

Fourth sitting

Monday, 11 June 2001, 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Parrot, Ms. A. Sto. Tomas

REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE GOVERNING BODY
AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (*cont.*)

The PRESIDENT (Mr. PARROT) — We shall now resume our discussion of the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Mr. MOYO (*Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe*) — At the outset allow me to preface my remarks by congratulating the President and the Vice-Presidents on their election to the stewardship of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. My delegation has complete confidence in their collective wisdom to guide our deliberations to new heights. I wish to commend the Chairperson of the Governing Body together with his team for their untiring efforts in producing their annual report on the activities of the Governing Body during the past year. My delegation appreciates and has taken note of their important report.

It is two years since the Director-General enunciated the vision of decent work. In this year's Report the Director-General poses a fundamental question as to what we have collectively done to realize the decent work agenda. He proffers some questions as to how we can collectively work towards turning the decent work ideal into reality. Indeed, unemployment has become one of the leading pandemics of our time.

If we consider the reality that globally 160 million people are without jobs, 500 million people are the working poor and that in the next decade there will be 500 million new entrants to the job market, then the call by the Director-General for concrete measures to reduce the decent work deficit makes sense and requires concerted effort by both the ILO and its constituent members and other multilateral institutions allied to the cause.

In our view, unemployment and underemployment, particularly in developing countries, are the root causes of the deprivation and denial of workers' rights and workers' social protection. If we can prosper the individual, then everything else would follow. The answer lies in the realization of decent work. The Director-General has asked pertinent questions.

First, is it realistic? Second, can we afford it? Third, is it worth the effort?

Our answer to all this is yes. In this respect, we welcome the Global Agenda for Employment and the convening of the Global Employment Forum in November. We believe that the realization of workers' expectations lies in sound economic growth. We also believe that employment is central to human

existence, hence the global deficit ought to be supported.

The question is what are some of the factors militating against full employment? We see the lopsided international trading arrangements, especially in relation to developing countries' legitimate desire for fair trading practices and a decent return for their raw materials. We support the initiative by the Director-General to forge strategic alliances with other partners, especially the Bretton Woods institutions in order to advance the decent work agenda for the benefit of the greater number of the unemployed. The proposed alliance ought to be transparent and honest and not self-serving in order to come up with positive development objectives.

Benefits of globalization have largely remained beyond the reach of a good many developing countries. The social dimension of globalization needs further investigation and my delegation wishes to take note of the proposal by the Director-General of the need to enhance the Governing Body's Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization. We will be making our interventions at an appropriate time.

Zimbabwe fully supports and appreciates the ILO's role in championing the interests of workers, including agitation for social protection in the informal sector. We, however, feel that the concept of decent work should also cover migrant workers as well as those professional and ordinary workers that are being lured from developing countries to work in developed countries on promise of good salaries yet in some instances they get a pittance. The ILO should urgently consider the plight of such workers since they deserve fair treatment.

At the national level, my country is doing the best it can under very difficult circumstances to realize the decent work agenda. We call on the ILO and its constituents to assist us in our endeavours.

Recognizing the importance of the small and medium-scale enterprises in generating employment, my Government set aside \$1 billion (Zimbabwe dollars, that is) towards a revolving fund to advance loans at concessionary interest rates, to the small and medium-sized enterprises and indigenous businesses.

The social partners in Zimbabwe have accepted the wisdom of social dialogue in resolving economic problems. Under the auspices of the tripartite negotiating forum, the social partners have agreed to enter into a social contract. In January this year, the social partners signed a declaration of intent towards a social contract, the goal of which is to create a conducive climate for the conclusion of a social contract as well as finding common ground to tackle the ills besetting our economy for the future benefits of social partners.

In an effort to alleviate poverty in our society, brought about by unwarranted outside interference in our domestic affairs, as a result of our principal decision to achieve social justice through equitable land distribution to landless workers, my Government has welcomed the Jobs for Africa programme and has integrated it into our ongoing poverty alleviation strategies. The main objective of the plan is to prevent irreversible welfare losses for the poor households reeling under the impact of the current economic problems brought about by the denial of decent prices for our primary exports due to the politics at play in the international trading system and partly as a consequence of external manipulation.

We support the Director-General's call for ground rules to be fair in the international trading system. At the centre of it all, we think it is the improvement of the international trading environment, especially in favour of developing countries, since it will help spur economic growth that would create job opportunities for the 1 billion underemployed quoted in the Director-General's Report.

We count on the ILO's activism in this respect and we count on the President and her colleagues to support our endeavour.

Original French: Mr. THYS (representative of the World Confederation of Labour) — In its declaration of principles, the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) asserts that each worker is a human being, a being who is free and responsible, whose dignity is reflected in the fundamental and inalienable rights which must be respected by all, including the State and society.

For the WCL, decent work must ensure dignity. It must be productive and freely chosen. It must ensure an income which allows the worker and his family to live decently and which respects the fundamental rights of workers, offering conditions of work that protect health and ensure adequate social protection.

Decent work, incidentally, is defined in the Preamble of the ILO Constitution. The ILO must promote decent, dignified work. It may not limit itself to reducing the deficit of decent labour. To look at it in another way would not be worthy of an organization such as the ILO. Indeed, the ILO can never accept that workers work in indecent conditions. Its objective must be to eliminate indecent work and not simply to reduce it.

As an international trade union, we must emphasize certain points where we do not share the opinion of the Report. The Report refers to freedom of association rather than trade union freedom, which is the term preferred by workers and their organizations, and to which the Constitution of the ILO refers in its Preamble.

Certain parts of the Report refer too often to civil society rather than to trade union organizations. It promotes codes of conduct and private voluntary initiatives rather than standards with the force of law. It speaks much more of people than of persons, which would lead one to suppose that the latter may be despised at times.

The Report speaks too much of codes of conduct and private voluntary initiatives, without speaking of the involvement or the possible commitment of the ILO to follow this path. The ILO must be proactive and take part in this discussion. The WFL asks the ILO to join in this process in order to avoid the priva-

tization of law. It asks it also to define the framework of the codes of behaviour and of all these private voluntary initiatives and to respond favourably to those employers who solicit its help in the development of such codes or agreements. The International Labour Conference recalls that, according to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Members of the Organization, even where they have not ratified the fundamental Conventions, have the obligation, simply by virtue of belonging to the Organization, to respect, promote and implement, in good faith and in conformity with the Constitution, the principles which apply to the fundamental rights covered by the said Conventions.

Governments are therefore responsible for their application, and there can be no case for creating a register of countries, that undertake voluntarily to comply with the Declaration in free export zones. The WFL cannot accept that an obligation be made into a possibility. The modernization of standards and inspection systems cannot be carried out by means of lowering requirements for application and inspection, nor by undermining what exists.

Our organization favours a programme to modernize the ILO, which opens the door to organizational change, giving a new vigour and dynamism to the ILO which must continue to be based on tripartism but also develop active collaboration with other actors.

Modernization of the ILO implies, amongst other things, that this Organization must be capable of really protecting all workers.

This was the reason for its creation. For the World Federation of Labour, the human being is first and foremost. Economic considerations come later. Respect for human dignity is not negotiable and does not have a price. In the long term, it is not sustainable to think of profit alone. Many studies show that it is economically efficient to respect human dignity.

To modernize the Organization means to seek ways and means of promoting the cause of social justice in today's world. The first phrase of the Constitution is still valid today: "Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice." Social justice cannot exist without full, productive, freely chosen employment.

As the Report notes, it is important to develop a world agenda for employment. Our Organization finds it regrettable that a world conference on employment was reduced to a forum lasting two or three days. By acting thus, the ILO runs the risk of disappointing the international community that appointed it to this task.

The knowledge economy is important, of course, but it only concerns a minority of the world's workers. Certain economists and organizations seem to be fascinated by it and forget that the majority of the workers of the world are in other sectors, particularly in the informal economy.

For the WFL, the social economy is a valid alternative to the creation of decent work for all people throughout the world. If we all want this, its development could contribute to greater social justice in the world.

Original Arabic: Mr. ABDUL-GHAFOUR (Employers' delegate, Iraq) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I am delighted to congratulate the Minister for Labor of the Philippines, Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, on her election to the presidency

of this session of the International Labour Conference. I should also like to congratulate the other Officers of the Conference.

Two years have elapsed since the Director-General's Report *Decent work*. In his present Report the Director-General has added certain ideas and comments, particularly with respect to the decent work deficit, and he outlines the reasons for this deficit.

Nevertheless, all these ideas and comments cannot, in fact, explain the decent work deficit in the economic conditions that have been imposed for over ten years on 15 million people in Iraq. In effect, the iniquitous embargo that has been imposed on Iraq since 1990 has had disastrous and devastating repercussions on the economic infrastructure of my country which, at the end of the 1980s, had attained a high level of development. It is this embargo and this destruction which led to the dismissal of many workers, the reduction in social services stipulated in legislation and the appearance of a multitude of problems for workers. Unfortunately we have not been able to apply all the principles, including gender equality and employment opportunities, that we would have wished. Regrettably, Iraq has lost a great deal of its potential. It has been unable to pursue its goals, deprived of the main tools of production, of equipment for access to modern know-how and technological developments which have evolved so rapidly.

The Iraqi employers, who it is my honour to represent here, would draw the attention of this assembly to the severity of the problems confronting both workers and employers in Iraq today and all the measures intended to paralyse the human and material resources of Iraq through the embargo imposed on it. The Iraqi employers consider that the discussion of decent work and the various challenges that this raises, cannot be undertaken in isolation. All the aspects of the embargo should be considered as one of these principal challenges that calls for an international stand to be taken to reveal the sufferings of the people of Iraq and the devastating consequences of this embargo.

To conclude, I would like to stress that we approve the very sound choice of subject-matter under consideration. However, despite the importance of these subjects for our country, the prime concern of Iraqi workers is the lifting of the embargo. We also wish to draw the attention of workers throughout the world to the situation of the Palestinian workers, who are subject to terrible coercive measures and who are being denied the most basic of human rights, in particular the right to work and the right to move around within their own country. These are arbitrary measures which have resulted in a steep increase in the unemployment rate and the loss of any form of social protection.

Mr. NGUTU (*Minister for Labour, Kenya*) — I congratulate the President, together with the Officers of the Conference, on their well-deserved election to guide the deliberations of this session of the Conference.

The main theme for our discussions during this year's session of the Conference is on a topic entitled: *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. We note that this decent work deficit is clearly expressed in the absence of sufficient employment opportunities, inadequate social protection, the denial of rights at work and shortcomings in social dialogue. It can also be expressed as a measure of "the gap

between the world that we work in and the hopes that people have for a better life".

The Kenyan delegation agrees that there is an urgent need to pursue the goal of decent work in a changing world. As the Director-General clearly points out in his Report, there is profound concern about a global decent work deficit of immense proportion reflecting the diverse inequalities of our society.

My delegation therefore agrees that unless we tackle this deficit, the goal of social justice will remain beyond our grasp.

In view of the ongoing liberalization and globalization of the world economy, the Kenyan delegation believes that it was timely for the ILO to take measures aimed at securing the basic rights of workers, thus helping reduce the decent work deficit as a global challenge. We agree that decent work should mean productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate income with adequate social protection. We also agree that such decent work should also mean sufficient work in the sense that all should have full access to income-earning opportunities. We therefore welcome the Director-General's intention of achieving ILO's primary goal of securing decent work for people everywhere through the implementation of our four strategic objectives and eight InFocus programmes. This decent work agenda will further be achieved through effective implementation of the strategic programme and budget which the ILO adopted recently, and which establishes targets and performance indicators, and hence enabling the Organization to measure progress and be accountable to its constituents.

In our efforts to promote decent work through the promotion of ILO's labour standards, Kenya has ratified and fully implemented 49 ILO Conventions, including seven out of eight core labour standards. These are: the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

At present, the Kenyan Government has embarked on a major review of our labour laws with the aim of ensuring harmony between our domestic labour legislation and the various international labour Conventions which we have ratified.

At this juncture, I wish to make brief comments regarding the various other items that are scheduled for discussion during this year's session of the Conference.

My delegation notes that the item on safety and health in agriculture is scheduled for a second and final discussion during this session with a view to adopting both a Convention and a Recommendation. Despite the agricultural sector being one of the most hazardous in both developing and industrialized countries, it tends to be omitted from the occupational safety and health standards of many countries. It is in this respect, therefore, that the proposed new standards on safety and health in agriculture are welcomed to set the framework upon which national policies on occupational safety and health in the sector could be developed.

We also welcome the first discussion on the item on promotion of cooperatives during this session of the

Conference. Cooperatives are perceived as a means for their members to achieve common economic and social goals in all countries, yet the ILO does not appear to have any comprehensive international labour standard in this area.

In Kenya today, we have 9,000 cooperatives with a membership of 4.8 million and an output of K.Sh.50 billion (or US\$750 million), which accounts for 45 per cent of the national GDP. It is therefore important that we should have a common position on how best to create a favourable environment in our respective countries for our cooperatives to grow.

