stick.

It is therefore in our best and collective interests to rebuild a world that is resilient and sustainable, while being mindful of the corrective action that needs to be taken collectively. This rebuild must address socio-economic structural flaws that prevent the building of sustainable and resilient economies that create employment. Building economies that provide decent work, dignity for ALL, and sustainable enterprises in a climate- and environmentally-friendly manner, is absolutely essential.

Change & Modernisation—What Does it Really Mean?

“Change is the only constant in life”, said the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus. Simply, this means that the world is always changing and so are the people. Not only is change always happening, but it is also unavoidable.

What is it about change that always makes societal actors nervous and fearful of this? Why is change so difficult? What does the ILO have to do with change and what does change mean for the ILO?

Perhaps we should start with a simple dictionary definition of change from the Oxford English Dictionary. As a verb, it says, “making someone or something different, altering or modifying, or replacing something with something else, especially something of the same kind that is newer or better, or the substitution of one thing for another”. As a noun,

it is “an act or process through which something becomes different”.

It is my view that change is always going to happen, with or without us. There is a saying that “A change is as good as a holiday” (of course the original English proverb is “A change is as good as rest”). Change of atmosphere, change of landscape, change of weather, changes of season, change of circumstances, change in attitudes, change in living standards, change of economies—all this in my mind conjures a change for the better, a need to do better, and as a productivity scholar over the years, I have come to identify with the Japanese concept of “Kaizen”, or “continuous improvement”. The latter, of course, has been popularised by productivity exponents and I will resist the temptation here to be taken in that direction. It will certainly, though, be the subject of future books, given its fundamental importance to the betterment I believe must be embraced. Suffice it to say that there is an inherent and unavoidable relationship between change and productivity in the pursuit of what would be seen as better. It is no accident that we ended up with productivity being mentioned 11 times in the ILO Centenary Declaration I have already recommended you should peruse.

What does that have to do with the ILO? Everything...

As the ultimate global platform for all discussions relating to the world of work, where we spend the majority of our lives, when not at home²⁸ (arguably even the majority of our activities at home as well, since the COVID-19 pandemic), the only tripartite home for social dialogue in which all decisions are taken by consensus, the ILO has a very critical role to play in the improvement of people’s lives, the alleviation of poverty via the creation of jobs, and ensuring that the employment environment is one that is characterised by peace and harmony, thereby adding to the happiness of the world. The

28 The COVID-19 pandemic has ably demonstrated how even being at home is now being at work, popularising all the digital chatting platforms whose share price and utility value shot through the roof.

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change we seek, therefore, in the ILO, is one that advances the modernisation of the same, builds on its impressive successes over the years since 1919, and by so doing, repositions it to make it relevant for/to ALL. A very good and apposite example of this is the Standards Review Mechanism (SRM), which, as the previous leader of the employer constituent, I played an active role in shaping. I am avoiding high levels of technicality so that I don't lose you and move away from the intention and the objective of writing this book, which is simplicity. Suffice it to say that as the constituents, we very deliberately decided we would work together to clean up old standards and test their utility value so we can ensure that we remain relevant by modernising our normative system. This is change in motion and it ensures betterment. We have done very well so far, and this work continues. Should you require more information, please visit the ILO website.

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention— Universality—What does it mean?

I have chosen this particular Convention as an example because it is easy to relate to. We all love and want children to prosper and do well in all quarters of the world. We all want and desire the best for our children and children of the world generally.

Our respective and global collective futures need children to be nurtured and enabled to take over the relay of life from all of us. This is the only way we secure sustainability for our world.

Some parts of the world have bigger challenges for children than others.

Convention 182 of the ILO relates to the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and includes forced labour, trafficking and slavery. In short, it forbids the use of children under the age of 18 in armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, illicit activities such as drug trafficking, and hazardous work of any kind.

This Convention has achieved universal ratification, in that all 187 member states of the ILO have ratified it. This is a huge achievement!

However, this Convention is the best example demonstrating that ratification on its own is far from enough—what is urgently needed is implementation by member states, working hand in hand with their social partners to ensure that child labour is eradicated and that perpetrators are brought to justice.

The other Convention, of course, that should be read in conjunction with Convention 182, is Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for admission to any type of employment or work, especially insofar as it interferes with compulsory education, health, safety or morals of young persons.

These Conventions should suffice as examples, using something we can all relate to.

Should you be interested in the technicalities or in following these Conventions for better understanding, you know what to do as mentioned and directed earlier—visit the ILO website. 😊 At the time of writing this book, the South African government, under the leadership of its Chief Director for International Affairs (Acting Deputy DG for Industrial Relations as the book was being completed), Siphon Ndebele, successfully hosted the ILO Global Conference on Child Labour, in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, from the 16th to the 20th of May 2022. It was my honour to be invited to participate by colleagues I used to lead, thanks to the leadership of my dear friend and collaborator in fighting for change, Jacqueline Mugo, now the vice-president for Africa in the IOE.

The Covid-19 Pandemic—What Does it Mean for Change?

I have referred briefly to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in a number of places above, and do not want to spend too much time on it, other than to highlight the fact that life will

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never be the same again post-Covid. Similarly, the world of work will change forever.

At the time of writing this labour of love, people all over the world were suffering due to rampant loss of jobs, lack of ability to create work, loss of businesses (particularly the small and medium ones), loss of life, increased child labour and slavery. We certainly were in the same storm, but it was evident that we were on different boats in all the regions of the world. Vast inequality on an individual human level was demonstrated, as well as country and regional inequality that has also been grossly exacerbated.

