



**Address by Juan Somavia
Director-General of the International Labour Office
at the opening ceremony of the
Global South-South Development Expo 2010¹**

**Geneva, Switzerland
22 November 2010**

Mr Celso Amorim, Minister of External Relations of Brazil and former Chair of the ILO's Governing Body,
Ms Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General for UN Women, Chair of the ILO/WHO Social Protection Advisory Group and a great former President of Chile,
Mr Marius Llewellyn Fransman, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa,
Mr Yiping Zhou, UNDP Director of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation – Thank you so much for that excellent introduction,
Your Excellencies,
Directors-General of Development Cooperation Agencies,
Deputy Directors of UN Agencies and colleagues from the UN family,
Dear friends,

Welcome to the ILO. We are delighted to have you all here.

It is a privilege for us to host this Third South-South Development Expo. Our thanks must go to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for this major initiative – and to Mr Zhou for the great work of the Special Unit he heads.

This has become a major annual event to showcase international cooperation and solidarity and commit to the values of the Charter of the United Nations – and to showcase solutions.

It is my honour to read a message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who could not be here today. He has asked me to represent him at this opening ceremony and to convey this message on his behalf:

MESSAGE FROM UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

“I am pleased to send greetings to the 2010 Global South-South Development Expo. You gather at a critical time, when progress toward the Millennium Development Goals is threatened by multiple challenges, from climate change to the financial crisis to persistent food insecurity.

Despite these difficulties, a number of developing countries have achieved important gains, including rapid economic growth, reduced poverty and greater access to health and education.

¹ Global South-South Development Expo 2010 (ILO headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland, 22-26 November 2010)

Still, there remain some 1 billion 750 million people in more than 100 countries who are unable to meet their basic needs.

This is according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index, a new poverty measure launched earlier this year by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative of Oxford University and the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme.

The challenges are clear, but they can be overcome. Cooperation is essential.

The more developing countries can share lessons about what works, from micro-finance to cash transfer programmes, the more we can advance.

Countries across the global south have created jobs and freed millions of people from poverty through home-grown solutions or by drawing on the innovations of others.

The South is a font of ideas and actions that are helping to tackle the major challenges of our day.

This Global South-South Development Expo is a valuable opportunity to share information, generate new initiatives, showcase breakthrough technologies and explore what can be done to usher in a greener, more prosperous future.

The United Nations stands with you in this effort, including through the presence of many of our agencies at this Expo.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful event.”

To these words of the Secretary-General, allow me to add some of my own.

Let me say first of all that I see this gathering as the expression of a new direction in international cooperation, the reflection of a rapidly expanding new demand.

The financial and economic crisis has served to reinforce a changing balance of relations in the international arena. This crisis started in the North and took deeper root there.

And I think, relevant to this meeting is that it has highlighted that no region of the world has a monopoly of wisdom or appropriate solutions.

Developing and emerging countries have made their presence felt as economic and political players in the international arena. But this is also true in the analytical and policy field.

They are assuming leadership, seeking their own solutions as well as the indispensable international cooperation to address the pressing challenges of today's economic crisis and of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In a recent article in the *Financial Times*, Minister Amorim wrote of the need to overcome obsolete global governance structures, institutions and practices in order to rebalance the agenda-setting and global decision-making process.

This also applies to international cooperation.

The traditional vertical, donor-beneficiary relationship has been changing because it is becoming increasingly outmoded in a global order in which developing and emerging countries have become major drivers of world economic growth, trade and investments.

Emerging economies are blowing some fresh air into the development cooperation world, shaping new forms of solidarity with the intensification of South-South exchanges. These now account for about 10 per cent of global ODA.

Recent initiatives such as the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) dialogue forum and the activities implemented by the IBSA fund are remarkable examples. And China has become a major player in South-South Cooperation.

We all know by now that there is no one-size-fits-all solution or model, but rather respect for diversity and adaptation according to national and local priorities. Solidarity rather than conditionality.