The item on social security — Issues, challenges and prospects is also scheduled for a general discussion during this session of the Conference. We note that the objective of the discussion will be to establish an ILO vision of social security that is rooted in the basic principles and how it responds to new issues and challenges facing social security. Such a discussion may also lead to the possible updating or revision of the existing standards. Many developing countries are experiencing difficulties related to the management and governance of social security systems, with a concomitant erosion of participants' confidence in the viability of the systems.

In Kenya today, our social security system consists of the National Social Security Fund as the leading social security institution since 1966. Other players in this area include the civil service pension scheme, the local authorities' superannuation schemes and other provident fund schemes offered by parastatal organizations and private companies.

Finally, I would like to mention here that the ILO as a tripartite organization has a very special and unique role to play in the promotion of social justice generally in the world of today, which has become so interdependent. It is against this background that the Kenyan delegation makes a special appeal to peace-loving nations of the world to continue supporting the ILO in its noble task of promoting social justice and improving the quality of life for all the peoples of the world, hence reducing the decent work deficit.

Original Thai: Mr. PHODHIVORAKHUN (*Employers' delegate, Thailand*) —On behalf of Thai employers, I wish to extend my warmest greetings to all those participating in the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I am glad that I come from a country where labour relations are relatively amicable with few unrests and disputes. While conflict and differences of opinion between employers and workers naturally exist, we can often reach compromises and reconciliation. In fact, employers and workers in Thailand have been cooperating closely in the following areas: promotion of cooperation between the employers and workers to forestall disputes and unrests; cooperation in promoting better safety, health and welfare in the workplaces; a campaign for the establishment of an independent safety institute; and support for a scheme to extend social security coverage to include enterprises with one worker, by gradually lowering the number of workers from ten to five and finally to one. This position has been adopted by the employers' side, considering the fact that even with the present minimum number of workers of ten required for an enterprise to register with the social security system, there is still a large number of small enterprises failing to comply. To lower the number immediately to one would be an

ineffective exercise. Employers and workers have also been cooperating to support jointly a government scheme to provide poor people with medical treatment at the cost of 30 baht or approximately 17 US cents per visit.

Thai employers have been promoting a scheme for lifelong learning for workers, taking advantage of the new legislation that extends compulsory education to 12 years. We are setting up a system to enable workers to upgrade their education through what is known as "schools in factories". This scheme is being implemented in several industrial establishments and it is expanding.

Thai employers have worked closely with the Government in various matters to promote safety, health and welfare of workers. Through the various tripartite committees, employers' representatives participate in drafting, amending and designing legislation, regulations, measures, with a view to obtaining fairness, adequate welfare, safety and protection of health for the workers. We do not always agree with the Government, but we often arrive at practical compromises. We are gratified that the Government has always consulted us on major policy issues. Thus, our relationship with the Thai Government has been very cordial.

We believe that Thai labour laws at this stage of Thailand's economic and social development are adequate to provide security, welfare and safety for our workers to have a decent living. The level of income of the workers is, of course, a contentious issue. The minimum wage is adjusted upward almost annually by a tripartite national wage committee. There have always been grumbles on both sides that adjustment is too much or too little. Thai labour laws have been constantly under review and revised with the aim of granting more and better benefits to the workers.

Turning to the question of women and child workers, we wish to inform the Conference that we have a little problem in this area. Women are treated as equal to men in the workplace. They receive the same wages and fringe benefits as men. Being the weaker sex, women are, in fact treated better than men. We often say that women, as the bearers of life should always be well treated. Besides getting the same rights and benefits as men, women receive the same consideration for promotion to higher positions in their workplaces. You will find in Thailand that many women are in supervisory and managerial positions in places where men work alongside them. As regards child labour, Thailand has conformed with the various ILO Conventions on child labour as evidenced by the provision of the Labour Protection Act, 1998. In fact, most organized enterprises in Thailand have set the minimum age for employment at 18. There might be isolated cases in small and family businesses where children aged 14-15 are hired to do light work, mostly during the school recess, to earn extra income for their school expenses.

I now wish to offer a few comments on the Report of the Director-General of the ILO. In general, we agree with his observations and suggestions. We go along with his suggestion that everyone deserves a decent living, which implies a reasonable income, job security, opportunity for advancement, for example. I would like to point out, however, that there is no standard measure for a decent living as it varies according to, for instance, local circumstances, culture, level of social and economic development.

I suggest that an attempt to establish guidelines would be risky. I believe that one of the priorities of every government in the world is to promote better living standards for its citizens. Therefore, things should be allowed to evolve and develop gradually.

I believe that one way to promote a decent living for the people is through poverty alleviation, an important policy of the ILO. The ILO should make efforts in this direction. The Director-General has mentioned in his Report greater cooperation and coordination with other agencies within the United Nations system. The ILO may immobilize resources and expertise from such agencies as UNDP, UNIDO, the World Bank and the FAO, for example, to help with rural development projects, which will contribute to poverty alleviation. Microcredit schemes which, I understand, are being promoted by the World Bank are another means to increase the income of the poor.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-AYYAR (*Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Minister of Electricity and Water, Kuwait*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! It is a great pleasure for me to take part in this session's work, which brings together workers, employers and governments of member States of this illustrious Organization that aims to establish global peace, social justice and prosperity for all people in line with its Constitution of 1919 and the Philadelphia Declaration and in line with the International standards and resolutions that have been adopted.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the President and her Vice-Presidents and wish them every success in their work.

I would like to welcome the Report of the Director-General on *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. Decent work covers all forms of social protection. It meets the aspirations, not only of this Organization, but also of all peoples worldwide. Perhaps I could make the following comments on the Report.

Firstly, decent work, provides us with an appropriate framework for an integrated policy combining the strategic aims of the right to work, employment, social protection and social dialogue.

Secondly, the deficit of decent work is an obstacle, hindering development nationally in all our countries.

Thirdly, it is extremely important that we increase productivity and combat discrimination, unemployment and poverty which are the greatest obstacles to social development and the development of humanity.

Fourthly, it is important that we create the necessary conditions to combat the adverse effects of globalization such as unemployment, falls in income and cuts in social allowances.

Fifthly, decent work has to be translated by the ILO into practical programmes and the ILO must assist the respective States in implementing their own development policies. This is in the interest of all levels of society and member States. The Organization also needs to assist governments and employers' and workers' organizations in this area.

Sixthly, I would urge the Organization to increase the participation of the Arab countries, in technical cooperation programmes and pursue its cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization.

The Kuwaiti Government has done its best to ensure there is decent work for all its citizens in line with the Constitution and its own legislation.

I would also like to make the following comments. The Kuwaiti Government guarantees its citizens decent work in the public and private sectors in order to combat the scourge of unemployment.

We have no forced labour, in conformity with one of the main principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We have also ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). My Government has also provided financial aid for the most underprivileged people in our country who are not able to work. Almost 15,000 families in Kuwait benefit from that assistance.

The social security law covers 100 per cent of workers in the public sector and the oil industry. The Government also gives special assistance and allowances to the elderly, the disabled, young offenders, orphans, etc. It supports civil society, trade unions and cooperatives in Kuwait.

In addition, Kuwait provides almost a million jobs for immigrant workers coming from Asian and Arab countries in the public sector, construction and domestic service. All immigrant workers enjoy very good working conditions.

Allow me to conclude by thanking all member States of the ILO for their willingness to reconsider the situation of Arab workers in Palestine. I call on the ILO to examine the disastrous situation of Palestinian workers. They are suffering from the worst kinds of exaction as well as unemployment and violation of their rights. I think all the people and countries of the world aspire to dignity and brotherhood. This requires a lot of effort as well as solidarity and cooperation among all of the social partners who laid the foundations Of the ILO over 80 years ago.

Original Spanish: Mr. BERNIS (*Government delegate, Paraguay*) — My first words are words of congratulations to President A. Sto. Tomas of the Republic of the Philippines. I should like to wish her every success in the task assigned to her by this Conference, namely, the task of leading this great meeting. It is an honour to represent the Republic of Paraguay on this occasion and to inform you that we are here to contribute to the best of our ability towards the many and complex problems in the world of work. This includes labour relations and social security in this increasingly globalized world and yet it also means that we have many problems in our countries in terms of development.

We must confront economic and social development by seeking solutions to enable us all to find the longed-for progress and economic and social development, and to see to it that this is not only for developed countries of the first world.

This challenge that we are facing from the tremendous changes in the world today should not be to the detriment of one of the key factors in our countries today, namely employment, which is essential to our peoples' economic and social stability.

We must find proper solutions so that we do not remain on the fringes of development. Countries like Paraguay, with mainly agricultural production, find that the doors of the international markets are closed to us, and we cease to be competitive because of the subsidies or the internal assistance that the developed countries give to the agricultural sector of their own country. For this reason, we feel that studies must be

carried out to determine how we can maintain development and the best welfare of our people. For this reason, we support most firmly the viewpoints of the Director-General of the International Labour Office, advocating that decent work should be a paradigm.

Paraguay, that is fighting ferociously for a higher level of social and economic development, continues to give priority to all work and labour-related issues. For this reason measures have been taken to extend social dialogue among all sectors of the government, employers and workers, in order to better confront the current challenges, consolidating our own democracy and pre-empting conflicts that could be detrimental to the growth and modernization of our country.

We have therefore created the tripartite Labour Council for Social Dialogue in order to look into social objectives.

We shall continue steadfastly along this path so that the decision of all parties concerned will come together to reach favourable solutions in an attempt to make employment the *leitmotiv* of our national policy. We are determined to apply the standards of the International Labour Organization that we have ratified.

This year, for example, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), is now in force in our country, and three intergovernmental committees have been set up to deal with labour standards in border areas with high migrant flows. This is our first six-monthly session as President of the MERCOSUR and we have convened a meeting of the four member States of MERCOSUR and the two associate members to look at the themes of this Conference and to reach a consensus, particularly with respect to social dialogue and better labour protection. For example, we are looking at the proposed Convention on safety and health in agriculture here. This proposal, which is very ambitious and which contains the standards of highly developed countries, is one which we will endeavour to adapt to our own national circumstances because we want to provide the best possible safety and health conditions for agriculture, which is our foremost national activity. We very much hope to find the financial and technological means for this Convention to come into force.

Finally, I should like to say that we are grateful to the International Labour Organization for the technical cooperation that we have received, and the realistic guidance that the Director-General has given to enable us to come together in the Office of Geneva and in our regional offices to find support for our economic and social development in Paraguay.

Original Arabic: Mr. EL-NETSHEH (*representative, Palestine*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! On behalf of the delegation of my country, Palestine, I would like to congratulate the President, on her election to this session and wish her every success in her work.

It is my pleasure to convey to you the greetings of the Palestinian people, resisting and struggling in order to lay the foundations of peace under the leadership of Mr. Arafat. I convey to you the greetings of the families of the martyrs who fall every day, of workers who die every day. I bring you the greetings of the families of hostages and detainees among the Palestinian workers. I bring you greetings from workers who die every day in their factories and on

their farms. I bring you the greetings of the families of orphans, and of the martyred baby Iman Hejo and the martyred child Mohamed El-Durra.

I have come here from Palestine, from a country in a state of siege. I have come alone; there is no Palestinian delegation. The Director-General's Report is entitled *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge* I welcome this title, which is very important because it concerns the rights of workers, basic rights at work, and we are grateful to the Director-General for having chosen this as the subject of this year's Conference.

We aspire to peace throughout the Middle East. The Director-General's Report concerns, as I have just said, decent conditions at work and workers' fundamental rights. Still; we have to examine carefully the situation and tragic and disastrous circumstances of Palestinian workers, who are being subjected to the very worst exactions, contrary to the objectives and principles which presided over the establishment of the International Labour Organization. Indeed, one of the objectives of the ILO is to protect workers' rights in all four corners of the world.

This is the order of the Conference, which I respect. I am asking for international law to be respected. We are talking here of international law, international ethics, the principles which presided over the establishment of the International Labour Organization. I will not take orders from an occupying authority which is breaching and violating these fundamental principles at work. I come from a country where innocent people are being killed, where the workers are being repressed, where workers are dying in their factories; where they are dying at their workplace. I am talking about those workers, not about other workers.

I convey to you the greetings from our peace-loving people, from our children, from our workers. I call on you and urge you to send urgent missions to our country to meet the families of the martyrs and prisoners. I am not talking only about workers. I am also talking about employers. Is it possible, is it permissible that the Palestinian delegation should be the only one which is not being allowed to come here?

I would like to thank you for your attention, and I would like to thank you for having supported peace, which is a cause endorsed by the Palestinian people.

Original German: Mr. NORDMANN (*Secretary of State, Directorate of Labour, Federal Department of Economy, Switzerland*) — I would like to congratulate the President of the International Labour Conference on her election, and I would also like to thank the Director-General and the Office for an interesting and stimulating Report which, unfortunately, appeared rather late. We would have liked to circulate this Report within our administration and thereby increase its public relations value, which is one objective of the Office. We hope that in future the Director-General's Report will appear at least one month before the Conference.