The reality of our existence is that we have had problems with how the economic world is structured for a long time now, and have closed our eyes and minds to this. We have had a collective behaviour of denial and an ideological framework for looking at the world, and concomitantly, the world of work.

We have increasing challenges with informality, social security and protection, and a failure to appreciate that diverse forms of work require diverse forms of treatment and response—the creative/entertainment industries are a good example of our confusion. Indeed, in all self-employed work,²⁹ including digital platforms as they emerge, we punish innovation and creativity rather than embracing and working with it for greater employment creation and realisation. Ballooning unemployment, mental health issues and inequality at local and global levels, are phenomena that are spiralling out of control. This is also deserving of a unique focus in future books as the future of work evolves in its different forms.

Before you go into a deep depression, rather than an appreciation of the ILO or what it can do, I must make you aware of the opportunities we have because of the same COVID-19 pandemic.

29 The potential that this sector has is huge, but it starts with protection of rights, understanding and providing support.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Sun Tzu says, “In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity.” Said differently, chaos is an opportunity for transformation.

We now have our eyes opened! Thank God, we can smell the coffee!! Not all of us though...some take longer than others and we must find a way of leaving no-one behind. There is a general global realisation that we must change the way we look at things, and the way we approach life; that collaboration is essential to our existence and sustainability; that action, action, action and implementation, implementation, implementation is (or should/must be) the name of the game. Actions speak louder than words!!

There is also an undoubted opportunity for the developing world to shape itself in a different way in order to achieve betterment and prosperity.

In my humble view, the jewel called the ILO has the capacity in what seems to be darkness to create light and to be part of a collaborative effort to have light in the world.

The ILO has 187 member states and social partners. It has the footprint, and has the “developmental will and DNA” required needs to transition from being a caterpillar 🐛 to a butterfly 🦋. My grandfather would say, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!”

It is time for all stakeholders to dust off the ILO and to clean and polish it so that it can sparkle.

It is time to build on its very rich legacy of standards and reposition it to create an ILO that delivers and cares for ALL.

It has very capable people in all parts of the world, and it just needs them to be reactivated and to have a bottom-up approach to life that demonstrates our faith in them. We need to give them renewed belief in the ILO’s capability, provide leadership, and practise what we teach by practising social dialogue in-house. We must engage our people and our staff. We cannot sell a product successfully that we do not sufficiently believe in and practise ourselves! In the technology business, when I ran an extremely successful high-tech skills

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company called Torque IT, we used to say that we must “eat our own dog food” if we are to be successful in selling it to our clients.

As one of my friends likes to say, “Teamwork makes the dream happen.”

The Centenary Declaration that I have already referred to earlier serves as the compass for us as we move forward, having been accepted by all the constituents of the ILO as the instrument that will help us to ensure a resilient and sustainable economic revitalisation.

There has never been a more exciting time for Kaizen.³⁰

Global Change, Global Impact and Global Social Justice

This is not a matter to be trifled with—our world needs change, impact, social justice and lasting peace.

Given the high levels of poverty, hunger, unemployment, inequality, chauvinism, rights abuses, and mental health challenges, there is no way we can realise lasting peace in our lifetime...unless of course, we deliberately and consciously change gear and do some introspection coupled with the expulsion of ideological fetishes and denialism.

There has to be a collective acceptance that things are not working for the majority of the world.

We require moral clarity and truthful re-examination of our world. It is our world—ALL of us are entitled to happiness, decent work and dignity.

Some people go through their lives searching for their purpose and still fail in the realisation of the same. I consider myself extremely blessed and am hugely humbled and grateful

30 “Kaizen is a Japanese term meaning “change for the better” or “continuous improvement”. More information can be found at <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/k/kaizen.asp>.

that I realised mine fully on the 26th of June 2018. It was like a eureka moment!!³¹ This personal enlightenment, you may have suspected, will be part of another book—so many books to write, so much to share, so much fun!! 😊

My purpose is to effect “Global Change, Global Impact and Global Social Justice!!

This is what cements my love affair with the jewel called the ILO, and it was the ILO platform that made it possible for my purpose to take form and shape regarding what I would do for its realisation and implementation.

ILO Member States and Coverage

The ILO is made up of 187 member states, including 186 out of 193 UN states, plus the Cook Islands, making up five regions, namely, Africa, Americas, Asia/Pacific and the Gulf States, Europe and Latin America. The ILO employs over 3350 officials in 107 countries around the world, with over half of the officials in technical cooperation programmes and projects.

The first African member state to join the ILO was South Africa in 1919, and it ratified the first Convention on November 1, 1921. This is of course significant for me as a South African, particularly given that I would become the first African since 1919 to be a global spokesman and vice-chairman of the ILO, and vice-president of the IOE, since its inception in 1920. The ILO demanded that South Africa fulfil its undertaking to respect the freedom and dignity of all human beings by renouncing its apartheid policy. To avoid being officially excluded, South Africa withdrew from the ILO in March 1964. In June 1994, after 30 years of self-imposed absence, South Africa re-joined.

31 I was in a hotel room at 4am, putting the finishing touches to my UWC Cape Council Chairman’s report for the duration of my service—2015 to 2018. I was hit by a huge realisation; that everything I had done up to that moment had been preparing me for my chapter that had commenced in June 2017, at the ILO. I clearly understood and embraced my purpose fully.

