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REPORT ON THE FUTURE TO BE PRESENTED ON FUTURE DAY

Verbatim transcript of the sitting of
July 24, 2024

ATTENDANCE

Chair: Legislator Rodrigo Goñi Reyes (Ad hoc Chair)

Members: Legislators Graciela Barrera and Carmen Sanguinetti; and Legislators Felipe Carballo, Gustavo Olmos, and Uruguay Russi.

Guests: For UNDP: Ms. Virginia Varela, Ms. Stephanie Rouvray, Ms. Ioanna Grotiuz, and Ms. Lucía Pérez Chabaneau; and Mr. Pedro Delprato and Mr. Daniel Carranza

For UNESCO: Ms. Lydia Garrido

Secretariat: Ms. María Elena Morán (Secretary) and Mr. Vladimir De Bellis (Secretary); and Ms. Joseline Rattaro and Ms. Sofía Martorano (Deputy Secretaries)

SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE FUTURE

(Meeting of July 24, 2024)

(In attendance: a delegation from the United Nations Development Programme)

THE CHAIR (Rodrigo Goñi Reyes).- A quorum being present, the meeting is called to order.

(It is 14:36)

—The Special Committee for the Future welcomes a delegation from UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), comprising Ms. Ioanna Grotiuz, Ms. Lucía Pérez Chabaneau, Ms. Virginia Varela, and Ms. Stephanie Rouvray, and Mr. Pedro Delprato and Mr. Daniel Carranza.

They asked to be received to present a proposal aimed at advancing the creation of formal mechanisms for civil society participation in the Committee's work.

MS. VARELA (Virginia).- Many thanks to all Committee members and to the Chair, Rodrigo Goñi, with whom we have been working for quite some time, supporting the development and evolution of the Special Committee for the Future.

We UNDP representatives are accompanied by a delegation of civil society organizations with which we are working on a project called “Dialogar acerca.” It relates to an issue that has gained a place on UNDP's regional agenda: concern about the quality of our democracies and the need to continue strengthening an inclusive public sphere. Among other things, that means ensuring civil society actually has spaces for effective participation in the various forums for public debate, particularly in Parliament.

In that regard, the committees operating in both chambers are naturally a space where civil society and legislators interact in different ways. We believe the Special Committee for the Future is also such a space because of its purpose and approach, and because it sees itself as an innovative Committee, open to active listening and effective exchanges with multiple actors from different fields. We know—and I know directly and firsthand—that in its first phase the Special Committee for the Future worked extensively with academia and also with private sector actors. It has also held conversations with civil society.

In our ongoing exchanges with civil society, we have discussed and planned to bring here the possibility of starting a conversation about how civil society organizations can create, within the Special Committee for the Future, a mechanism or space that can gradually be formalized for participating in and shaping this Committee's agenda and proposals, and putting them into effect.

I will stop here so that our colleagues representing civil society can introduce themselves and make more specific proposals, given the time available.

MR. DELPRATO (Pedro).- Good afternoon. I represent Anong. I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to have this space.

As Virginia rightly said, we are part of civil society, a fairly heterogeneous and diverse civil society, involved in many issues and policies in general and in the governance of many aspects of our society.

Through our work, we also have a certain closeness to the population in general, which allows us to take its pulse and see what is happening. We do not represent the population, but we do have something of a voice on certain issues, made possible by the closeness our work gives us.

In that regard, we think part of envisioning the future involves civil society being able to play a substantial role in policy development and design. Decisions are often made without much consideration of their possible long-term impact. We think we can contribute significantly to a long-term perspective, bringing at least sensitivity to policymaking. By law, we participate in several forums, but we believe there should be a more systemic approach to what can be contributed and how.

From that perspective, we were interested in including an actor from civil society in its various forms in the development of public policy and its potential impact on the population's future.

MR. CARRANZA (Daniel).- I am part of Data Uruguay and also belong to the Open Government Network and the Open Government Working Group, the governance body for a national project coordinated by Agesic.

Continuing that idea, I think Anong expressed participation and its value extremely well. We would also like to contribute on how to do it.

Uruguay has done a great deal of work and made very significant advances in participation and transparency policies. Parliament itself has in fact participated in the open government plan for at least 2 or 3 plans, with both chambers represented, so methodologies, clear precedents, and a great deal of knowledge on how to organize participation already exist.