The Swiss delegation is impressed by the openness with which the Report addresses politically explosive problems and we hope that through open discussion we will find answers to the questions that have been raised.

The Report correctly analyses the ILO's challenges in the age of globalization and shows some courageous solutions. It is correct that the decent work flag of the ILO is being perceived more and more. But it is

also true that the thrust of the ILO troops who are bearing this flag should be defined more concretely. That requires detailed work and follow-up to every major initiative. Only then will the ILO be taken seriously by its partners.

In order to achieve the ambitious objectives set out in the Report, we need funds and partners. We support the Director-General in building new bridges, namely to NGOs and to private business. Only if we all work together and take advantage of the knowledge, personal dedication and financial strength of everyone concerned will we be successful. Here the International Labour Organization can learn from its sister organizations. Here it goes without saying that the tripartite structure of the ILO must be further strengthened and developed. What is important for Switzerland is the following three areas in particular.

First of all, the development of an employment and development strategy. We welcome the global employment forum, which Switzerland supports financially. The GEF should be a starting point for strengthening the ILO in socio-economic issues. This research work should be intensified and publicized as prominently as possible. An empirically and theoretically solid foundation of decent work will enable the ILO to use its decent work agenda as a platform, both internally and externally, and that is my second point. Externally it will be easier for the ILO to perform its natural leading role in the areas of labour standards, trade and development. This has been the ILO's mandate for some time, not just since Copenhagen and Singapore. Specifically, the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization must be strengthened if other organizations concerned, such as the WTO, are going to participate in its work. The Office must also submit serious economic studies. Now, if the ILO takes over this leadership role, it will make an important contribution to ensuring that the destructive conflict between slogans and truncheons is replaced by pragmatic solution-oriented discussions. Thirdly, internally, a strengthening and realignment of standard-setting activities is necessary. Switzerland welcomes this. We would like to congratulate the Director-General on his call for a reform of the standards-monitoring apparatus. Standards monitoring must become more transparent and tougher. The same also applies to the regrouping of standards and the relevance of the standards that are drawn up, thanks to the integrated approach.

At least equally important, on the other hand, is the ILO's commitment to new instruments. Whether it is soft law or hard law is an academic discussion. What is important is the results, the creation of as many decent jobs as possible. And here voluntary private initiatives or socially compatible investments often do better than the sometimes barely ratified Conventions. That is why we support investigations on these initiatives and their connection with the decent work agenda. We support an active role of the ILO to ensure that these initiatives correspond to the decent work agenda. We also support technical cooperation from the ILO in order to implement the initiatives and, in addition, an active advisory role for the ILO towards undertakings seeking advice.

Finally, we also support the idea of promoting the Declaration in free trade zones, for example by means of a register and through technical cooperation in order to support and monitor its implementation.

This may seem far-reaching. However, that will only be the case for those people who are afraid to look at daily reality. Here labour standards are governed bilaterally by business interests and NGOs. The ILO runs the risk of being penalized for arriving too late. If we want to prevent this, we must shoulder our responsibility as ILO Members. I therefore urge you to adopt the Director-General's proposal, so that together we can do justice to the ILO's historic mandate.

Original French: Mr. SÂRBU (Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, Romania) — I would like to congratulate the President of the Conference upon her election and wish her good luck with her mandate. I have the pleasure of addressing this international forum where problems relating to the world of work have always been examined seriously and responsibly. Social justice, which is the goal of the ILO assumes a new dimension at the beginning of this millennium. One cannot speak of social justice without decent work. It is clear that decent work and a reduction in unemployment, which are dealt with in a sensitive and relevant manner in the Director-General's Report, should be a universal goal. This would result in the development of both society and the individual, and the harmonious joining of social and economic policies, as well as the increasingly active role of social partners representing effective steps to reaching this goal.

The Government of Romania has expressed its wish to renew economic growth and the struggle against poverty and unemployment. The principle of a balance between the imperatives of a market economy and that of protection and social solidarity are the foundation of our programme. Economic growth is the *sine qua non* for resolving social problems, including the most serious problems, such as unemployment. In this context, the objectives of reform in the field of employment follow two directions. The long-term objective is the constitution of an effective framework for social policy capable of solving problems of the modern economy in the process of evolution.

The main issues concern reducing dependence on payments in kind, the guarantee of increased mobility in the labour market and the need to prepare for the risks and problems inherent to a genuine market system.

At the same time, we must take into consideration certain short-term aspects which call for immediate intervention. Part of this is related to the consequences of economic restructuring and the increased costs of social insurance which affect the development of the country's economy and lead to the unacceptable and perilous generation of a 'grey economy'. In Romania, our strategy in the field of employment is an action plan, which will be developed in light of the current situation in Romania and, take into consideration the short-term and long-term effects of industrial restructuring as well as define priority measures for increasing employment.

The Government would like to apply economic measures to stimulate job creation during the continuation of the process of privatisation, so that unemployment falls below 8-9 per cent in the year 2004. From an economic point of view, we will also stimulate investment, including public investment and, from a social point of view, raise the minimum wage, with a relative reduction in unemployment benefits.

Unfortunately, in recent years, we have encouraged compensatory wages granted to those voluntarily leaving non-performing jobs. The present government will renounce these measures which have a devastating effect on an economy in the process of being restructured. We will re-direct our limited resources towards small and medium-sized enterprises to create jobs for the unemployed. Bearing in mind the financial resources available, we will train, retrain and reorient the labour force. We will also establish programmes for vocational readaptation in the light of forecasts concerning structural changes in the national economy.

In the social field, we have promoted a series of regulatory measures which aim to improve the protection of the rights of each citizen. In this context, I would like to mention the draft law concerning the minimum wage, the struggle against social exclusion, stimulation of employment and the labour force, the social protection of jobseekers and equality between men and women. Experience, so far, has shown that good governance can be achieved only through the promotion of a genuine social dialogue, which is a key element for a democracy, and a flexible instrument for accomplishing economic and social goals.

In this spirit, the Government of Romania has given particular attention to dialogue with social partners by negotiating and concluding a social agreement February last. It was the first such agreement signed by the Government and all of the trade union and employer associations at national level. Moreover, last week, the same partners, with one exception, signed a protocol in the field of social security legislation. They committed themselves to not asking for changes in this legislative framework for four years, providing that social dialogue is the path to political and social stability, which is so necessary during this period of transition.

As regards this relationship with the ILO, the Government of Romania considers that it has a very important role in supporting and promoting decent work. The technical cooperation programmes is one of the most appropriate means which the Organization should develop, and which should be aimed at stimulating employment, creating small and medium-sized enterprises and improving working conditions.

Original Arabic: Mr. LOUHAIIDIA (*Government delegate, Algeria*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! First of all, on my own behalf, and on behalf of the Algerian delegation, I would like to congratulate the President of this session upon her election. I am convinced that thanks to her wisdom and competency, we will achieve some very positive results.

I am going to be making some comments about the Director-General's Report. That is why, first of all, I would like to start by saying how important we think this Report and its two dimensions, social and economic is.

The Report in question comes within an economic and social context characterised by economic and technological globalisation, whereas social development does not meet the ambitions of people, especially those suffering from natural disasters, conflicts and poverty, which particularly threaten developing countries, especially African countries.

Starting from this, the employment problem is particularly acute at a time when the main concern of any

citizen is to find decent work — not only in developing countries but in all countries of the world.

Given that employment is the pivot of all governmental programmes implemented in Algeria, we believe that it is our duty to direct all of our efforts towards meeting the needs of our population in the field of employment and the struggle against unemployment. I believe this is linked to reactivating investments and to the influx of capital.

Guaranteeing decent work for all remains our prime concern because we believe that work constitutes human dignity. That is why Algeria is making a great effort to guarantee the dignity of each citizen by ensuring employment through the competent services, within the framework of a programme established by our government and aimed at combating poverty and ensuring the integration of the main categories of the population, and in particular, young people. It is clear that the search for achievement of decent work should not overshadow the conditions under which such work is carried out. In this regard, we can indicate that Algeria had ratified all the international conventions concerning decent work, the most recent of which is the worst form of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Algeria's legislation in the field of labour establishes the principles of conditions relating to health and safety in the workplace and ensures the promotion of social dialogue. That is why the Algerian legislator has considered the right to decent work to be a human right which ensures the respect of a worker's dignity; this same legislation guarantees consultation and dialogue between the conditions of employment and employment whilst observing the ILO's standards.

I would like to take this opportunity to deal with some of the issues on this agenda, particularly issues relating to social security because we believe that this initiative is worthy of interest, given the important role played by social security within society for alleviating social problems, particularly poverty, which exists in economies subjected to restructuring programmes on a social level. It should also be noted that the survival of social security is an important challenge within a context of worsening unemployment, which is an obstacle to global development.

Despite all these difficulties, social security services in Algeria have been able to cover more than 85 per cent of Algeria's population in all sectors. To this regard, we can indicate that Algeria has organised weeks during which all the social partners have participated with a view of drafting the foundations for modernizing social security.

The proposals contained in the Report relating to social security and the debates that they will lead to, will form the basis of the work on consultations between all of the social partners affected by the survival and modernization of social security.

Current economic and social changes require new mechanisms to meet the demands of the world of work and to guarantee the respect of working conditions, rights and obligations in the workplace. We have to make every effort to reduce the decent work deficit.

We are pinning great hopes on this session of the Conference, and we hope it will enable us to be successful in the area of decent work.

I would not like to finish my intervention without recalling, once again, of the precarious and dramatic

situation being experienced by workers and employers in the occupied Arab territories. We urge our Organization to devote all its efforts to providing the technical assistance required to reduce the effects of this tragedy. I thank you for your attention and wish you every success in your work.

Original Russian: Mr. NAGIYEV (Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Azerbaijan) — I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to speak before this important forum, the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to emphasize the importance of this session and the reports submitted to us on the possibility of achieving decent work in our countries and also on the application of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Over the past two years the Government of Azerbaijan has implemented several measures aimed at establishing a qualitatively new system of labour administration and social protection, and social and labour relations corresponding to international standards and norms.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, even before the adoption in 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work consistently applied a policy which respected, recognized and promoted the principles set out in the Declaration. As part of this policy, Azerbaijan has ratified 54 ILO Conventions, including seven core Conventions.

The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has on numerous occasions referred to our achievements in applying international labour standards in national legislation and practice.

In order to meet the requirements of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, our Parliament has ratified the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). A great deal of work was also done to prepare for the ratification of two other Conventions, the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129).

Much attention was paid also to the ratification of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). Under our national laws, no form of forced labour is allowed, with the exception of specially stipulated cases. Azerbaijan thus has a legal basis which precludes the possibility of forced labour. The resources for the prevention of forced labour include legislative standards adopted by the corresponding organs and a state labour inspection system, which works through the Labour Inspectorate, a part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Of course, the ratification of such important documents promotes the further improvement of our national legislation and its conformity with international standards and principles. It is also an important stimulus for the implementation of reforms in the socio-economic sphere.

However, these profound transformations are seriously hampered, as the Armenian aggression continues. There are about a million refugees and forcibly displaced people, and 20,000 families have lost their breadwinners as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. There are 8,000 invalids, and there has been a loss of 300,000 jobs in the occupied territories.

In spite of all these difficulties, in Azerbaijan we are successfully introducing a market economy

and broad reforms in the fields of labour and social security.

Effective macroeconomic and regional programmes and specific measures such as quotas, support for self-employment and the creation of farms are aimed at providing work for the most needy citizens, including refugees, the forcibly displaced and young war invalids. In our republic we have several programmes aimed at providing temporary employment abroad for specialists in various fields. The development of market relations, socio-economic reforms and integration in the world economy have laid the foundations for the establishment and improvement of the necessary normative legislative base. We have drawn up a draft Employment Act and submitted it to our Parliament, and we have adopted an Act on Labour Migration. In recent years, one of the basic themes in the new political reform has been to strengthen poverty-reduction measures. A new strategy has been drawn up in which a great deal of importance is given to targeting social protection. It also defines other measures to reduce poverty. Our country is paying particular attention to reform in the field of pensions and social assistance. The Government now has before it and is considering a concept of pension reform. To improve national legislation in this field, draft laws have been drawn up on pension benefits and individual pension accounts, and the Act on Social Insurance has been amended. Cooperation between Azerbaijan and the ILO takes place on the basis of two-year programmes drawn up by the ILO and the three social partners. For 2001-2002, the parties supported the concept of decent labour as set out in the documents of the 88th Session. This programme provides for cooperation with the ILO along four strategic avenues: promoting basic labour principles and rights, the development of employment, social protection and social dialogue. I would like to express thanks to the ILO experts who in 2001 helped us hold our first tripartite seminar on the culture of social dialogue and meetings for our employers and trade unions.

We are making democratic transformations, and we will continue to cooperate with the ILO in trying to achieve social justice, to eradicate poverty and to achieve full employment for citizens.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-HOSNI (Minister of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training, Oman) — In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the All Merciful! May I begin by greeting you on behalf of the Government of Qaboos bin Said Al Said and convey to you to his best wishes for the success of this meeting.