How the ILO has Impacted me, a Rural Boy from the Eastern Cape in Nelson Mandela’s Corner of the World and a Candidate for the Position of ILO DG

Hopefully, my passion and enthusiasm for the ILO jumps out at you from the preceding pages. 😊

This has been a real labour of love for me. Making the ILO understood and relevant gives me great joy!!

My involvement in the ILO was somewhat an accident of life, in the sense that I never even saw it coming and like most of you, did not know what it was—let alone know it existed.

When I studied Labour Law A at Wits University, as I recall, it was compulsory as part of our LLB (Bachelor of Laws Degree). Labour Law B was an elective. I had been largely uninspired by a certain Labour law lecturer, strangely held in high esteem in labour law circles, who never seemed prepared and I could just see that he just had no structure, even though I had been told he also had a good reputation as a lawyer. However, I was very inspired by another lecturer by the name of Brassey³² who also lectured another class I was in—Administrative Law B (which, together with Jurisprudence by another amazing lecturer, David Unterhalter, were my best courses). When I was told Brassey would take part of Labour Law B, I registered for the module. Labour Law, though, had never been my intended focus for the law I envisaged myself practising, nor did I spend any time on it when I was trained as a lawyer—the focus being commercial drafting, litigation, and ultimately, entertainment law, as well as intellectual property law. This is yet another book on its own!

I had also majored in Industrial Sociology and African Politics in my Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degree. At this time, I never connected the dots, studying the Industrial Revolution, Karl Marx (including the very intimidating volume *Das Kapital*) 🧑 while one very good lecturer, Frankel,³³ shared

32 Adv Martin S. Brassey is Senior Council at the Cape Town Bar.
33 Prof. Phillip Frankel is a former lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand and currently the Director of the Agency of

with us in African Politics how the African National Congress (ANC) was one of the most strategic political parties in the world...and releasing Nelson Mandela from prison looked promising, but at the same time, seemed like a dream, and sometimes like a mirage. That was then! As we all know, the ANC today is but a shadow of its former self and has completely lost its way. I am one of the multitudes of disenfranchised members who can unfortunately do nothing to help.

I get distracted again...let's get back to where we were.

As a rural boy, I went to school at Dipana Primary, St Mary's Higher Primary, Price Mbete Junior Secondary and Mehlomakulu Senior Secondary; all Bantu Education institutions, it could be argued.

My area of birth, in Coville/Herschel, never knew where it belonged politically for years—tossed between the Republic of South Africa, the Ciskei and the Transkei; these latter two being Homelands/Bantustans that were created as part of the Apartheid machinery.³⁴

The first time I experienced a library; walked into a library, not makeshift shelves in a room, was at Wits University; there were, I recall, 15 of them to deal with 🧑. This was also my first experience of being on my own, outside a rural setting.

We had, as I mentioned in my preface, as underprivileged or disadvantaged students, from an “apartheid era”, to be taken through a structured pre-university study skills programme by Slo, and we had Stodel for the art of speaking.

Following the completion of my studies at Wits, I was offered articles of clerkship or candidate attorneyship at a Jewish firm called Kallmeyer & Strime (later merged with/acquired by Fluxmans Attorneys and referred to as such today),

Social Reconstruction.

34 A history of the homelands can be found here: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20ten%20homelands%20were,designed%20for%20specific%20ethnic%20groups.>

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trained as a commercial lawyer and was given the space by my principals to establish a specialisation in Entertainment Law.

Starting an entertainment/intellectual property practice was at the advice of a friend, my hairdresser Peace Cindi, who owned “Hair It Is”, when I still had hair!! I loved the specialisation, and this was later to change my life and appreciation for the Arts!! As you might have guessed, this will be the subject of one of my other books.

Suffice it to say, that, as exciting as it was, acting for mainly musicians and some sports people was not enough to keep me in law. I moved on to business and I ended up in ICT after having a stint in the hotel & hospitality industry working for Southern Sun Hotels, and following a period in the music industry representing producers of music, such as Sony Music, Polygram (now Universal), EMI, BMG (subsequently merged with Sony Music), Gallo (which also represented Warner Brothers) and a number of Independent Record companies (Indies).

To get back on track here—I was to end up with a company in financial trouble, making huge losses and in which my partners and I did a management buy-out. When we were in the middle of turning the company, namely, Torque IT³⁵ around in 2002, I was approached by a certain Nhlanhla Goba to join the Black Information Technology Forum (BITF)³⁶ because, as he said, they were looking for revolutionaries. When I protested that I was a rural boy who knew nothing about being a revolutionary other than what I had learnt in my Bantu Education history about the French Revolution and what I had learnt in my Industrial Sociology studies about, inter alia, Karl Marx, he was quick to retort that I should leave the identification of revolutionaries to them.

35 <https://www.torque-it.com/>. Torque IT was a turnaround success built under my leadership, with my partners, to become a globally competitive and award-winning technology company with a presence in 27 countries, specialising in Cisco, Microsoft, Cloud computing, etc.)

36 <http://www.bitfgp.co.za/>.