These elements presented in the various landmark South-South declarations and statements, from Buenos Aires to Nairobi, express a new spirit of development cooperation and I believe that international organizations and the UN system must be ready to adapt and absorb this new reality.

Second, South-South Cooperation is about knowledge sharing and a quest for knowledge that is relevant.

Knowledge production and innovation spans the globe. Countries and communities want to learn from those who have similar problems and experiences.

When we fully reduce the digital divide, the new technologies will allow the most excluded groups from the most remote areas to connect and communicate with the global community.

The notion of a knowledge bank has become archaic, because knowledge is everywhere and evolves at a very impressive rate.

What we need now are knowledge gates to facilitate exchanges, knowledge platforms in which those who are assessing are, at the same time, users and providers.

Today more and more people can participate in the collective knowledge – building process. And the creativity and policy developments that ensue cannot and should not be patented.

International organizations must also adapt and innovate to facilitate the connections that are demanded in South-South Cooperation: between supply and demand for expertise.

And most importantly, we must also link those who can think globally about local solutions and those that from the local perspective often understand better, what global solutions are about. We need to promote the cross fertilization of ideas and exchange of experience in areas such as those the UN Secretary-General has described.

Third, from the perspective of the ILO, the principles that characterize South-South Cooperation are very much those that are inherent in the approach of our Decent Work Agenda.

It is based on universal principles set out in the Constitution of our Organization established more than 90 years ago: that peace is founded on social justice, labour is not a commodity and that poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.

The Decent Work Agenda is centred on the central role of work in people's lives and the importance of assuring the dignity of work at all levels of development.

The Agenda includes mutually reinforcing objectives covering fundamental principles and rights at work, employment promotion and enterprise creation, social protection and social dialogue. We include gender equality and development as cross-cutting issues.

These universal objectives can be realized in a range of national circumstances. Consequently they provide the basis for a much more integrated, sustainable and varied development and growth agenda and for a working out of poverty approach.

And I believe that it is this responsiveness to national specificity and the capacity to communicate experiences among countries that has accounted for the global and regional endorsement of this Agenda, including by the G20.

Our main point today is that there is no real economic recovery until there is a recovery in job creation – it means putting quality jobs at the heart of the recovery. Again, it is some emerging countries that are growing and beginning to create jobs while most of the developed world is not yet doing so. At the same time they are interdependent. And positive signs of growth are accompanied by the highest level of unemployment – and the ranks of the unemployed have been swollen by 30 million more since 2007 without taking into account those in vulnerable employment.

We hope that you will take away from this Expo and your visit to the ILO an understanding of this Agenda:

South-South Cooperation is growing at a time when cooperation is urgently needed to address the challenges ahead including the current global economic crisis, food and fuel price volatility, and climate related disasters.

In this respect, I am very happy to announce that, just after this opening, I will sign with Minister Amorim a declaration to start a major South-South Cooperation programme on disaster prevention and recovery between the Government of Brazil and the ILO.

And with the Governments of India, Brazil and South Africa, I will sign a Declaration of Intention to cooperate in the development and promotion of the Decent Work Agenda through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

Dear friends,

The route travelled so far, in the field of South-South Cooperation, for each organization, and for us as a group, has been paved with significant landmarks. And today I am sure we mark another goal in this process.

This Expo – a meeting of stakeholders – will discuss solutions from the South engaging a range of participants from policy-makers to partners in rural communities.

I particularly welcome a range of national cooperation agencies – both South and North – to help us reflect and take action on all these issues.

I am sure that the spirit of the United Nations, and the International Labour Organization, where social dialogue between workers, employers and governments occupies a distinctive place, will nourish increased South-South dialogue.

The ILO is built on a tripartite structure where dialogue is our modus operandi. We are pleased to open our house of dialogue to you.

I am certain that this gathering will generate a fruitful exchange of strengthened solidarity and new opportunities for cooperation.

Make yourself at home in this house in which South-South Cooperation will be so present for the next few days.

Thank you for coming and inspiring us to continue.

Thank you.

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