I am delighted to congratulate the President of the Conference on her election. We are fully convinced that with her knowledge and competence and in cooperation with her Vice-Presidents, she will lead us along the road to success.

I should like to inform this Conference that the Government of the Sultanate of Oman has decided to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the necessary measures to eliminate these forms of labour. This conforms with Decree 34/4 that has been passed in the Sultanate of Oman.

Decent work which is to increase production and competence and to increase the welfare of all the population to guarantee social protection is, to a certain extent, the best possible path for development. For

this decent work to become a fact in our country, which is, like the rest of the world, becoming increasingly globalized, additional efforts must be made. We have to close ranks in order to promote constructive social dialogue. In so doing, we will reach a better balance between economic and social development.

Growth and new standards in communications and transport can only serve to promote production and management, but we need better interaction between the various aspects of labour and the numerous ways in which these structures function.

Social welfare is one of the fundamental pivots of development. To give protection to the members of the working society and to their families, to protect them against all the vicissitudes of our economic life is essential. This can also consolidate solidarity amongst our people because man is the linchpin of development.

The Sultanate of Oman would like to draw particular attention to its belief in decent work and has demonstrated this through the adaption of various forms of legislation, in the hope that this will give security and safety to all people at work so that men and women in the Sultanate will be able to live in decency and prosperity.

The terrible situation of Arab workers and of employers in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories calls for the international community to take action in order to halt this deteriorating situation, particularly for the workers. We are convinced that peace is vital. We hope that one day peace and security will reign in that part of the world, that man will be able to live in that land in safety, free from poverty and the terrible aspects of war. We hope that the ILO will be a sentinel for the security on Earth.

Original French: Mr. ZAFERA (*Government delegate, Madagascar*) — Dr Alice Rasoamanjarimalala, Minister of the Civil Service, Employment and Social Affairs who took part in the 89th Session of the Conference last week, has had to leave Geneva on official business, and has asked me to read out the speech she prepared in relation to the discussion of the Director-General's Report.

It is truly an honour and a privilege for me to address this august assembly of the International Labour Conference.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election. Under their skilful guidance, I am convinced that this Session of the Conference will be a success. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General for his excellent Report and for the work carried out so far.

Major steps forward have been made since the 87th Session of the Conference, during which we discussed the goal of decent work and what that means: fundamental rights at work; employment; social protection and social dialogue.

I would particularly like to thank the ILO for the consistent support it has given my country in the follow-up to the Declaration. Cooperation between the missions sent to Madagascar and the Government has been extremely fruitful.

Following on from the personal commitment entered into by His Excellency, President Ratsiraka at the Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000, the decree ratifying the Worst Forms of

Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), has now been signed and a programme for its implementation will be carried out together with the ILO.

At government level this commitment has meant that an appropriate budget has been given to the Ministry of Employment. The mission led by Mr Delhomenie in March 2001 has also allowed us to define the problems and the action that needs to be taken in order to eliminate forced labour.

We entirely endorse the idea that there is a decent work deficit in the world. It is particularly evident in developing countries like our own. All the different aspects of decent work are inextricably linked, but we believe that the issue of the enjoyment of fundamental rights has to be seen in terms of jobs, and must take into account the informal sector. At least as things stand at the moment, only wage earners enjoy the benefit of social welfare and relative fulfilment of their fundamental rights. Few of them take part in social dialogue.

There is no doubt that in this context, women and children are the first to suffer. That is why Madagascar feels that employment has a key and urgently-needed role to play in reducing poverty.

We welcome the technical assistance provided by the ILO as a result of agreements reached in the two previous sessions of the Conference for the three other priority areas: our national employment policy; the extension of social welfare provision and the strengthening of social dialogue.

I would like to reiterate our desire to see the activities carried out in that regard target specifically the people who are excluded from the current system. While we recognize that this will not be easy, as a Madagascan proverb says, where there's a will, there's a way.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-HUSSAINI (*Government delegate, Yemen*) — In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful! It is a pleasure and an honour to speak on behalf of the delegation of Yemen at this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would like to express my country's satisfaction with the work carried out by this Organization, in its efforts to establish the principles and the values of its Constitution and core Conventions, and the role it has played to bring nations closer together since it was founded in 1919.

The International Labour Organization has for many years carried out a tremendous range of activities. As the Director-General's Report indicates, this has led to the development of a vision for the future concerning decent work and respect for basic human rights, especially those relating to employment and a reasonable standard of living. That vision also includes the follow-up to ratifications of Conventions, together with their implementation at the national and international level, as well as assistance given by the ILO for the pursuit of programmes relating to labour standards.

We welcome these developments, and I would like to thank the Director-General for giving a human face to these issues. Whatever culture, country or continent they come from, all men are brothers. Consequently, peace and prosperity are inextricably linked to development and human rights.

We appreciate the Organization's role in highlighting the problems of developing countries, and in

discussing their problems in international and regional forums. We welcome its efforts to establish the foundations of decent work in developing countries, in which problems such as poverty, low economic growth and a lack of education constitute huge barriers to the realization of the noble objective of ensuring decent work for all, which will in turn guarantee freedom and dignity. The attention given by the ILO to the problems of developing countries is a factor in helping the international community to understand those problems and to find solutions.

Yemen wishes to help the ILO to attain its objectives and we were among the first countries to ratify the core Conventions referred to in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted at the 86th Session in 1998. Our Constitution guarantees social and political rights to all citizens, so that they may enjoy the freedom of association and the democratic activities of civil society. This reflects the policies of our country, respecting as we do local, public and international opinion.

In the last few months Yemen has taken new measures to reinforce democracy and to increase popular participation. The first local elections allowing regions to have a certain amount of control over social and economic development have taken place. The success of these measures depends on our ability to combat the scourges of poverty and unemployment, to raise educational standards and to ensure lasting participation in social and economic activities. These are issues which are a real challenge to us today and for which we require effective assistance to enable us to keep up with the globalizing world of information and technology. We need to restructure our economy if we are to be able to compete in the global market place. Globalization has created new possibilities for international relations, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and the exchange of information between nations: yet in its current form it constitutes a barrier to our development, since a balance of interests and benefits has yet to be achieved. That is why the ILO's efforts to offset the negative aspects of globalization and to lessen its damaging impact on the informal sector, women, children and immigrants must lead to the development of a coherent vision to combat unemployment, crime, poverty and serious diseases, so that the gains of globalization can be shared by all, in accordance with the aims of this Organization.

As the President of the Conference has indicated, we are looking towards a new world order of peace and friendship amongst nations. Yet in spite of this, acts of aggression continue to be carried out by Israel in the occupied territories in Palestine, the Golan Heights and the south of Lebanon. Innocent lives have been lost, people have been denied the right to work. This situation must be brought to an end, and the ILO needs to assume its responsibilities in this regard.

My country calls for an end to the blockade which has caused the suffering of the Iraqi people for the past ten years.

We have a very long agenda, including new standards on safety and health in agriculture, cooperatives and social security. Social security has become increasingly important in view of the need to offset unemployment and a shortage in social welfare provision. My country supports the development of these new standards which take into account the characteristics of individual countries.

I would like to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election. We wish the President every success in her work and we look forward to meeting her at future sessions when we hope the objectives for decent work and a decent life for all people throughout the world will have been attained.

Original Arabic: Mr. ABBAS (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Iraq) — In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I wish this session of the Conference every success in its work.

In the Report of the 87th Session of the ILC, the Director-General examined many important ideas. In his new Report, entitled *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, he reports on the achievements made over the last two years.

The Director-General states that inequality in different societies is the basic reason for the deficit of decent work. However, while it is sometimes due to internal factors in our societies, in other cases it is due to external factors, for instance the total embargo imposed on Iraq. I would like to point out that Iraq before 1990 and the embargo had developed programmes, plans and national legislation precisely in order to reduce the deficit of decent work. The effort had been fruitful, increasing job opportunities for all Iraqi citizens and promoting social protection for all categories.

However, the constant attacks and the embargo imposed in Iraq since 1990 have led to an imbalance between labour supply and demand and also hampered the efforts of the State in the area of social security and social welfare, which have had a negative impact on our society and the economy in particular.

I agree with the Director-General as regards many of the ideas he sets out but there are some points I would like to focus on. Mention is made of achieving gender equality. That cannot always be achieved for a number of reasons including the way society views women's rights and problems, especially those of working women. There are also external reasons, for instance the embargo on Iraq, whose first victims are women workers.

The embargo has undermined the world of labour. This unfair embargo also imposes severe conditions on workers, employers and the various economic sectors in Iraq and has paralysed the import-export sector. However, Iraq has always done its best to guarantee international labour standards and the principle of equality in its labour legislation.

In this era of globalization, we need to examine its adverse effects and re-examine issues such as social security, welfare, health care, and the effect globalization has on them. In several countries, globalization has had an impact on social policy, especially on social security programmes, and also collective bargaining, and all efforts by governments to achieve social justice and reduce the gap between social classes.

Everyone is entitled to a dignified life and decent work. But this terrible embargo on Iraq conflicts with these principles and fundamental labour rights. The main victims are innocent children, women and workers. It is an embargo which spares no one and it is something which I believe the international community should react to strongly, taking a clear stance against its very principle.

I call on the international community and the ILO in particular to bring pressure to bear in order to end

the embargo, which imposes an intolerable injustice on the Iraqi people.

We also need to look at the tragic situation affecting Palestinian workers, who are suffering from the terrorist practices and exactions of the Israeli occupying forces. The violation of human rights and basic labour rights is continuing in Israel and those practices must be stopped immediately. The ILO must give all possible support and assistance to the Palestinian workers.

We would like to thank once again all who have helped us in our hour of need.

The PRESIDENT (Mr. PARROT) — I would like to remind the delegates that while these are not necessarily in order, there will be a Special Sitting to deal with the situation of the occupied Arab territories I would just like to remind the delegates on that because many delegates have taken more than five minutes and this takes time over other delegates that are coming.

Mr. MAMMADOV (*Employers' delegate, Azerbaijan*) — Let me extend to this session of the Conference the greetings of the National Confederation of Azerbaijan Entrepreneurs' Associations. I express my appreciation to the organizers of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, and wish this session of the Conference every success.

For the period of its activity, the National Confederation has organized the internal structure to correspond to the international norms of the employers' unions. The Azerbaijani Entrepreneurs' Confederation (AEC) has extended and now unites more than 650 entrepreneurial (employers') structures.

Within the social partnership, the AEC cooperates with its partners, the Azerbaijan Republic Cabinet of Ministers and the Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation, and especially with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population representing the Azerbaijan Government. For the first time, AEC has had trilateral negotiations with the social partners on signing the general collective agreement for 2001-02. The draft agreement has been discussed in the commissions and the overall collective agreement was signed by the social partners on 2 June 2001. It should be noted that the process of signing the sectoral collective bargaining and the territorial collective agreement is very slow. It has a formal character. There is need for the urgent issues, and we hope it will have positive results if it is supported by the ILO experts.

Before expressing my opinion on the four important principles concerning the fundamental rights in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, I would like to touch on one of the serious problems that is very important for us. Although a lot of work has been done on the implementation of the fundamental principles in the Azerbaijan Republic, a number of matters in labour and employment have not yet been solved; the reason being that 20 per cent of the land is available for cultivation by the Armenian Republic. Being the employers' union, we are greatly concerned with this. It has resulted in the failure to create new jobs as a solution to the employment problems of people who have long been involved in agriculture, and no normal living conditions have been provided for about 1 million refugees and internally displaced people.

The four important principles in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted on 18 June 1998 at the 86th Session of the Conference in Geneva, have been reflected in the new Labour Code of the Azerbaijan Republic, which was approved in 1999, and the realization of these principles in Azerbaijan proves that the Government is very attentive to this matter and intends to provide a quick solution to the problems in this sphere. If such work is implemented by all member States, the system of regulation of labour relations will be effective and serve to protect human rights all over the world.

As regards the next issue on the agenda, safety and health in agriculture, it should be noted that the adoption of the proposed Convention and Recommendation is important. The employers involved in agriculture are well aware that abiding by safety and health standards greatly benefits industrial relations. The proposed Convention has been discussed by the social partners. The norms provided by this proposed Convention are very significant and we believe they will play an important role in the organization of the labour and the regulation of labour relations.

It should be taken into account that eliminating unemployment, providing jobs and strengthening social protection play an important role in the economy of each country. This is especially felt in the social economy of the transition countries. The rise of the welfare of the population, development of self-employment and the development of cooperatives are important issues in industrial relations. If we refer to economic history we see that over time cooperatives have played an important role in solving bankruptcy, poverty and unemployment problems in the present developed countries. We think that the development of more perfect norms promoting the development of cooperatives on an international level and the use of work practices in this regard would be reasonable. Social protection is also an important issue as our country is in a similar situation to that of most of the countries of the former Soviet Union. It is natural to have such problems in the transition countries. The solution to the aforementioned problems is to create a new system with fundamental changes, within the framework of social partnership. In this respect, it is time to start the reforms and the preparations for a normative legal basis to create resources for social protection. Here we will need the support of the ILO, I would like to request ILO technical assistance in several areas so that we may establish safety and health centres for workers, organize training courses and programmes on the improvement of working conditions in small enterprises, and set up research groups to study social policy and employment issues.