We have also sent Parliament, on more than one occasion, a document with recommendations on having an open Parliament, including many suggestions on how to implement these participation mechanisms.

If there is a possibility of institutionally incorporating forms of participation into the work of the Special Committee for the Future, account should be taken

of that previous experience and all those precedents, I stress, of Parliament itself in working with civil society, in a broad sense. This is not exclusive to organized civil society or to the organizations here today; it is about participation by interested individuals and relevant actors interested in the various issues, who will of course include civil society.

MS. PÉREZ CHABANEAU (Lucía).- I represent Amnesty International Uruguay. Thank you very much for this space, and I also thank UNDP for creating this opportunity.

I will try not to repeat what has already been said.

I think we have an opportunity to rethink some of the channels that already exist today, or are envisaged and function to a certain extent, with varying outcomes for dialogue between Parliament and civil society organizations.

The space provided by committees, and this Committee in particular, undoubtedly offers a different opportunity, and I think we can consider this mechanism from another perspective. I think Daniel shed light on some of these questions about how. We need to consider the established mechanism itself, but also how these processes can become more efficient in gathering civil society's input, which is not always exclusively concerns. Organizations such as Amnesty International and others conduct research, generate empirical evidence, and produce many assessments on a large proportion of the issues, many of which are discussed in this House.

It is therefore about creating opportunities that can genuinely be used not only in the urgency of a discussion about voting on a law, but also, as Daniel mentioned, to generate processes that help us approach issues better, incorporating an important voice: civil society in general and organized civil society in particular.

I therefore welcome this opportunity to rethink the mechanism and its effectiveness so it can truly be a space for influence, useful engagement, and improvement based on the input gathered. I would also like to add to what Anong said about the diversity of civil society organizations. Although it adds complexity, it is also a great strength, and I think channels can be established to enrich the conversations and discussions held in this Committee on different issues, depending on where this opportunity before us today leads.

I would like to mention that Amnesty International, and other organizations with which we have shared experiences, have very good experiences and practices that worked very well and on which we can build. These include not only parliamentary dialogues but also work with public institutions generally, leading to the production of empirical evidence and data that, perhaps, through

public information access requests, the State did not have for addressing urgent issues of great importance to the country. We can build on those cases. We also have other cases where these dialogues were not so fruitful.

I think these experiences can provide a basis for building a better path toward making better use of this space.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR.- Of course, we thank you for the proposal you have presented.

As UNDP knows, this Committee has a precise methodology, which UNDP also practices: anticipatory governance. This methodology is already recognized, accepted, and practiced and, like any methodology, has its rules and system.

We have adopted that methodology for our processes because parliamentary committees on the future around the world have also incorporated it. We are invited precisely because we adopted a methodology recognized even by the UN itself, now in the Pact for the Future. In short, our processes use this methodology, which we have developed through the approach of “The Future of Work and the Work of the Future,” the theme this Committee chose as its focus for these four years. We are already heading toward the final report, in a process involving all actors considered relevant, including, of course, civil society, which, as you say, is very diverse and has much to contribute to this report. “The Future of Work and the Work of the Future” covers a very broad area with many threats and challenges, and also involves raising awareness. One of our greatest concerns is that civil society is unaware—as several parliaments are recognizing—of emerging processes and the impacts new technologies, and I mean artificial intelligence, will have. Societies are somewhat anesthetized or asleep, and civil society organizations also have much to contribute to raising awareness; they are part of the problem and part of the solution. Let this serve as a preliminary clarification by way of introduction. You probably already knew it, but it is important to state it.

Second, this has been the Special Committee for the Future's first experience. Before this term ends, we will vote on a more permanent structure. This is a special committee, and the idea—at least as the President of the General Assembly has put it to us—is to leave a standing committee for the next and subsequent terms, as other parliaments have. We will also have to introduce other aspects relating to more systemic and permanent participation by the various actors, including civil society. We have not yet begun that discussion. We wanted, in a way, to complete this experience so we could explain why a standing committee is worthwhile, including some other innovative elements in Parliament's work. That is why your proposal is very welcome; in a way, it gives us legitimacy to propose more permanent processes.

I do not know whether the legislators would like to comment. If not, Ms. Virginia Varela, we will remain in contact.