I would then rise to the rank of secretary-general for Gauteng, then national chairman of the BITF, while simultaneously being elected as President of the Information Technology Association (ITA).³⁷ I was then drafted into a team to raise funds for, and draft, the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Charter for the ICT sector—all around 2005 and 2006. This is certainly a book worth waiting for and acquiring. In 2006, I won the IT Personality of the Year and made a speech entitled “Satis est Satis” (Latin for Enough is Enough), which can be found on the www.computerwoche.de website, when I was fed up with multinational corporations, mainly from the US, that were attempting to thwart our BEE ICT Charter efforts, personally targeting me and others in business so that we would “behave”, and trying to dissuade us from doing what was right; I used the platform to great effect!

The BITF and the ITA then became members of a new business federation called the Business Unity of South Africa Association (BUSA).³⁸ I represented both organisations on the BUSA board and quickly rose to become the deputy chairman of its Transformation Policy Committee. Upon the departure of a very good friend, Sindi Zilwa, who was the chairlady, to focus on her business activities, I became chairman. I then rose to become vice-president for professional organisations at the instigation of a lady, who would later become a friend and the first woman President of BUSA, by the name of Futhi Mtoba, then the CEO of Deloitte. I was later to campaign for her as the first woman President of BUSA; the reason there was a breakaway organisation called the Black Business Council (BBC), was mainly because President Zuma, some ANC acolytes and the then leadership of the Black Management Forum wanted Sandile Zungu (then in the Zuma camp), who lost rather embarrassingly to Mtoba, to be the BUSA president. Later, I became the vice-president for Unisectorals, which included all the very powerful members of BUSA. Again, you guessed right—more on the juicy BUSA versus BBC story will be in one of my other forthcoming books.

³⁷ <https://ita.org.za/>.

³⁸ <https://www.busa.org.za/>.

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This was a period of high black business activism and straddled the presidencies of Presidents Mbeki and Zuma; experiences that will also feature prominently in my other book/s as I was part of the teams that met with them at the Union Buildings³⁹ and led some business delegations out of the country.

The then COO of BUSA, Vic Van Vuuren, was on the GB of the ILO.

No-one on the BUSA board knew what the IOE and/or the ILO did or was about, and no-one knew what Van Vuuren did at the ILO. Every time he disappeared to Geneva for what seemed to be an eternity, for a minimum of about three weeks (at the time), three times a year, excluding other trips in between those to attend to Committee duties, it became a recurring item at board meetings. It got so tense that he became an agenda item on the board and was discussed rather emotionally.

Given how unhappy the board members were with our COO “disappearing” and members wanting to act rashly, I volunteered to have a chat with him to establish what he was doing. We met, and as he took me through what the ILO did and his role in it, and how BUSA as an IOE member played a role, I was intrigued. It was clear that his failure was in not writing reports of what he was doing, as he had clearly been doing good work that the country needed. I subsequently discovered that the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was also very active in the ILO structures via ITUC—I was later to spend much time travelling to and fro, as well as on behalf of, the IOE and ILO on missions with Bheki Ntshalintshali (who later became the COSATU secretary-general). We both served in the ILO Turin Centre, in Torino as chairs for the employer and worker groups, respectively, travelling for four or five hours by bus from Geneva, when he was already the secretary-general of COSATU. He appears in the Photo Gallery. Incidentally, I was to also build a great friendship with the late

39 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/union-buildings-pretoria>.

How the ILO has Impacted me

Esther Busser, a very passionate ITUC adviser, who specialised in economic policies and the concerns of developing countries, and who was the Deputy Director of the ITUC Geneva office. She travelled with me on the same bus to Torino. She had served as the secretary of the workers' group in all sessions of the ILC. May God Bless her amazing Soul! See Esther's photo as well in the Photo Gallery; May Her Soul Rest in Peace.

Van Vuuren also took me through the workings of an organisation called the IOE that I had never heard of; this is the secretariat of the employers in the ILO, and for which we were paying a staggering fee, as members; about 40 000 CHF at the time, compared to the 77 000 CHF paid today. As you may know, the Swiss CHF is almost the same as the US dollar. I would later over the years have to expend numerous efforts to explain the rationale and utility of the IOE to BUSA with regards to its membership, especially during austerity periods of financial challenges such as the global financial crisis of 2008/9, and explain that the IOE membership was key for BUSA and South Africa.

I reported back to the BUSA board that the ILO was an important organisation, and more importantly, one that justified the COO's time and was certainly worthy of his "disappearing acts". I was convincing enough for everyone to leave Van Vuuren alone.

Van Vuuren then drafted me into the ILO team that attended the ILC and so I started disappearing as well from time to time, and with increasing frequency and regularity when Van Vuuren left to be the ILO director responsible for the Pretoria office.

I became the natural ILO representative successor on its GB to finish his term. While this is not necessarily automatic as it is more of a sub-regional representation on the GB, coordinated by the IOE rather than a BUSA position *per se*, the strategic nature of South Africa and BUSA's resources have always been recognised as necessary and critical for the sub-region's benefit.

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I became a member of the GB, completing Van Vuuren's term in 2008, and then became a GB member in my own right in 2009. The rest, as they say, is history! 😊

I started understanding how the ILO works, how social dialogue works, and imbibed its ways, traditions and normative importance in the world of work like a sponge—and so the labour of love was born. The more I got drawn into its ways, which are quite foreign to how business functions, for example, the time it takes for anything to reach successful consensus conclusions, the more I fell in love with it.