We would also like to encourage the active participation of women in the private sector in order to develop women's understanding of entrepreneurship. We hope to adopt laws to help resolve labour conflicts so that all decisions conform to ILO standards. I wish the Secretary-General and all participants every success for this session of the Conference.

Original French: Mr. OULAYE (*Minister of Labour, Public Service and Administrative Reform, Côte d'Ivoire*) — It is a great honour and an outstanding privilege for me to take the floor before the august tripartite assembly that you constitute and which represents the diversity of the whole world's workers

and their hopes for increased and more equitable social well-being.

I would like to convey to the President the sincere congratulations of Côte d'Ivoire on her election as President of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, which will be discussing subjects of great importance for the promotion of decent work in the world, particularly in the developing countries, namely safety and health in agriculture, the promotion of cooperatives, social security and the application of standards. I would like to wish the work of the 89th Session every success.

Côte d'Ivoire, with nearly 16 million inhabitants, is a country with a very high proportion of foreigners. The official figure is 26 per cent, but in reality 45 per cent of the population are foreigners, all of whom have come to Côte d'Ivoire looking for social well-being. Our economy, which has been seriously handicapped for the past 20 years by the reduction in export earnings from coffee and cocoa, is rendered very fragile by a heavy debt burden resulting in the exacerbation of unemployment and a serious deterioration of the social protection system. This situation constitutes a genuine subject of concern for Ivorians, and so the President of the Republic, His Excellency, Mr. Laurent Gbagbo (who was democratically elected on 22 October 2000), immediately addressed the urgent tasks of consolidating the republican institutions, achieving national reconciliation of all of the nation's life forces, and rebuilding the basis of a strong economy with the support of the international funding agencies.

The ILO, fully aware of the difficulties our country has been experiencing following the military transition which lasted for one year, has not participated in the campaigns of denigration and isolation of which our country has been the butt. This is the right forum to say that the ILO's participation in the work of the 24th Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Committee of the OAU and the organization at Yamoussoukro of the Special Session on the ILO's guidelines on the fight against HIV/AIDS in the workplace were for us a reason to regain hope and an obvious sign of confidence. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes this and thanks the ILO.

Côte d'Ivoire is also pleased to share the vision of the Director-General of the ILO, which stresses the complexity of the concept of decent work, incorporating both, the economic and the social dimensions of work. It concerns both job opportunities, which should enable the largest number of people, particularly young people, to engage in gainful employment, and observance of rights, which uphold the dignity of men, women and children in their relationship with the world of work. These include the right to equal treatment and trade union rights as well as social protection of workers and the consideration to which they are entitled through the promotion of social dialogue.

This is the right forum to stress that, in these various areas, the Ivorian Government has recently submitted to Parliament for ratification the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It has just ended, by means of dialogue and mediation, the old conflict between Caréna and the Dignité Trade Union Association with the signing on 1 June 2001 of a memorandum of agreement.

Africa is suffering from a chronic deficit of decent work. The causes for this are known, namely econ-

omic underdevelopment, poverty and armed conflict. The phenomenon has serious consequences, including the migration of African workers to the countries of the north and towards some relatively prosperous African countries and trafficking in women and children.

As the ILO's Director-General states so appositely in his report entitled *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*: unacceptable trade-offs are a daily diet for far too many working people, trapped in circumstances and systems. This experience of work is profoundly at odds with what work at its best is about.

Despite the economic difficulties, Côte d'Ivoire is still, for many people in neighbouring countries, an El Dorado, which continues to attract people looking for jobs. Unfortunately some of these people have decided to base their wealth on the exploitation of women, the disabled and minors, in violation of the laws of our country, and attempt to hide their activities from the national authorities.

Trafficking in and exploitation of children is a recent phenomenon in our country. Our State has always considered that children should be at school and not at work. Our legislation prescribes that the minimum working age should be 14 years. It is not the custom in our country to make children work in plantations. That is why the Government of my country was particularly shocked to discover the exploitation of minors in the plantations.

In the face of this intolerable phenomenon, the Government has decided to act by taking a series of measures in order to put a stop to it. The Government remains convinced that these measures remain inadequate and limited so long as we are still faced with the underlying problem of the shortage of decent work. That is why we are looking for sustainable and effective solutions to combat trafficking in children and calling for the adoption of a targeted, integrated programme to reduce the deficit of decent work in the subregion, including all the countries concerned and benefiting from the technical and financial support of the multilateral partners.

Mr. FOGELSTRÖM (*representative, International Co-operative Alliance*) — It is an honour for me to address you today on behalf of cooperative organizations in over 100 countries which are members of the International Co-operative Alliance. As the representative organization of cooperatives worldwide ICA knows that cooperatives can and do make a difference in promoting decent work. Today they provide approximately 100 million jobs worldwide and their potential for contributing to closing the employment gap is widely recognized. For instance in many countries in Europe the cooperative enterprise model has proven to be very successful in alleviating unemployment and in providing services in the vacuum created by a shrinking welfare state.

Cooperatives are a form of enterprise that put people first; they are member-owned; they are controlled under democratic principles; and they are competitive enterprises which are at least as efficient in their business operations and use of capital as others in the marketplace. Yet, they are not driven by profit, but rather by needs. Cooperatives help people meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and thus secure human dignity. However, cooperatives will not be able to facilitate job creation, economic growth or social development, nor in fact reduce the decent

work deficit, if they are treated as instruments of public policy. If they are to be successful they require governments to create an enabling environment for autonomous cooperatives to develop and grow.

It is for this reason that the International Co-operative Alliance welcomes ILO's initiative to revise its Co-operatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation, 1966 (No. 127) on the role of cooperatives in the economic and social development of developing countries. It is our hope that the new instrument on cooperatives will provide a long-term policy reference framework for the Members of the ILO, will be global in nature and scope, will have the flexibility to address the needs of all types of cooperative organizations in all sectors of activity and will focus on ensuring that enabling conditions exist for cooperatives to function and thrive especially with regard to the role of the State. We are confident that a new instrument that recognizes the cooperative values and principles that ensures cooperative autonomy, that enables cooperative development through a level playing field, will enable people around the world to use the cooperative enterprise model to meet their needs.

The ICA is committed to working with the ILO to strengthen the potential of cooperatives to contribute to making people's lives better. We look forward to collaborating with you to ensure that cooperatives can truly, in the words of the Director-General, "take advantage of market dynamism in ways that deliver social justice as well as economic benefits".

Ms. CEK (*Government delegate, Croatia*) — On behalf of the Croatian delegation, allow me to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election. Allow me also to join in congratulating the Director-General for a very inspiring Report prepared for this year's general discussion.

Mr. Somavia has made a great personal contribution to promoting the significance of social issues within the context of globalization and sustainable development. His efforts raised these issues to the top of the global agenda and he has continued to follow the same policy in his capacity as the Director-General of the International Labour Organization. It can be seen from the Report that he has found an innovative approach by which to reaffirm the fundamental task of the Organization to protect basic human rights in the field of labour. Decent work as a global policy of social development, based on four strategic objectives, is designed as a model for the creation and implementation of national, social and development policies.

As the Director-General stressed in his Report, social policy is an inseparable part of general development policy because the development of a country's economy is interconnected with the achieved level of social protection of its citizens. The Croatian Government emphasized this fact in its development policy for the twenty-first century as one of the principles of social justice. Unfortunately, the realization of this principle, in most of the countries of our region, as in many other regions in the world, still depends on the establishment of stable peace.

In its report *Night work of women in industry* the Committee of Experts on the applications of Conventions and Recommendations emphasized the universal character of ILO standards, designed in such a way that they can be applied notwithstanding the extremely different conditions existing in its member States. Decent work reflects the same universality,

making it possible for every Member to implement that policy according to its specific conditions and possibilities, regardless of its level of development. Thus, the International Labour Office must be adequately professionally equipped to respond to this challenge. Moreover, even with the help of the ILO, the success of development policies at the national level lays in the readiness of the governments and social partners to reach consensus on implementing the reforms necessary in the light of rapid changes in the world of work. Indeed, in today's world all long-established notions as to what is typical in the world of work and employment are constantly challenged.

On the one hand, the changes have opened up possibilities for job creation that were previously unimaginable and on the other, in the context of globalization they may endanger the values of decent work built in the last century, in particular, the social achievements for which this Organization laid the foundations, such as social security and occupational safety and health systems. In this context my Government attaches special importance to the outcome of the discussion on the future of social security systems under way in one of the Conference committees.

One of the important roles of the International Labour Organization is to ensure that decent work is accepted globally and that national efforts made towards its achievement are recognized and respected at the international level. It is our special pleasure that the Director-General has assessed, entirely correctly, the circumstances existing in countries that are faced with privatization and deregulation in implementing structural adjustment policies which put at risk the existing protective mechanisms of decent work. Therefore through coordinated activities and intensified dialogue with other international bodies, and in particular with international financial institutions, the International Labour Office should ensure that these institutions accept and admit that difficulties faced by the traditional structural adjustment policies are due in part, to their failure to incorporate into these development policies fundamental rights, social security and social dialogue as their goals and mechanisms of implementation.

Although in a situation of high unemployment, low GDP growth and high social costs, my Government has not forgotten the significance of tripartism and social dialogue, occupational safety and health and social security in the context of job creation, an increase of unemployability and thus economic development. However, the need for the country's inclusion into the global economic context and the need to strengthen the competitiveness of the national economy requires an ongoing analysis of the impact of labour costs — including social security contributions and the costs of occupational safety and health and worker protection — on labour market flexibility. The Croatian Government is trying to solve that complex issue as the priority of its policy efforts aimed at the reduction of unemployment, in such a way that the achievements within the framework of decent work are not put into question. We have determined this to be the only way to ensure long-term sustainable development.

Globalization not only requires the permanent analysis of mechanisms for the protection of adequate conditions of work, it also demands our efforts to search for new, modern and more developed mechanism than those we know today, when the traditional

ones are no longer sustainable. Our success will depend precisely on our ability to find such new mechanisms.

The Director-General's Report *Decent work* assured us that the ILO was prepared to take a leading role in the fulfilment of this common goal. As a member of the Governing Body, Croatia fully supported decent work and it continues to endorse all the objectives and structural changes within the International Labour Office in line with that policy.

Original Arabic: Mr. OULD SIDI (*Minister of the Civil Service, Labour, Youth and Sports, Mauritania*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. It is indeed an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania at this forum on the occasion of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the President of the Conference and to the Officers upon their election and wish them full success in their work.

Allow me also to thank and congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the Office, for the wisdom, efficiency and expertise he shows in guiding this Organization.

We are convinced that the renewal we have undertaken will be necessary to improve working conditions in a time of globalization and to make it possible to meet all the challenges which arise, including those facing the developing countries. In accordance with the instructions of our President my Government attaches a great deal of importance to the recommendations and resolutions of the ILO because they are very pertinent to the world of labour and to social security.

We are thus proud to say that our country is at the vanguard of those which have ratified the Conventions of this Organization.

Since the last session we have ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

My Government has recently approved the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). Both of these instruments will be ratified at the present session of our Parliament.

For the second time, in conformity with the will expressed by our Government and in response to the needs of our population, we have carried out a 10 per cent increase in wages of civil servants.

Moreover, we are pleased to note an improvement in various economic indices, including a decline in unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and gains in social and medical coverage, etc. We cooperate with all the different responsible sectors and bodies, and we thank the International Labour Organization for the interest it shows for social security. We also thank the Organization for the assistance it gives us in this field.

In order to consolidate these developments, our Government this year adopted a development plan prepared in consultation with civil society, all its components and representatives, and of course the social partners.

The dialogue among the social partners which this international organization has been promoting ever since its creation should be made more exhaustive and thorough. Mauritania is fertile ground for this kind of undertaking. We hope that the spirit of part-

nership which is the hallmark of the International Labour Organization will remain emblematic of the Organization, that in the future it will be known that this is the work of the International Labour Organization, and that this will be in the interests of developing countries. Allow me to wish you every success.

Mr. MANNAN (*Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh*) — We congratulate the President most warmly upon her election to the Chair. We are confident that the stewardship of our deliberations rests in capable hands.

We deal with labour issues in an era of globalization different from ones that have preceded it. More than ever before, progress has become dependent on knowledge, its acquisition and utilization. Entrepreneurs, using the free movement of ideas and capital are creating wonderful new opportunities. Wealth has been created as never before. Technology has made strides at a pace that was unthinkable barely two decades ago. Mankind now has the means and opportunity to change the fate of humankind.

As we see it, the very knowledge and resources required to change the face of the globe is concentrated in a few hands. Many, particularly the least developed countries, are being denied the opportunities that enabled them to change their fate. They face obstacles that countries that are now developed did not face in the early stages of their development.

We need to look afresh at the development paradigm. We require a structure different from the one we have so far committed ourselves to. Perhaps a pragmatic approach, till we reach the stage desired, is to do whatever we can on the fringe.