This report we will produce—we will now focus on advancing this final report—is also an opportunity, although time is short, for participation on the subject and for contributing elements to something that, I repeat, will affect and impact absolutely everyone.

MS. SANGUINETTI (Carmen).- I would like to greet the delegation and thank you for being here.

I think we are very much aligned on the importance of integrating civil society into the work we do here. Personally, on several issues I have worked on, I began by inviting academia, civil society, the private sector, and the different fields. Coming from civil society myself, I believe in it. I also think Uruguay's scale makes participation and interaction among academia, civil society, and political authorities straightforward and easy. I think there is an opportunity to keep building on it.

I think this Committee's work with academia, promoted by its Chair, is an example of strengthening, as was said here. I agree that many things have been done well and that there are others to learn.

I simply want to emphasize that many of us are firmly convinced that this existing bridge must be strengthened and deepened to meet the coming challenges. Artificial intelligence is one of them, but we could name quite a few.

Thank you again for being here today.

THE CHAIR.- We thank the delegation for coming and will remain in contact to provide feedback soon, since our term is drawing to a close.

MR. CARRANZA (Daniel).- We are available to discuss any mechanisms we may think of.

THE CHAIR.- Perfect.

(A UNDP delegation leaves the room)

—We will distribute a very simple proposal relating to a suggested first step toward making this Committee permanent. We are circulating a draft text. Let us look at it.

(Exchanges)

—We can vote on it up to the last General Assembly sitting; it would be a first step toward a standing committee.

(Ms. Lydia Garrido, Adviser on Futures and Collective Intelligence Methodologies, enters the room) —If you agree, since a legislator will have to leave later, we will ask Ms. Lydia Garrido to discuss the proposal for advancing the Special Committee for the Future's final report. We have already produced a preliminary report

on “Future of Work – Work of the Future,” and we have two months left. Without further ado, we would like her to set out the next steps so we can then discuss them among ourselves. We ask Lydia Garrido to tell us about this point.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).- I will try to be very brief.

This report is part of the requirements of Law No. 19.509 and must be delivered before the end of this term. I should remind you that we drew inspiration—as did the Committee's organization and approach—from Finland's Committee for the Future, among others, of course, and above all focused on creating our own tailored design. Finland's Committee for the Future is our main guide, although the major difference is that, in Parliament, it responds to the report produced by the Prime Minister's Office. That is the difference we will have. Regarding the report's characteristics, it provides a concise summary of the activities carried out during the term, over those four or five years. Such reports generally run between 50 and 80 pages, although they are now being divided into Part 1 and Part 2. So we would be talking about around 100 or 120 pages. That is the idea for the report's length.

The methodological approach falls within the anticipation and complexity frameworks used for all the other work and activities. The report seeks to analyze and integrate the input generated over these four years, from 2021 to 2024, through the various written contributions of the expanded Expert Group, workshops, workshop sessions, roundtables, seminars, presentations, and the second world summit process. We should remember that this was a nine-month process with very interesting interactions involving a very broad range of experts connected with artificial intelligence: its relationship with democracy and with major social transformations directly related to work and society, and the cultural implications for learning, education, and other areas.

For this work, secondary sources are being scanned, a process known in English as environmental scanning; its Spanish translation is not very clear. In essence, it is a search for and analysis of documents, reports, and studies from various highly reputable sources, including Finland's OSDE, the World Economic Forum, and The Millennium Project. I mean think tanks that work specifically and continuously to identify variables, trends, megatrends, and weak and strong signals—in short, all those categories of change.

(The presentation is accompanied by PowerPoint slides)

—Interviews are planned to validate or expand the written draft of the document, and to review it as well.

I will explain the re-view later, that is, looking at it again.

I have proposed holding a kind of workshop, an interactive activity to validate the work before the final document is delivered. But you will have to decide according to this year's timing and conditions here in Parliament. My recommendation would be to hold it.

Among the inputs, it should be noted that the CEF has produced all these publications. One of the latest is the Methodological Guide, by UNDP with the Committee for the Future. That needs to be discussed with UNDP, because I think it will be issued under UNDP's name. The other, more recent, is a publication that I think has just been completed on the Committee for the Future's process and, above all, contributions to synthesizing the Summit. I do not know whether you have received that document yet.

THE CHAIR.- No, because we have not been given access. It is being edited.

I have repeatedly requested both the UNDP document and the IDEA document. Lydia submitted a text, but they have not given me access to it. I have not been able to see it.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).- I will make both working documents available to you.