Increasingly, the ILO consumed more of my personal time, and as I got involved with the G20/B20/L20⁴⁰ processes and the IOE UN Business & Human Rights Policy Working Group, which I ended up chairing, the more time I spent away from home, living on aeroplanes.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world around February/March 2020, it was a very welcome grounding for me for purposes of some introspective stability and spending time with family. Reflecting on my time, I was shocked to realise that my travels had gone up to about 30 overseas trips per year and because of my love for food—I am an extremely good

40 About the G20: “The G20 is a strategic multilateral platform connecting the world’s major developed and emerging economies. The G20 holds a strategic role in securing future global economic growth and prosperity. Together, the G20 members represent more than 80 percent of world GDP, 75 percent of international trade and 60 percent of the world population.” <https://g20.org/about-the-g20/>.

About the B20: “The Business 20 (B20) is the official G20 dialogue forum with the global business community. Established in 2010, B20 reserved companies and business organisations and it is among the most prominent Engagement Groups in G20.” <https://b20indonesia2022.org/about-b20>.

About the L20: “The Labour 20 – L20 – represents the interests of workers at the G20 level. It unites trade unions from G20 countries and global unions and is convened by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD.” <https://www.ituc-csi.org/l20>.

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cook, by the way 😊 —I had reviewed over 250 restaurants all over the world in a space of four or five years on TripAdvisor!!

This period also coincided with my agreeing to be a candidate for the ILO DG position, having been asked to consider this by the previous Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant, in 2017 when we were in Bad Neuenahr in Germany at the G20/B20. It was to make for an interesting transition in my life. I had always planned to devote some time to myself when my kids finished school, having raised four amazing kids (one of them being my nephew inherited from my ex-wife's family), with the last born, my daughter, completing her studies in London at the end of 2021. Destiny and the universe had a different plan for me.

I had always told anyone who asked me to avail myself as a candidate, including friends and colleagues who attended the Latin American Regional meeting of the ILO in Panama, that I needed to fulfil my role as the vice-president of employers and vice-chair of the ILO, as well as to see how well we would collectively do at the centenary celebration in terms of our conclusions, given that I was to lead my group in those discussions, for me to be able to consider being a candidate. The Centenary Declaration was a huge success, and it was a matter of time before I would consent to throw my hat into the race for a chance to lead the implementation of what I was part of building. In fact, Minister Oliphant sent a delegation after the 2019 ILC Centenary celebration, including Siphon Ndebele (Chief Director for International Affairs at the time in the Department of Labour), Zingiswa Losi (President of COSATU), Luvuyo Ndimeni (Chief Director at Dirco, our Foreign Affairs Department) and Kaizer Moyane (Business Convenor at NEDLAC, BUSA Chairman of the Social Policy Committee and GB member of the ILO, replacing me on same) to convince me, insisting that I was being deployed as an African.

Those who followed the elections will know that I had a great time with my campaign, supported by all the SADC trade unions, under the leadership of SATUCC, initially by the African Union (AU) and of course all the employers I was

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leading globally. Some South African government leaders, in collaboration with some international detractors, worked hard behind the scenes to have the South African government inexplicably withdraw its support, for reasons that have never been divulged. This was followed by an intense de-campaigning process by the South African cabinet ministers, and sabotaging activities at the AU level, with South Africa intensely lobbying her BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India and China) partners. There were numerous other geo-political realities that I shall cover in my “juicy” other books and memoirs, where I shall also share intimate details of why these cowardly ministers lied behind closed doors to convince their colleagues this was the right course of action. Geneva became an African contested terrain, with the South African Ambassador to Geneva, Mxolisi Nkosi (and ably assisted by former Ambassador Nozipho Mxakatho-Diseko) working feverishly and leading the attack against me, I was reliably advised by all. Tragic and treacherous, yes, and other unmentionables!! Let us focus on the positives that this book is intended for—the whole process was highly educational, and I discovered from the over 40 000 views and comments on LinkedIn and other social media, that most people, especially the youth, were greatly inspired by how we managed the campaign.

I am happy, though, that thanks to my candidacy and campaign, albeit one borne out of desperation for the role not to be occupied by me, an African finally became the DG of the ILO.

This has not dampened my love for the ILO at all. In fact, it has made me more resolute to work hard and make sure it is understood and used to change the world of work for the betterment of all working people. I also believe that the universe conspired for me to do far more important work, which you shall read about and experience outside the parameters of this book. This in no way exculpates the evil-doing by the government leaders, together with their global co-conspirators. You will have to be a bit patient to have all the details in a tell-all book covering this specifically.

How the ILO has Impacted me

Suffice it to say that, as you can see, my coming to the ILO had never been my own plan. Becoming the vice-president of the employers' group and consequently the vice-chair of the ILO, and an ILO officer, had never been my plan either.

Approximately a year and a half before the IOE vice-presidential election, I was approached by one Alberto Echavarria, the employers' Colombian representative, as I was leaving the employers' room, Room III of the ILO building, adjacent to what would later become my office as leader of the employers' group, and he asked me to consider being the employers' spokesman. I was astounded to say the least, and could not understand why he would ask me when I was one of the youngest in the group, if not the youngest, and when there were many who were my seniors in the organisation.

His response was that they had watched me over the years, had listened to my input and had watched how I listened and paid attention to the peculiarities of the different regions and showed sensitivity and appreciation for the nuances and diversity of the employer family. He then asked me to consider it and not to share this with anyone. Sadly, Alberto passed away and joined the angels at the time of finalising this book for publishing. May His Soul Rest in Peace!!