The Director-General's Report *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, can form the basis for global consultations for evolving a just and pragmatic development strategy in the field of labour. We commend his endeavours in setting the goal of decent work, as well as identifying the challenges, difficulties and gaps in operationalizing the decent work strategy. I am pleased to inform the Conference that currently we are working with the International Labour Office to implement the Decent Work Pilot Programme in Bangladesh.

There is consensus that poverty is the greatest challenge facing our generation. There is also a consensus that international reforms should aim at reducing poverty worldwide through creating productive employment opportunities. The international community has reiterated its commitment to reducing poverty at the recently concluded Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) held in Brussels.

The employment and labour relations in LDCs need special attention. We are unable to integrate effectively with the emerging global trade and labour market on account of our inherent weaknesses of decent work. If these difficulties are not addressed, the paradigm may remain an illusion for us. The programme for LDCs in the ILO should therefore be further strengthened.

Migration is contributing to enriching societies, and benefiting economies of both sending and receiving States. Short-term movements of workers from developing countries are helping meet the demand for labour in the industrialized economies. Ironically, attempts are made to make such movements of labour an exception to the process of globalization. It has not

increased at the same level as the growth of trade, services and capital flows. There is a need for global action to evolve an orderly movement of labour across borders. The ILO should take a lead role in this area.

The ILO is associated with the Bangladesh Government in our plans to eliminate child labour. This is a highly complex phenomenon and it cannot be resolved overnight. We have to face reality: child labour, more often than not arises out of sheer economic necessity. Reality dictates that efforts to combat child labour be based on the broader development matrix. Legislation and administrative action, though necessary, are not by themselves sufficient to bring about a rapid decline in child labour. Our efforts (reforms) should include social and economic interventions to address the problem. The memorandum of understanding between the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer and Export Association, ILO and UNICEF, has set new and encouraging examples in eradicating child labour from garments industry.

I am happy to inform the Conference that Bangladesh has ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Projects are being implemented to eradicate hazardous child labour in Bangladesh.

Under the dynamic leadership of our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, the Bangladesh Government is implementing numerous programmes for the welfare of working people. The Prime Minister has launched an old-age allowance programme for the aged as the first step to developing a nationwide social security system for the poor.

We have also ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No.100).

Our Government has just completed its five-year term and, as per our Constitution, countrywide elections will be held in due time. The policies and programmes we have set in place will bring about fundamental changes in our labour conditions and labour relations.

In conclusion, I assure the President of our fullest cooperation and support in making the Conference a success.

Mr. SOODHUN (*Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, Mauritius*) — I am deeply honoured to address this august assembly for the first time, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General for his comprehensive Report on the importance of reducing the decent work deficit.

At the outset let me underline that Mauritius fully subscribes to the views of the Director-General that decent work is a legitimate right of every citizen, and that it is a “defining feature of human existence. It is the means of sustaining life and of meeting basic needs”. However, the effective implementation of the concept of decent work depends largely on the capacity of developing countries to reconcile economic and social goals while ensuring sustainable development. This is, in fact, the very challenge that Mauritius is facing, and I would like today to share with you the approach of my Government to the issue of decent work from the prospective of a small island economy.

Indeed, let me stress that the negative impacts of liberalization and globalization are already being felt in Mauritius through loss of employment, particularly in the agriculture and textile sectors; loss of historical trade preferences; the absence of tangible benefits stemming from liberalization; and heightened vulne-

rability on all fronts. Our economy has been further weakened by the fluctuations of the euro; public debt reached 50 per cent of GDP last year. All these factors have worsened our capacity to compete globally, and have led to rising unemployment, which is now already past the 8 per cent figure. Despite these difficulties the Government of Mauritius remains strongly committed to meeting its social obligations towards its people.

Today 40 per cent of our annual budget is allocated to welfare, free education, free health services and social security. It is clear, however, that we will not be able to sustain this without continued economic growth.

I recognize that the responsibility to make the right strategic choices rests with the Mauritian authorities. Mauritius does indeed have the strong political leadership which is necessary for us to forge ahead. Nonetheless, our will alone is not sufficient. National policies and decisions can only be successful if they are buoyed by a favourable economic climate at international level and a multilateral trading system which is sensitive to different levels of development and country situations.

I am thinking in particular of the difficult challenge that a small island and economy is faced with in the context of a globalizing world. The high degree of openness of the Mauritian economy means that the economic performance of our country remains anchored to the economic situation prevailing internationally. Mauritius is currently redefining its development as well as its labour and employment relations strategies. It has taken the bold step to restructure its economy from a labour-driven to an innovation- and knowledge-based economy with particular focus on services and IT sectors. We are aware that our success in this economic restructuring is also linked to our capacity to overcome the human and institutional resource constraints which many small islands face.

A core issue in the context of an evolving economy such as ours is that of employment rights. The Mauritius Government remains sensitive to the situation of workers and it is in this perspective that we are putting more emphasis on the importance of labour relations. My Ministry is already working on an action plan based on an integrated policy framework and guided by the decent work concept. Our focus is more particularly on the review of labour legislation, on the promotion of employees’ participation and collective bargaining, on capacity-building of social partners, on safe work and social protection and on measures to eliminate gender discrimination and protect young persons. We are engaged in broadening our scope on such issues as flexibility, mobility and employability, while securing the necessary conditions for the promotion of decent work.

Let me reiterate that the Government of Mauritius is strongly committed to social protection. In this respect, we would like to express our gratitude to the ILO, which is assisting us in a study on work and the family, and a review of gender discrimination in employment and wage policy. The ILO is also supporting various other initiatives relating to the consolidation of trade unions. Next, let me indicate that Mauritius is giving serious consideration to the ratification of three ILO core Conventions as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), which we have not been able to ratify so far for technical reasons.

We are also reviewing our occupational safety and health legislation and will be developing for the first time a national policy on occupational safety and health. We look forward to receiving the necessary technical support and guidance from the ILO in this task. Let me add that it is our intention to conduct other studies, namely on the economic and social implications of health and safety, the impact of the social environment and food habits on employees' productivity, the effects of economic structuring on female employment, and the impact of the new economy on work organization and employment relations. We believe that deepening our understanding of these issues is critical if we are to elaborate sound policies.

Allow me to conclude by expressing the very sincere thanks of Mauritius to the ILO for the technical assistance it has so readily granted us. The Government of my country greatly appreciates the mention made by the Director-General in his address this morning that Mauritius has been earmarked for the country pilot programme on decent work at national level. I am confident that ILO support will help us to reinforce labour rights in an evolving economic context.

(Ms. A. Sto. Tomas now takes the Chair.)

Original Portuguese: Mr. DONATO (Employers' delegate, Brazil) — I congratulate the President on her election to the post of governing the work of this Conference.

Since the recently elected Director-General coined the expression "decent work", in his Report two years ago, in the face of widespread concern over the changes and uncertainties of our new era, the ILO has tried to define both the nature and the size of the challenges ahead of us.

In his Report to the 89th Session of the Conference, the Director-General makes a deeper analysis of this issue, in an attempt to establish how to bring about decent work and how to ensure that it has a positive impact. He notes that decent work has a beneficial impact, both in social and economic terms, stimulating demand, boosting investment and the productivity of companies.

The activities and objectives of employers in Brazil have for some time coincided with the line of action set out in the Report with a view to actively decent work for all. From the first half of the last century onwards, employers played an important role in the transformation of Brazil. From a largely agricultural society, it was transformed into a nation which took on board an awareness of its own vocation and destiny and how that destiny was intimately linked to industrial activity. Brazilian employers broadened the base of the labour market, creating numerous job opportunities. Since it was necessary to prepare and provide skills for employees in order to meet the demand generated, employers realized that they had to move into the areas of education, health and leisure for employees and their families. For instance, vocational training centres and the social welfare centres were founded, administered and maintained by employers, through confederations and the representative federations of industrial sectors, commerce, farming and transport.

It is worth highlighting some of the more recent initiatives which have helped to raise the standard of vocational skills, workers' employability, lives and welfare. The National Service for Industrial Appren-

ticeship has been building into its strategic planning a series of activities linked to technology in the most dynamic areas of the industrial sector. Let us not forget, globalization has meant that we need to usher in new programmes in order to ensure that workers are able to constantly update their information technology skills, a vital prerequisite for the competitiveness of Brazilian products on the international market. At the same time, in order to reach people in the most underprivileged and remote areas, such as the Amazon region so that they can be properly trained to carry out productive activity, so that in the short-term at least they can ensure that they have an income and improve the quality of their lives.

The service has drawn up a Mobile Activities Project, characterized by its simplicity and mobility.

The Industrial Social Service, an industry agency for workers' education, health and leisure, has recently created a new flagship scheme entitled businesses' social responsibility, which involves social welfare activities carried out within businesses or with business participation, and this has brought valuable thinking to bear in the communities where the workers live.

The Director-General, highlighting these voluntary, private initiatives, has given us a great boost and encouragement so that business organizations in Brazil and the institutions run by them can carry on with this creative impulse and develop actions for the common good.

One of the most positive aspects is that they are planned, executed, carried out in conjunction with the worker and the employer.

A recent study carried out in the north-east of Brazil, which is the poorest region of the country, shows that 78 per cent of north-east companies — some 68,000 — carry out voluntary initiatives for employees and their families; 55 per cent carry out community oriented projects, and voluntary initiatives by small and medium-sized businesses are particularly noteworthy. In this regard employers have worked together nationally with the Government and the workers so that practical initiatives, although they are to some extent "one-off" and still rather timid, gain in effectiveness and coordination, drawing their inspiration from the tripartite dialogue.

At the international level, as employers in a developing country, we depend heavily on the technical cooperation and indispensable support of the ILO in order to ensure that we learn from global experience in order to generate decent jobs and learn how to handle the difficulties ahead of us. Of course, the ILO alone cannot find a solution to all the serious problems affecting the world of work but it would be useful if the ILO, when it defines its work agenda, would give priority to studies concerning the problems related to globalization, and particularly its social dimension, so that decision-makers can be better informed of these questions and that a fruitful and realistic dialogue can be held.

In that regard, we certainly hope that the discussion of the relevant questions contained in the Report of the Director-General will not finish at the end of this Conference, but that it will carry on as part of the work of the Governing Body and its committees. That will enable us to deal effectively with a range of issues and related problems stemming from a new reality. We also hope that the World Employment Forum, set to take place in November 2001, will be an appropri-

te forum to promote dialogue and ensure that we find the very best solutions.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the commitment of Brazilian employers to pursue their efforts to reduce the decent work deficit in the hope that appropriate macroeconomic and fiscal policies will be implemented in order to obtain the desired results.

Original Spanish: Mr. PACHECO FRANCO (*Minister of Labour and Small Enterprises, Bolivia*) — It is a pleasure to congratulate the President on her election to the 89th Session of the ILC. I should like to say on behalf of the Government of Bolivia that we have read with great interest the annual Report of the Director-General on decent work, which sets out the need to create jobs that are sustainable, decent and fair, with universal respect for the principles and fundamental labour rights, creating more opportunities for employment and income for women and men, extending social protection and, above all, promoting social dialogue.

It should be emphasized that, since the beginning the active intervention of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, IPEC, in 1996, Bolivia has begun to develop and implement activities to eliminate child labour progressively. The Ministry of Labour and Micro-Enterprises has set up an institutional committee, established in July 2000, whose legal constitution was based on the signing of an agreement for a national plan endorsed by a variety of institutions.

Over the last 20 years, Bolivia has, through its democratic process, been experiencing an historic transition from State capitalism to a free market model — and these have converted Bolivia into a setting of international legitimacy capable of adapting its experience to the needs for change in society at the national and international levels and establishing in the interaction of State, the market and society a thoroughgoing process of institutionalization which is currently in full flow.

The application of various constitutional reforms during the democratic process, the efforts by the Government to promote the four pillars of public management — opportunity, equity, institutionality and dignity — and the design of the Bolivian poverty reduction strategy have produced guidelines for the application of the current development model.

The break in the intermediary relations between the State and society, the unfinished process of structural reform in social and labour issues, the low capacity for employment generation, the lack of equity in wealth distribution and access to opportunities the poor participation by our economy in integrated world markets have given rise to a third sector in the form of an informal economy.

In this setting, the national economy has not been able to adapt to the challenges imposed by the globalization process and competition, yet this is vital for integration into the major markets of the world, the access to rapid technological development, sound management practices and active participation of the private sector.

The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprises has taken on a new impetus which will accelerate its activities in a new context that has arisen in the country as a consequence of the proposed constitutional reform which the President of the Republic has submitted to the National Congress.

The inclusion of labour reforms within the framework of constitutional reform has opened up a new possibility for the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprises, requiring it to adapt to the reforms within the State and the new market conditions.

The challenges of this new situation are varied but, first and foremost, with respect to my own functions in this process, we must gear our relations with our partners and international organizations to this new dynamic approach which has come into being in Bolivia, as a result of progress towards national dialogue and social consensus.