The UNDP document has 100 pages; they shortened it to 50. I think that is a pity. There are 50 pages I would like to propose recovering so we can have the whole document, with whatever adjustments you want, of course, but it is a pity to cut it.

The other publication, Bringing the Future into the Present: Parliament's Role in Fostering an Innovative Anticipatory Governance Ecosystem, includes a synthesis of the Summit among its chapters. I think it contains very interesting input that could be useful both to this Committee and many others. It has almost 150 pages.

As I previously shared with you, I identified artificial intelligence as a cross-cutting theme in the different areas the Committee for the Future has been working on, directly or indirectly, within this broad subject of the "Work of the Future" and the "Future of Work": AI's conditions as an emerging and evolving phenomenon; ethical aspects, which should be central, as has been argued; its relationship with democracy, directly with opportunities, challenges, and threats in the work of the future; education, also linked to work, specifically parliamentary work; and climate change, also linked to the future of work insofar as certain opportunities for transformation, such as the digital economy, have aspects that must be made compatible with sustainable evolution.

Is the idea of sustainable evolution clear? It is because they generate a very substantial carbon footprint.

The report will be presented around the areas we have been working on, with two additional areas resulting from this very process of the Committee's work. The aim is to incorporate sustainability, climate change, the digital economy, and zero emissions, as well as artificial intelligence, whose cross-cutting nature we have already seen both through the Summit and in everyday life, and the

impact its potential could have on changing the very anatomy, we might say, of work itself.

I will not go into detail about this slide, but it is a very useful heuristic and one of those we use to connect the different vectors or drivers of change. What matters is seeing their relationships and interrelationships, rather than viewing each one separately. They in turn generate novelties and opportunities, but also threats; in certain respects they are enablers, but in others they are also inhibitors. There could be other vectors like these. We use some cross-cutting vectors in analyzing these themes.

In a way, the heptagram captures almost all of the 7 areas around which the text is organized.

Next, I have included just 3 slides to make us think, prompt some reflection, and show where this work's approach is heading. In a report of between 80 and 100 pages, we cannot go very deep; nor is it a recipe, because all of this is changing, which is the most important thing to keep in mind.

I could have chosen many other statements, but I chose one from a McKinsey report last year: “Generative AI is likely to have the greatest impact on knowledge-based work, particularly activities involving decision-making and collaboration, which previously had the lowest automation potential.” What does that mean? When this very Parliament began discussing the future of work in 2015, 2016, and 2017—I do not know whether you remember, it happened every year during Future Day in September—the discussion was that the greatest threat was automation, the replacement of routine, unskilled work. But what has happened over the past year and a half? We realized that one of the greatest threats is precisely to skilled work, to some of the jobs based on qualifications and knowledge. For your reference, this chart shows, across different areas, the impact expected before 2017, in studies up to 2017, 2018, and 2019, and what the latest studies are showing. You can see the increase in the percentage impact automation would have on each sector.

Take the first: “STEM professionals,” in science, technology, mathematics, and economics, I think that is what the acronym means. Up to 2018 and 2019, before the emergence of generative artificial intelligence, its potential impact was thought to be around 13% or 14%. Today it is thought to be 30% or more. In education, it was thought to have an impact below 10%; today it is understood to be above 20%, and the same happens in each activity. This lets us see visually the difference already made by generative artificial intelligence, which is still in its very earliest stages.

The next chart shows what happens over time, that is, when the impact would occur. Up to 2017, 2018, or 2019, the expectation was what appears in gray: that the impact of replacement and automation would occur around 2045, 2050, or after 2025. If you look now—the part of the chart in light blue and darker blue—we are talking about between 2025 and 2030. As an initial, very broad reflection of my own, intended to provoke thought, in the next term, over five years, we will be at a turning point when conditions must be created for transformations already underway—the famous catching-up economists talk about. I do not want to predict the future; I want to base this on this report, as on many others, but I thought this one was presented very visually and is well supported.

We have many other areas of what is called the technological frontier: biotechnology, nanobiotechnology, and the management of human biological foundations. That would be another important issue to address. But artificial intelligence, which relates more directly to work and is still in its early stages, is transforming and changing at a pace that even we experts involved in these issues have been unable to keep up with.