Then, a few months later, I was in a taxi in Bangkok, returning from an ILO meeting and headed for the airport, when a former colleague, Garance Pineau, a member of the Mouvement des Entreprises de France⁴¹ (known as MEDEF) and a colleague on the GB, began asking me strange and probing questions about the role of the global spokesperson. I kept answering, but was clearly not saying what she wanted to hear, 🤔 😊 and only realised this when one of my dear friends, Renate Hornung-Draus from the Confederation of German Employers' Associations/Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (known as BDA), and who is now my successor as leader of the IOE, called me and said, "Young man, we have been thinking and discussing that you

41 <https://www.lesbiographies.com/Biographie/PINEAU-Garance,217036>.

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be the next spokesperson of our group”. When I asked who “we” was, she said Garance Pineau and herself, and told me that Garance found me elusive on this matter. 🤔🤔 Garance these days is on President Macron’s staff.

I have never been able to establish whether Alberto and Renate were working together on the project, although there is reason to believe this was so. All I got was huge laughter in response when I inquired.

And so, the labour of love was strengthened. 💪

Closing and Recognition

I have always wondered how authors decide whom to recognise and thank when they finalise their book projects, as I can imagine loads and loads of contributors that might deserve to be thanked. More importantly, my concern (no; nightmare!!) is to forget or omit someone who deserves to receive acknowledgement.

Should this happen to me, I ask for apologies in advance...this includes the spirit guides. I must start by thanking my family. Family, for me, is everything!! My family has been there throughout the times when I was faced with innumerable challenges over the years. There are, of course, a lot of others equally deserving of recognition and thanks, who, due to protocol reasons in the ILO, I cannot mention by name, lest it be misunderstood. You know who you are!!

Let me start by thanking my late angelic aunt and ancestor, to whom this book is dedicated. Myo (Yolisa Soul) was the chief librarian at the University of Fort Hare, and always emphasised the importance of archiving and ensuring that milestones and critical events were kept safe for posterity. She must be smiling wherever she is in Heaven that I have finally written a book.

As mentioned previously, my kids have had to tolerate my many years of absence from home, travelling all over the world, missing each others’ special moments that can never be repeated or replaced. They are the ones who have been fed

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with ILO-related jargon whether they liked it or not. I also thank them for all the unconditional love!!

People who know me will be aware that my kids are the only ones who really matter the most and with whom I check and bounce off difficult things. When they give me the green light, it does not matter who gets upset—if it's the truth, then it is the truth and it shall be done.

Mlungisi, my eldest son, is the South African Legal Head for the Coronation Fund in Cape Town, and has two beautiful children (my grandchildren) namely, Keiko and Kenzo. Neo, my adopted son from my ex-wife's family, is a budding entrepreneur; Litha a.k.a NuEdison, a hip-hop musician whom most of my global followers on Twitter and LinkedIn have come to know extremely well as I am also his manager; and my only daughter, Nina, an art psychotherapist in London, has been to the ILO with me on one of the trips when she came over to see me in Geneva, lots of Love and Light! I promised Litha and Nina that I shall later in life have a custom-made jacket, marked "Standing Man" (Litha's) and "Self-made" (Nina's). Elaboration will be provided in my other book/s.

I thank all my siblings, five of them, namely, Sonwabo, Boniswa, Luthando, Zuko, Itumeleng (Tumlung)...thanks for all the support and love and I love you dearly!

My parents, my 83-year-old mother, Tilli (Phyllis Boniswa Rose Mdwaba), my late dad, Ken (Kenneth Mpumelelo Mdwaba) who has been gone for over 15 years, but know that you are always there in the spirit world, and as one of my most watchful ancestors have given me more protection than can be appreciated. Thank you for having always prioritised education for me and my siblings, and ensuring that we always came first even when it was hard to have all six of us get quality everything!

My grandparents, both paternal and maternal (yes, my grandfather, the one who named me Perry-Mason). I spent my youthful years with my maternal grandparents and they ensured that I was always incentivised (particularly my grandmother) to always be top of the class at school; buying

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me books such as Reader's Digest, Spiderman, Archie and all the other comics that made it possible for me to dream. They taught me entrepreneurship at a very young age. My grandmother was one of the smartest and most intelligent persons I have known, always giving spot test checks on simple arithmetic! Thank you, and I appreciate your being very active ancestors, always making certain we are all okay.

All my other ancestors and guides; my great uncle, Professor TW Kambule, the mathematician, after whom the Mathematics building at Wits University is named—TW Kambule Mathematical Sciences Building (who used to insist that he speaks a number of languages, but that Algebra was the one he spoke the best)—I bet you never knew that I had mathematics royalty DNA genes; my only uncle, Thabo; my cousins, Daliwonga ((my cousin brother with whom I spent my youthful years), Small Boy (Smally), Madoda; my aunts, Myo (who taught me the finer things about cooking, decorum, numerous other qualities and most importantly, documenting and archiving as the librarian in the family having been the University of Fort Hare Chief Librarian) Dade, Dinono, Nosipho (Zip), and all my other family members that have gone, but are always watching over me/us, I am so grateful!

I would also like to thank my favourite aunt, who was/ has always been like a mom to me (one of my three moms, sharing this role with Tilli, my mother and my maternal grandmother)...Mzo (Zoleka Ndzekeli). You know that I have lots of admiration and love for you; without you, I never would have had my great sense of style and swag and would not have met my other dad, Langs (Langa Ndzekeli), who is the most amazing intellectual and one of the most cerebrally gifted people I know, who taught me my deep appreciation for jazz music and gave me my "TZoro" nickname, inspired by the heroic and charismatic swordsman, Zorro...I love both of you enormously!! I also thank my late spiritual guide Mama Mona, my late spiritual big sisters, Sandra and Jill, as well as my late inspirational principal, Larry Kallmeyer, and consider them to be family who are always there to look over my Earth family and me.