In this new context, the International Labour Organization is an essential partner in helping us to consolidate a new place for labour reforms within constitutional transition which is now proceeding very dynamically in Bolivia.

Original Farsi: Mr. KAMALI (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! I would like to begin by congratulating the President on her well-deserved election to preside over the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I am delighted and encouraged that this session of the Conference will provide us once again with the opportunity for deliberations and exchanges of views with the officials and those involved in labour and social issues.

Globalization of the world economy brings about structural changes in different sectors of national economies, which in turn result in imbalances in terms of employment, increased poverty and growing social inequality within and among poor and rich nations.

However, globalization, if properly managed, could provide us with a bright perspective.

To this end, international organizations, and especially the ILO, should undertake due responsibility and play the crucial role as envisaged in its noble objectives.

We do believe that this is a very timely moment to discuss the overall impact of globalization with a view to mitigating the negative effects, and enhancing the positive impacts of this phenomenon.

Unemployment, such as is found in many countries of the globe, must receive due attention in the globalization process. Addressing this problem will require the creation of hundreds of millions of jobs, mostly for young people, over this decade.

To provide appropriate grounds for globalization and to avoid its negative consequences, the following are suggested. International economic cooperation should not embrace political concerns and motivations. Capital and financial inward flows to the countries of the South should be facilitated and North-South cooperation should contribute to the developing countries efforts in developing human resources, enhancing productivity, and promoting technical competitiveness in line with modern scientific and technical developments, thereby enabling them to compete at the international level. Job-creation policies and measures should be pursued in developing countries more extensively. Developing countries should be assisted financially and technically by international organizations in order to enable them to provide social services to vulnerable populations affected by globalization. The newly activated Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization should be granted further attention by the Organiza-

tion. The member States should be kept informed of the ILO's work with this development.

We call on the ILO to focus its policies and programmes on, and mobilize its financial resources to, addressing the challenges facing developing countries such as employment, social protection and security, and poverty alleviation.

Moreover, the ILO is expected to revise its standard-setting and supervisory system. The system should not serve purposes other than the improvement of the labour situation, while considering the countries' real obstacles, as well as social and cultural grounds, and taking into account the actual capabilities of the governments in this regard.

The second National Labour Conference was held in Teheran last month and attracted wide participation from workers' and employers' groups and governments. The last two articles of the final resolution alluded to fundamental labour Conventions.

In recent years, we have enjoyed a better understanding and wider cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ILO. We are, however, interested in further expansion of bilateral cooperation.

We believe that the re-opening of the ILO representative office in Teheran can serve as a channel for direct, constant and fruitful interactions and cooperation in our country programme, and further boost training opportunities for the Islamic Republic of Iran as well.

In the third economic, social and cultural development plan of Iran, employment has been made the top priority in the objectives of the developed plan.

Furthermore, and due to the importance of labour issues, the current year has been proclaimed as the Year of Employment. The officials and lawmakers of our country attach a great deal of importance to the creation of decent and productive job opportunities as their main objective.

The ILO is, therefore, expected to make its contribution to this process, including the allocation of relevant projects to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Original Russian: Mr. EREMEEV (Employers' delegate, Russian Federation) — The Report of the Director-General is of direct interest to all three of the social partners in the ILO, each of which is well represented in this room. On the basis of this Report, we can say that the process of renewal and modernization which started two years ago is now yielding its initial fruits. We can also see this in the changes that have occurred in the Office and in the profound ideas about further changes which are set out in this Report.

The great variety of the problems addressed in the Report calls for careful reflection. Unfortunately, as many other delegates, we did not have an opportunity to read this Report in great detail. We received this Report just prior to the opening of this session of the Conference.

Nevertheless, the problems touched upon in this Report are topical, and I would like to share with you some of my ideas about them. Russian employers pay particular attention to ensuring decent work. Right from the start, we have actively participated in preparing a modern and civilized Labour Code, replacing a code that had been adopted over 30 years ago. We have almost completed our work, and I hope that we are now about to produce an agreed-upon version which will be adopted by consensus.

Special attention is given in the Director-General's Report to forging a strong consensus as a basis for balance and effectiveness in implementing our Organization's decisions. We fully share this view, and we believe that this is the only way for the ILO to retain its authority and uniqueness in the family of specialized United Nations agencies.

This is the first session of the Conference in the new century, and it is thus a good time to take a new look at those important values which were the cornerstone of our Organization when it was founded, some 80 years ago. The most important was tripartism. It has proven its worth, and needs to be further developed and strengthened if we want to keep this unique quality of the International Labour Organization. For many countries with an established market economy and a decades-old system of social partnership, further enhancing tripartism might not be a priority. However, the situation is quite different in countries in transition, including the Russian Federation. For most of them it is now very important not to turn back from economic and social transformation, and to establish a strong foundation for a democratic society. One of the cornerstones of such a society is tripartism. We Russian employers see this as a task demanding immediate attention, and would like to count on the ILO's understanding and cooperation. However, in this connection we are rather concerned about two trends. There has been less attention to technical cooperation, and there is a greater effort to involve non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in defining the activities of the ILO.

Concerning technical assistance, the first and foremost mechanism for tripartite cooperation, we would not want this type of activity, which is a hallmark of the ILO, to lose ground to scientific, sometimes purely theoretical approaches to problems. Our Organization might then become a sort of debating society. As for the ILO's relationship with NGOs, we unconditionally support the use by the Office of any means to keep abreast of developments in our rapidly changing world and to make the best possible use of the various views and opinions in preparing decisions to be adopted by our Organization. However, this work should in no way replace the established tripartite cooperation structure of the ILO. It must not be detrimental to the work carried out in the Organization by representative employers' and workers' organizations.

The Report of the Director-General, while indicating our Organization's paths for the future, calls on us to bear in mind that the International Labour Conference is the highest forum of the ILO, and that it provides a possibility to have the greatest exchange of views. It is for the Governing Body and its corresponding bodies to comprehend these views and give concrete form to them.

We would venture to hope that today's discussion will be continued in a constructive fashion.

Original French: Mr. ONDOUA (Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Welfare, Cameroon) — For me it is a particular pleasure to join the previous speakers in offering the President, on behalf of myself and the Government of my country, our warm and sincere congratulations on her election to preside over the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would like to say a few words about the relationship between my country and the ILO, and then

touch upon the major agenda items for this session of the Conference.

First of all, relations between the ILO and the Government of Cameroon are good, both with headquarters and with the regional office and the ILO multidisciplinary teams.

I would like to emphasize that about two years ago the Government of Cameroon made available to the regional office an office free of charge, which has enabled the members of the office to work in decent conditions, which serves to promote good relations.

Technical cooperation between Cameroon and the ILO is very rich and fruitful, both nationally, where it covers many projects, the aim of which is to strengthen the technical capacities of our social partners, and regionally, where it involves two major projects the Jobs for Africa project and the project known as "Pro diaf".

The expectations the Government of Cameroon has of this cooperation, which we hope will continue, concern, first of all, greater visibility for the Jobs for Africa programme. This is halfway through its term and its effects on employment are not yet being felt to the full. We are also concerned about the objectivity and neutrality of local ILO officials when dealing with trade unions. This neutrality should be as emphatic as that shown by the Government, which is strictly neutral when it comes to trade unions, and does not interfere in their internal affairs so as to maintain harmonious relations between the Government and the trade unions.

When it comes to international standards and the management of freedom of association in Cameroon, let me say that freedom of association is observed and that the trade union situation in Cameroon is normal. This is particularly true of the largest confederation; the CSTC, and has allowed the resumption of tripartism and social dialogue, overseen by the National Consultative Labour Commission, the National Occupational Safety and Health Commission and the Joint Commissions for the Negotiation of Collective Agreements.

All these Commissions are working hard and are preparing drafts to be submitted to the Government; some are negotiating new collective agreements, while some are revising old ones which have now become obsolete.

The ILO mission to Cameroon in April this year noted all these positive developments. In addition, it noted that the many allegations made against Cameroon in respect of its observance of ILO Conventions were false. International trade union organizations tend, without first checking the facts, to act in haste. They supported many of these allegations and they should, in the future, we think, avoid any impetuous action which supports action which extends beyond the framework of trade unionism and actually verges on destabilizing sovereign states. The objective of tripartism should not be to weaken governments.

I should therefore like to take this opportunity to remind the ICFTU and the OATUU, which are present in this room, that they need to check the facts and, if necessary, organize a mission of inquiry whenever a national trade union organization makes a complaint against a sovereign government. That would avoid them making errors and, in the long term, losing their credibility.

Cameroon is slowly and surely modernizing its legislation and labour-related regulations. To this end,

committee to review our legislation has been set up in order to bring it into line with the international Conventions we have ratified.

The ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), on 17 April this year, and the ratification currently under way of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), are testimony to the firm intention of the Government of Cameroon to make further headway, and to continue to modernize its legislation.

After this brief overview of my country's relations with the ILO, I would now like to specify the position of the Government of Cameroon on some items on the agenda of this 89th Session of The International Labour Conference.

On the programme and budget for the 2002-03 biennium Cameroon has no objection to the way the budget has been set out by the Governing Body so as to provide the ILO with the resources it needs to implement its policy. I refer in particular to support for new programmes to the struggle against HIV/AIDS and to providing the necessary support for the priority objectives of employment and social protection.

On the Director-General's Report, Cameroon supports the decent work approach and the need to promote it further; the basic objective being to ensure that globalization does not sound the death knell of human and economic and social progress but rather the reverse.

On safety and health in agriculture and the proposed, Convention and Recommendation, we support the adoption of such instruments which we consider to be absolutely essential.

Lastly, on the issue of the promotion of cooperatives, we support the idea of an instrument in the form of a Recommendation, this would back up the Yaoundé Decennial Plan of Action for Poverty Alleviation by promoting cooperatives in Africa. On this point we hope for support from the ILO and international cooperation agencies to allow this Plan of Action which seems to us to be a very useful tool to be effective.

To conclude, Cameroon is fully committed to modernizing its legislation and its regulations so as to ensure that we can better observe and promote ILO instruments. Committees have been set up for this purpose and serious thought is being given to a reform of our social security system. Cameroon, in the hope of continuing cordial and harmonious relations with the ILO, is faithful to the spirit and standards of the ILO and repeats its hope that this cooperation between our country and the Organization will bear fruit in the name of progress and development.

Mr. DOSHI (*Employers' delegate, India*) — I bring greetings from India and address this august gathering on behalf of Mr. Srinivasan, President of the Council of Indian Employers, who was unable to attend.

Let me, at the outset, congratulate the President on her election to the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference which, in my view, is the global social parliament. The employers' community of India joins me in conveying its hearty felicitations.

We are confident that the session will conclude with landmark decisions, making the ILO mandate even more meaningful and relevant. The changed focus of the ILO, unfolding social dimensions of labour and workplace environment as a tool to achieve socio-economic equilibrium in the midst of economic

upheaval unleashed by the global economy, is a bold and laudable attempt to realize once again the dreams of the founding fathers of this premier institution.

We, the employers in India, extend our full support to the ILO in creating a positive environment to fulfil its new mandate.

The sweeping wave of globalization has resulted in massive transnational investments, outsourcing of raw materials and manpower and shifting of production bases. All of this has disturbed the tranquillity of the working life and employer-employee relationship by injecting insecurity. Moreover, increased reliance on capital-intensive and high-tech industries, intensive use of information and communication technologies and the primacy of the service sector have changed the profile of the industrial worker. The efficacy of this institution lies in mitigating the adverse impact of globalization.

The developing countries of Asia and sub-Saharan regions in Africa deserve focused attention in this context. These resource-constrained economies, with a different historical and cultural background and less developed human capital, are already disadvantaged. The ILO has to reprioritize its geographical focus and reach out to redeem its statement that "poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere".

The *World Employment Report 2001*, released recently, records the poignant fact that one-third of the global working population, close to 1 billion, is either unemployed or underemployed and records open unemployment at 160 million. It is stated that 500 million new jobs need to be created by 2010 to accommodate the existing unemployed people as well as the new entrants. This is a massive challenge to the ILO and all of us.

Employment generation is one of the strategic objectives founded on the Philadelphia Declaration "to promote free and productive employment". It should be at the forefront of the ILO's action plan. Major employment generation programmes should focus on the promotion of self employment, entrepreneurship and management development, training and skill development.

The success stories of SEWA in India, as mentioned by the Director-General in his Report, or the Gramin Bank experience of Bangladesh, provide excellent examples of creating self employment. The ILO has to benchmark these success stories to enhance its relevance and global visibility.

Emphasis should also be laid on employment generation and improving the quality of employment in the informal sector to reduce the incidence of child labour and forced labour which otherwise cannot be abolished by any number of Conventions and sanctions. This is our experience over the past several years.

In the Director-General's Report there is a suggestion to make decent work development objectives part of the basic framework of the Bretton Woods institutions. I compliment Mr. Somavia on his visionary approach. But different organizations looking at problems with different perspectives very often end up working at cross purposes. The objective would be better achieved if various ILO interventions targeting these strategic objectives were financially supported by these institutions.

