Question 1: How did you experience the Youth Employment Forum?

Mr Cognac opened the discussion by saying that the YEF provided a unique opportunity for involving young people into policy-making and for giving youth the voice they deserved. He said that it was not possible any longer to develop policies without involving youth in a more systematic manner.

Ms Coronacion added that it was a great opportunity to work together with so many young people from all over the world and appreciated the opportunity to learn from others’ lessons and experiences.

Mr Samuel Díaz Fernández stressed the urgency of such a YEF and said it was important that youth not just entered the bureaucracy for the sake of it but to ensure that action came through.

Ms Ismail Al-Motawakil mentioned that the issues that came out of the 46 global youth consultations reflected the same challenges which her own country Yemen was facing. She said that many of the good practices on youth entrepreneurship presented at the YEF could be implemented in Yemen. Mr Zemmour said that the YEF showed that there was indeed a “global youth” and that the anger and frustration but also aspirations were the same in every corner of the world. Mr Soaré agreed with the panel and stressed that while the realities were very different there was a common vision amongst youth and that the ILO’s initiative of organizing such a YEF provided a great opportunity to work together towards this common vision. Mr Soaré reminded the audience on a recent interview with the ILO Director-General in which he had mentioned that youth were the future. Mr Soaré emphasized that youth were not only the future but also the present and that any debate on youth issues needed to involve young people.

Question 2: Do you feel your voices were being heard?

Ms Coronacion said that she felt that their voices were being heard at the YEF as well as through the young people’s address to the 101st ILC. Mr Díaz Fernández recognized the importance of such a Forum for listening to young people’s voices but stressed that without continuity the voice would break. He also said that it was critical to build a structure that allowed for visibility of youth issues. This structure could consist of, for instance, a tripartite ILO youth advisory council as suggested at the YEF, a supporting youth network which could feed into the advisory council and regular YEF. Mr Zemmour said he agreed with the panel and added that the current youth employment crisis also presented a window of opportunity as events in North Africa and elsewhere clearly showed that youth were the engines of social change.
Question 3: Which policies were discussed at the YEF?

Ms Coronacion said that the social partners had different opinions over the right strategies to promote decent work for youth. While some, including many employers, believed that youth entrepreneurship was key to tackling the youth jobs crisis, others, including many trade unions, did not think of youth entrepreneurship as a substitute for job creation. In her personal opinion, Ms Coronacion thought that regular employment relations and higher wages could lead to growth in the domestic market which would create new jobs. She emphasized that while there are many different approaches and ideas, the YEF and the ILC served as an opportunity to look for a common ground because a sustainable solution could only be found together.

Question 4: What are the key messages from the YEF?

Mr Soaré said that the key message was that youth needed to be involved in the development and implementation of youth employment policies and programmes. Countries which did not include their young people into decision-making processes were now facing generational and education crises as a result. In his closing statement, Mr Zemmour said that one of the key messages from the YEF was that we needed to admit that there are no ‘one-size-fits-all solutions’ to the youth employment crisis and that youth employment was a highly political issue. He urged not to pursue solutions that were only gimmicks. If we talked about youth entrepreneurship, for instance, we also needed to include access to finance and entrepreneurship education. Mr Zemmour said that he personally preferred not to have a permanent ILO youth advisory council and that he rather lived in a society where youth issues were mainstreamed into wider policy-making and where youth were treated equally, with the same rights as everybody else. With reference to the President of Indonesia’s call for a Global Youth Employment Coalition at the 100th ILC, Mr Cognac concluded the discussion by saying that we were witnessing the beginning of a global youth employment coalition.