Closing and Recognition

Outside my immediate family, I have so many others to thank, starting with my spiritual adviser and dear sister, Mira Djurdjevic and, inter alia, Erol Kiresepi (Turkey), Daniel Fune de Rioja (Argentina), Roberto Suarez (Spain), Maria Anzorreguy (Argentina), Matthias Thorn (Germany) and the whole IOE team, Corinne Frassier (France), Irene Mbika-Gondo (Cameroon), Ousseine Diallo (Côte d'Ivoire), Liu (Penny) Hansong (China), Valérie Berset Bircher (Switzerland) Priscilla Bautista (Dominican Republic), Maria Moskvina (Russia), Ana Melba Rosario (Dominican Republic), Renate Hornung-Draus (Germany), Rajeev Dubey (India), Ambassador Salim Baddoura (Lebanon), Beyani Munthali (Malawi), Jorge Roig (Venezuela), Rajeev Dubey (India), Harry Kyriazis (Greece), Hiroyuki Matsui (Japan), Peter Robinson (USA), Amadou Sako (Guinea), Blaise Matthey (Switzerland), Ambassador Carla Maria Rodriguez (Guatemala), Mahmood Al-Siddiqi (Qatar), Ambassador Claudio De la Puente (Peru; retired), Yanguo Liu (China), Jorge Illingworth (Ecuador), Barbara Maino (Italy) and the whole employers' team at the Turin Centre (ITCILO), Ambassador Francisco A. Caraballo (Dominican Republic), Deborah France-Massin (United Kingdom), Rafael Gijon (Spain) and the whole ACTEMP team, Maria Helena Andre (Portugal) and the whole ACTRAV team, Jacqueline Mugo (Kenya), El Mafoudh Megatelli (Algeria), Emmanuel Julien (France) and Mathilde his very wise wife, and countless friends employed by the ILO, and the ILO Staff Union officers. The list is so long that I know I definitely left someone out; this omission is but a lapse of memory, but I will be writing a few other books and will make amends.

My singular gratitude to my amazing campaign team for the #mdwaba4ILODG that knows no limit to giving, and who now have all become ILO experts in their own right, namely, Dicksy Ngqula (grateful for being introduced to him by someone who is a friend and younger brother, Lunga Kepe), Jahni DeVilliers, Jermaine Craig, Anda Ngani, Theto Mahlakoana, Thobile Hans, Thandi Sihlali, Sinovuyo Moabalobelo, Rebone Tau and colleagues from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation who brought a team from Switzerland

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to film a video of me cooking using the three-legged symbolic pot for tripartism: see the video on Youtube), Michelle September, Yvette Weinrich-Stander, Vuyani Makausu, Tahir Maepa, Lyndon Barends and Sizwe Maswanganyi. This was a dream team that I am convinced will still play a role in my life as it unfolds!!

I would also like to thank colleagues operating in our labour environment for all their support, namely, Tanya Cohen, my mlungu Jewish sister and Kaizer Moyane, the NEDLAC business convenor (he is now the GB member who succeeded me) who have over the years been in my ILO teams when we attended the ILC.

I also thank the Department of Employment and Labour team under the leadership of the former DG, Thobile Lamati, notably, Siphon Ndebele (Acting DDG for Industrial Relations at the time of going to print) and Siyabonga Hadebe (Labour Attaché in Geneva) and the CEO of Productivity SA, Mothiba Mothunye and his team for all the support.

Lastly, I thank all the family, friends and colleagues who took their time to give me feedback and assisted with editing this labour of love, namely, Tumlung my little sister, my brilliant genius niece, Uzile, Thandi Sihlali, my personal assistant who wonders when or whether I ever sleep, Marie Clarke Walker (you will recall from earlier that she was the Canadian worker spokesperson who led the Convention 190 discussions) who kindly participated in the review, and the amazingly efficient Jahni DeVilliers.

Ngiyabonga kakhulu, ndiyabulela kakhulu, baie dankie, asante sana, merci beaucoup, muchas gracias!!

Photo Gallery



From the top left to the bottom right: Bheki Ntshalintshali (COSATU Secretary-General) at the ILC; Catelene Passchier (Leader of the Trade Unions & Vice-Chair of the Workers in the ILO) & yours truly at an ILO event); President Cyril Ramaphosa (South African State President) at the start of the Global Commission on the FoW in Geneva at the ILO; Erol Kiresepi (Former President of the IOE) with Mildred Oliphant (Former Minister of Labour) & yours truly, at a G2o event in Argentina.



Plenary speech by yours truly at the ILC Centenary celebration in 2019 at the UN Building; Minister Patty Hadju, then Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion of Canada (2018) with yours truly at the Vieux Bois restaurant at the UN entrance in Geneva.



Yours truly at an ANDI (Asociacion Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia) event in Medellin, Colombia; African Sisters, Jacqueline Mugo (FKE - Federation of Kenyan Employers) CEO with Saida Neghza (President of the CGEA - Algerian Confederation of Algerian Enterprises) in Algeria with yours truly; King Letsie III (His Royal Highness of Lesotho) with Lindiwe Sephomolo (Business Lesotho CEO) & yours truly; Sir Roy Trotman, a politician and trade unionist served on the ILO Governing Body for 20 years and was the chairman of the Workers Group for 9 years.