THE CHAIR.- Thank you, Lydia.

I will make two or three comments. First, beyond Lydia providing them, we will request the complete texts she prepared for both the “UNDP-CEF Methodological Guide. The Use of the Future as a Capability and Competency in Parliaments” and this latest work with IDEA, “Bringing the Future into the Present.” The Special Committee for the Future is involved in these texts in some way, so we should see them before they are officially published. I requested them and still do not have them, but we will look at the texts Lydia offers us today while we await the versions to be published. Of course, we will give our approval first.

Second, we should keep moving forward with the approach and timetable Lydia proposes, because the idea is to hold an event in Parliament with all parliamentarians and the candidates before the ordinary session ends, on this report in which we have already made substantial progress. It is a very, very important issue, and this is the opportunity.

MR. OLMOS (Gustavo).- As always, I thank Lydia Garrido for her contribution. I agree with the point just made that these last five years are going to be highly dynamic. Surely the Parliament elected and taking office on February 15 will see radical changes during that process, over those five years, some stemming from technology and others imposed on us by the European Union's border policies and other things that will require very profound changes in many areas: the economy, legislation, and incorporating climate change risks and mitigation. Although Uruguay does not move the needle globally, that will still be a requirement.

A dramatic change will surely be needed in the way we debate. Without going into the issue, the way we discussed the

transformation of social security was relatively independent of the changes we expected in the world of work. It was a discussion grounded in the previous world of work, without considering that it will quickly enter a crisis because of the consequences of this transformation. So I think having this material—which I believe is the most we can aspire to in this legislature—establishing this forum as a standing committee of the General Assembly, and ensuring that its methodology and way of reasoning spread to the other parliamentary committees in both chambers, is the best contribution we can make from these years of work.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR.- Thank you very much, Representative.

We will therefore continue working on the issue, following this timetable and proposal. We are talking with the international organizations that have generally accompanied us in this process to complete this final report properly and on time. As Representative Olmos said, it will have very high impact and usefulness for coming legislatures and governments. Finally, I would like to report that ECLAC has invited us to participate in a process to promote a network of committees on the future. This process began at ECLAC's suggestion, the ILO subsequently became interested in supporting it, and Uruguay's Parliament, through the Committee for the Future, is part of the project.

We also have confirmation of the Third World Summit of Committees of the Future, to be held in Chile on January 15, 16, and 17. It was a decision we made here at the Second World Summit in Uruguay. We are invited, and the idea is for all Committee members to attend, or those able and willing to go. It will be a third world summit, like the second one we held in Montevideo, but also linked to Chile's Congreso Futuro, which we all know is of great interest. I therefore place on the record the invitation we have received; it will arrive through formal channels later with further details. These are summer vacation days, but the occasion is truly worthwhile because it is the third summit—Uruguay earned prestige and an active role through the second summit we held here in Montevideo—and also because of the Congreso Futuro.

I also place on the record that we will follow and participate in ECLAC's initiative for a Latin American network of committees on the future, a way of advancing these issues.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).- Supporting Representative Olmos's point, I do believe the Committee for the Future has a fundamental role over the next five years and could become a major source of support for the other committees and Parliament. Here, in our Uruguayan way, we move slowly and must begin to accelerate, but we have already gone through a learning curve.

I will give just one small piece of information. Up to 2017 or 2018, there was talk of almost 50% automation of work. Today the concept has changed: rather than automation of work, the discussion concerns automation of working

time. The change is significant; semantics matter. The discussion is no longer about that 50% which seemed outrageous to us in 2015, 2016, or 2017 when these reports were presented. Today it is said that well before 2030 there is a possibility of automating between 60% and 70% of the working time currently spent.

Why do I say the semantic change is important? Because this is not a reason to embrace fatalism or dystopias, or think robots will take our jobs. No. What it indicates is a change: a large share—we are talking about between 60% and 70%—of current working time will be replaced by artificial intelligence, meaning humans will have other kinds of tasks and activities. What does this connect with directly? The need to anticipate the capabilities and competencies required for those new tasks, which we do not yet know exactly. Training in the necessary agility and speed to keep pace with change on its own terms therefore becomes a fundamental skill and ability.

THE CHAIR.- I suggest holding the next meeting on Wednesday, August 21, at 14:30, with an update from Lydia Garrido on the final report on future work.

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned.

(It is 15:24)