Mr Guy Ryder

Director-General

International Labour Organisation

4 route des Morillons

CH-1211

Genève 22

Switzerland

By email to: ryder@ilo.org newsroom@ilo.org

Thursday, 8 March, 2018

Dear Guy,

On behalf of UNISON’s 1.3 million members working in public services in the UK, I am writing to urge the ILO to recognise child marriage as child labour.

In recent years the ILO has played a leading role in global efforts to reduce child labour. However, ILO child labour figures have significantly underestimated the number of girls performing domestic work, and completely omit girls who have been condemned to one of child labour’s worst forms – child marriage.

Earlier this week UNICEF published a new report demonstrating that child marriage has decreased by 15 per cent over the last decade. Whilst this progress is welcomed, it is staggering that one in five girls is still subjected to this horrendous form of abuse. The figures reveal that international efforts need to be increased significantly to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal to end child marriage by 2030.

As child marriage is forced marriage, domestic work performed by a child wife within her spouse’s household must be considered as forced labour. Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour should already cover child marriage: It includes slavery and practices similar to slavery, the trafficking and sale of children, forced and compulsory labour and hazardous work, all of which are commonplace within child marriages.

We welcome the ILO’s inclusion of forced marriage within the global estimates for modern slavery. The report includes the important recognition that forced marriage, and by extension child marriage, places victims at greater risk of being subjected to sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and other forms of forced labour.

If the ILO recognised child marriage amongst the worst forms of child labour, millions of girls would be covered by a legally binding international treaty and the ILO could invest its substantial resources and work with governments to enforce laws and develop programmes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal.

We urge you to call on the governing body to recognise child marriage as child labour and ensure the ILO plays a leading role in the eradication of this terrible crime.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Prentis

General Secretary

cc.

Rt Hon. Boris Johnson MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk

Rt Hon. Esther McVey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

ministers@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP, Secretary of State for International Development enquiry@dfid.gov.uk