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Sharan Burrow, former ITUC General Secretary, Erol Kiresepi, former IOE President, Peter Robinson, United States Council for International Business CEO, & yours truly, celebrating life at the G20, in Mendoza, Argentina.



The late ITUC Adviser & very dear Esther Busser, with yours truly.

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ILO Officers, Houtan Homayounpour, Corinne Vargha, Qatar Government officials, including the then Minister of Labour, Yousouf Mahommed Al-Othman Fakhroo & yours truly celebrating the Labour Law Reforms.



Yours truly with the State of Qatar Minister, Administrative Development & Labour, Yousouf Mahommed Al-Othman Fakhroo.

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A photo taken at the adoption and celebration of Convention 190 on Violence & Harassment, the DG, Guy Ryder, Jean-Jacques Elmiger, Head of International Affairs, SECO & Chairman of the ILC 2019, Government Spokesman from Barbados, Colin Jordan, Employer Spokeswoman from Australia, Alana Matheson, Worker Global Spokesperson & Vice-Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body from the Netherlands, Catelene Passchier, Worker Spokesperson from Canada, Marie Clarke Walker, yours truly, Canadian Ambassador and Chairman of the C190 Committee, Rakesh Patry and Employer Vice-President for the ILC 2019 from Kenya, Jacqueline Mugo.



King Mswati III (His Royal Highness of Eswatini) together with the Leadership of Business Eswatini, Erol Kiresepi, Mahfoud Megateli, CEO of the Algerian Employers, CGEA, IOE colleagues and yours truly.

Closing and Recognition



Yours truly (R) attending a Centenary celebration event at the invitation of trade unionist Luc Corteebeck (insert), at his home in Brussels, Belgium, previously the leader of the workers at the ILO, and later chairman of the ILO GB.



The then President of Colombia, President Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018), after his plenary address, sharing with me that he won the Nobel Peace Prize because he followed Nelson Mandela’s example, who the Nobel Peace Prize many years earlier for his contribution to peace in South Africa. Looking on is José Manuel Salazar, then ILO Regional Director for Latin America.

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From Left to right: Yours truly with ILO staffers Corinne Frassier, Irene Mbika-Gondo, and my dear friend, the Swiss Ambassador to the ILO; Valérie Berset Bircher at an ILO party/event; my brother and I, Erol Kiresepi, our IOE President taking a break on the UN Palais lawns following the Convention 190 adoption; posing with Gabriella Herzog, Vice-President at USCIB, the US Employers' organization.

Closing and Recognition



Yours truly dancing and celebrating the adoption of Convention 190 on Violence & Harassment at the UN Palais lawns with trade unionists.



Majyd Aziz (Former President of the Employers Federation of Pakistan), with Kris De Mestere (Senior Adviser, Federation of Enterprises in Belgium) & yours truly at the ILO

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Yours truly addressing colleagues at the ILO Global Commission Report release and the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, arriving in Geneva for the Global Commission discussions, with the then Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant looking on.

Closing and Recognition



Following the adoption of Convention 190, I went for a bike ride to release some tension and relax while we still had an impasse on the ILO Centenary Declaration on the FoW—I bumped into the Executive Director of the Zambian Employers’ organisation, Harrington Chibanda at the bus stop outside the UN Palais. The then Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant and the former Director-General of the Department of Employment and Labour, Thobile Lamati at the UN Palais plenary.

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Cutting of the ribbon by the Leaders of the ILO as the ILO Centenary was launched.



Addressing staff at the ILO, following the cutting of the ribbon to launch the ILO Centenary celebrations.

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The ILO staff members in the ILO building for the cutting of the ribbon launching the ILO Centenary celebrations and speeches by the leaders of the ILO Governing Body, including yours truly.



Address at the ILO Centenary celebrations launch by the then President of the ILO Staff Union, Catherine Comte-Tiberghien.

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Surprise birthday cake for the President of South Africa, H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa as he was headed home that evening and on the eve of his birthday, after co-chairing the Global Commission meetings with the then Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan Lofvén.

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The late Comrade Dennis George, past Secretary-General of the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), at the UN Palais, ILO plenary.



Yours truly at the Latin American ILO Regional Meetings in Panama, 2017, together with the CEO of the Panama Employers, CONEP, Analisa Montenegro, and a colleague from her office.

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Tripartite representatives on Mission in Guatemala, together with Luc Cortebeek, representing trade unions.



Luc Cortebeek, yours truly and another trade union colleague in Guatemala.

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Top: Yours truly addressing delegates at the ILC, opening of the ILO Centenary Celebrations at the UN Palais Plenary in 2019.

Bottom: Tahir Maepa, Secretary-General of the Public Sector Commercial Unions (PSCU) at the 2019 ILC/Centenary Celebration.

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Sipho Ndebele, Acting DDG, Labour Policy & Industrial Relations at the Department of Employment and Labour; photo taken at the ILC 2019.

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Group photo by the Employers after the pre-ILC Annual meetings at the ILO Centenary celebrations.

Demystifying the jewel called the ILO : A Labour of Love.



Prof Mthunzi Mkhabela

The first African ILO Vice President & ILO
Vice-Chairman/Global Spokesman for Employers
in 97 years of the ILO's existence.
(June 2017- June 2021)



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