



FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the International Symposium
on Trade Unions and the Informal Sector
(Geneva, 18-22 October 1999)**

1. The International Symposium on Trade Unions and the Informal Sector was held in Geneva from 18-22 October 1999. The meeting was attended by representatives from 28 national trade union centres, nominated following consultations with the Workers' group of the Governing Body. Also attending were a number of observers from other trade union organizations.
2. The agenda of the meeting, as approved by the Governing Body at its 274th Session (March 1999), was the following:
 - (1) Structural changes in the labour market: The significance of the informal sector, homework and contract labour; challenges and opportunities for trade unions.
 - (2) The role of trade unions in organizing informal workers, protecting their interests and promoting their mainstreaming into society.
 - (3) Strategic measures and action plans for consideration by trade unions to deal with workers in the informal sector, homeworkers and workers engaged under contract labour, particularly in connection with ILO technical cooperation activities.
3. The report of the meeting, which is appended, contains a detailed set of conclusions and recommendations drawn up by the participants, which set out the framework for future trade union intervention in this field.
4. These recommendations refer to both internal trade union policies that should be enforced to effectively organize informal sector workers, and policy proposals addressed to governments and international organizations on how national and international policies in areas such as labour standards and labour legislation, economic policy and social protection should evolve to progressively transform informal sector activities into more productive, organized and socially responsible enterprises. They also contain a number of clearly articulated demands from the trade union movement to the ILO in regard to technical assistance and policy for the informal sector.

5. The Governing Body may wish to take note of the report and to request the Director-General to take the recommendations into account in implementing future programmes of activity.

Geneva, 8 February 2000.

Point for decision: Paragraph 5.