Enterprise restructuring is a global phenomenon to meet the challenges of the competitive market. This is resulting in unemployment and social trauma for the

developing countries due to the lack of a safety net. A major task, before the ILO, therefore, is to help its member States through technical and financial support or by devising an appropriate safety net mechanism for these countries. We look forward to a major global programme.

Enterprise is the driving force to achieve social progress. The ILO's inputs and interventions in the area of enterprise development are therefore crucial. Let us be careful that pursuing social objectives is not at the cost of efforts and resources to strengthen enterprise development. Otherwise, the whole edifice of our approach will collapse.

These are some of our concerns which I hope will receive the focused attention of this august house.

Mr. DEVEAUX (*Minister of Labour and Immigration, Bahamas*) — The Government and people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas are grateful for this opportunity and extend our hope for a successful 89th convocation.

My Government shares the aspirations of our Director-General in seeking to establish a focused approach in social dialogue and social services to achieve decent work for the people of the Bahamas and for the world.

My Government's initiatives in promoting decent work have produced the most dramatic reduction of unemployment and underemployment in all sectors of the Bahamian economy in a generation. Although the Bahamas is assailed by a continuous influx of economic refugees, quality work with pay is easily available.

On 25 May 1976, the Bahamas ratified three of the eight core Conventions. During this 89th Session I will, on behalf of my Government, deposit the instruments of ratification for the remaining core Conventions: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Next month when we enact into law the Employment, the Minimum Wage and the Health and Safety Bills, the Bahamas will have satisfied the necessary pre-conditions and will ratify the remaining non-core Conventions.

Since the last convocation of the ILO, my Government has accepted, on behalf of CARICOM member States, the establishment of a regional centre in the Bahamas for research and service programmes for HIV/AIDS: the Bahamas AIDS secretariat is accredited for its distinguished work on research on HIV/AIDS.

My Government is committed to the continued promotion of tripartite consultation and social dialogue. Our revised labour legislation will be concluded by the Parliament of the Bahamas in July 2001. This follows extensive bilateral discussions with our social partners, especially the workers' representatives of both national umbrella organizations.

The Director-General's Report on *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, presents a challenge to governments across the globe and most especially to small developing economies in ensuring decent work. This worthy goal can only be achieved if governments commit to a relentless strategy to grow

the economic pie, thus affording greater opportunities in sharing the pie to all people.

The Bahamas realize the need to ensure and maintain equity and justice for workers and has enlarged the process for dispute resolutions.

My Government is pleased that through the collaboration of our ILO Regional Office we have trained part-time conciliators to assist in resolving workplace disputes. I believe the Bahamas may be the first State in the region to actively use the services of retired civil servants and eminent private sector persons as part-time conciliators to enhance the dispute resolution machinery.

In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to reaffirm my Government's support for the ILO, its principles and programmes. We wish to commend our Regional Director from the Caribbean Regional Office, Mr. Will Mumm and his multidisciplinary team for their support and advice specifically and the wider CARICOM member States generally.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-JIBOURI (Workers' delegate, Iraq) — On behalf of the workers of Iraq, I would like to wish our worthy President every success in managing the work of this Conference.

The return of the Director-General to the subject of decent work in this session of the Conference in his second Report after the 1999 Report very clearly demonstrates the reality of his last Report, namely, the main objective within the International Labour Organization is for every man and every woman to find decent productive work in conditions of safety, equity and dignity. Quite obviously this noble objective is not within easy reach, particularly in our difficult times where those who dominate politics and the world economy are trying to get rid of all the legislation and regulations which mankind has created in its efforts to create a world of justice and peace. Market forces have tried, over the last decade, backed up by military, political and technological forces, to abolish the rules and to create a world in which the law of the jungle prevails and governments and unions have been unable to stand up to a stronger and better organized camp on the opposing side. The acquired rights and assets of the people have been devoured by the economic interests of the powerful and the great danger of today's world is a totally liberalized economy, totally devoid of any social content. Consequently, we think that the Report of the Director-General presented to this session of the Conference, highlighting how necessary it is to build a world economy upon a social platform, is an excellent starting point to stop this economy from running out of control, thereby endangering the future of humankind.

If the workers of the world have to face up to the negative effects of the supremacy of one single political and economic pole, if we are to deal with the effects of the globalization of the economy, I come before you today to share with you the concerns of workers of a region which has been subjected to the most negative effects of the changes in the world economy. These changes have given rise to a continual onslaught of military operations, civil wars and economic blockades of war imposed by the super powers upon the peoples of the region. The inhuman forms of coercion which have been adopted by the super powers and their allies in the region have driven the region towards a very complex human tragedy.

The workers are among the first to have paid the highest price for this tragedy. Consequently, the ILO's discussion of the whole concept of decent work is something which we should all support together in the light of the political, military and economic aggression which our peoples are subject to, so that our peoples can recover their independence, dignity, capability of investing and managing their resources and the possibility of building a society of social justice. These are the conditions in which decent work can be offered to our work force.

On behalf, therefore, of the workers of Iraq, I call upon all of you to support them in their legitimate demand to lift the economic sanctions and end the continual aggression against them over the last ten years so that we can carry out our plan to construct a better society under the leadership of our President Saddam Hussein.

May I call upon you to support our attempts to help stop the slaughter by the occupying forces of the Palestinian people and the attacks to which are subject not only Palestine but the Syrian Arab Republic and other countries.

The world cannot be a world of security and stability if it is not based upon the principles of peace and justice. We will never be able to enjoy peace and security if the good of this world cannot overcome the looters of other people's assets by taking away their freedom and free will. Let us all strive for this, therefore.

Original French: Mr. TRENCH (Workers' delegate, Bulgaria) — May I first of all express my greetings to the President and to her Officers on behalf of the Bulgarian workers and employees and express our sincere congratulations at their election to these positions of great responsibility. Allow me as well to express my certainty that under their guidance the work of this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference will contribute to the development of efforts to eliminate violence and constraints in labour, as provided for in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted three years ago.

We are convinced that the tripartite participants of this Conference will contribute in a responsible and firm way to the discussions on the Report of the Director-General on forced labour.

We support the fundamental parameters of the proposed Convention and Recommendation concerning safety and health in agriculture, given that in Bulgaria agriculture, which represented 12.8 per cent of GDP in 2000, occupies an important place in the structure of economic activity. This is why we would wish to intensify our efforts to convince the Bulgarian Government to accelerate the process of presentation and ratification of the Convention. At the same time, we are aware that the priority given to agriculture during Bulgaria's negotiations for entry into the European Union imposed the necessity of considerable investment in agriculture, in terms of both quantity and technological quality, and a part of this will have to be allocated to the respect of standards of safety, protection and the guarantee of sanitary conditions in the workplace.

On behalf of the Bulgarian workers and employees, I would like to express our support for the initiative of opening the debate on the promotion of cooperatives, the result of which as things currently stand will be the establishment of a Recommendation.

We will also have to mention that the cooperative movement in Bulgaria has existed for many years and includes remarkable advances, despite attempts by the totalitarian communist powers to impose the parameters of a particular form of organization of economic activity.

I would also like to draw the attention of the delegates of the Conference to the importance of the application of adequate labour standards in cooperatives in the agricultural sector and in the so-called cooperatives of productive work in Bulgaria, in which the employees coexist alongside ownership.

It is my honour and privilege to endorse, on behalf of the workers and employers of Bulgaria, the main thrust of the discussion on social security and express the hope that, as the twenty-first century dawns, the tripartite partners will be able to find solutions to the challenges existing in the social security system to achieve conditions of decent work.

In this context we would like to mention that being a country in transition, forming part of the new high-risk markets in Eastern and Central Europe, Bulgaria is in fact far from the concepts of social protection and social dialogue, which are an integral part of the process of establishing new social relations, including in the workplace and in industry. The system of a monetary council imposed by international financial institutions has been used as an excuse for the absence of social responsibility and the lack of social policies.

Despite modifications and amendments to the code of work and some laws regarding social affairs adopted by the government at the end of its term, industrial relations in Bulgaria do not conform to the standards of the International Labour Organization and European directives. We are witness to a situation where, after efforts made over the last ten years and dedicated work in favour of social dialogue, some organizations of employers contest the principles of collective bargaining and, along with the State, try to ignore unions in seeking to institutionalize and impose representatives' and workers' councils without ratifying the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135).

It is to our regret that institutional forms for social dialogue have not been fulfilled in Bulgaria. Over the last four years, Bulgaria has paid a high price for financial stabilization in the desperate impoverishment of the population, the policy of non-payment of wages owed for years by employers, and the drastic fall in the standard of living and possibilities for economic activity. We have seen signs of uncertainty among our workers and inefficiency in economic and social policies in force. This was worsened by the immense problem which endangers the foundations of democratic change in Bulgaria, in particular corruption under quasi-official control.

I would also like to assure all participants that Bulgaria's trade unions believe that their priorities should aim to guarantee dignified work for all Bulgarians. We are going to continue to fight for raised awareness of and respect for international labour standards concerning the rights of workers in the context of guaranteeing all the necessary conditions for the process of integration of Bulgaria into European structures, including in the social domain.

I would also like to wish the International Labour Conference every success in its work and express once again our certainty that this session of the Conference will reaffirm the right to decent work as an essential component of global development.

Ms. ÇEÇO (*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Issues, Albania*) — On behalf of the Albanian Government, I would like to warmly congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, elected to run the workings of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, and the Officers of the Conference.

I take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Somavia, on behalf of the Albanian Government, for his work and achievements as Director-General of the ILO, and to express my hope these achievements will deepen in the future.

The concentration of the ILO's attention to the great principles embodied in its four main objectives makes up the essence of its mission and philosophy. It is due to this that the Albanian Government evaluates the cooperation and contribution of the ILO with particular interest.

We follow the working of this session with interest and we especially welcome its conclusion and assure you of the commitment of the Albanian Government to fulfil our duties arising from these documents.

The Albanian Government evaluates the role of social partners in designing a new economic and social policy, capable of meeting the new challenges of the market economy, and of providing workers with social protection.

The Government which I represent, has provided important access to social dialogue at all levels by designing the strategy and developing policies on this dialogue. The National Labour Council of Albania is the highest tripartite consulting body and has made it possible to institutionalize partnership and social dialogue. This marks an important achievement since the National Labour Council aims to be transformed into a mini parliament, where the representatives of the social partners and government discuss the important issues of the word of labour together. To assist the activity of the National Labour Council, specialized tripartite commissions and temporary working groups have been established, in which the parties are represented by qualified experts. Parallel with consultative bodies, the tripartite decision-making bodies function as an administrative council of social security, employment, vocational training and social services. The tripartite composition of these bodies ensures that during the decision making, the interests of workers and employers are taken into consideration. At present in the framework of the decentralization of employment services, work is being carried out to establish the regional employment offices.

The 1995 Labour Code is a contemporary labour law which is compliance with international labour standards. It provides for the harmonization of interests between workers and employers and ensures that workers have the necessary protection in the work place. The five years of experience of implementing the labour code led to the need to review and improve this labour code, which, in fact we are doing at present. In cooperation with the social partners, we are working to improve the labour code and make it up-to-date with the international labour standards. In pursuance of our attempts to improve labour legislation and update it with international standards, and in cooperation with social partners, the ratification of international Conventions is a priority.

In this framework, during the last two years, the Albanian Parliament has ratified some conventions such as Conventions Nos. 144, 26, 95, 131, 173. During May of this year, the Albanian Parliament ratified the

worst forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), thus expressing its serious commitment to care for the young generation, with the priority of eliminating the worst forms of child labour. We are in the process of ratifying the Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103) and the collective bargaining convention, 1981 (No. 154). Meanwhile procedures have started for several other Conventions.

I would like to express, once again, the serious commitment of the Albanian Government to fulfilling the obligations which arise from the ratification of the ILO's international Conventions. I would also like to repeat our commitment to further developing cooperation with the ILO. Evaluating the serious commitment of the ILO in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, bearing in mind the experience to date and the positive effects reflected by organizing regional conferences such as those in of Sofia, Salonika, Budapest, I would be greatly interested in the continuation and further development of the ILO's initiatives, considering them in the framework of the Pact. In this manner, the contribution and role of the ILO has continued to increase, thus bringing about an important contribution to the increase of regional and interregional dimensions.

Regional cooperation, in the framework of tripartism, will promote understanding in south-east Europe, which is still full of conflicts, and will also create cooperation among peoples of the region and the respect of the universal rights and freedoms, with particular accent on ethnic groups and minorities.

Finally, I would like to extend my best wishes and hope that this session of this Conference will be successful.

Mr. MONONGA (*Government delegate, Malawi*) — I bring you all happy and fraternal greetings from the warm heart of Africa, Malawi. His Excellency the President, Dr. Bakili Muluzi of the Republic of Malawi, wishes you the President and all the delegates to the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference a very productive and fruitful Conference. Malawi is very pleased to be attending the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, which happens to be the second in this millennium. Allow me sincerely to congratulate the President and the three Vice-Presidents on being elected to their high office. The manner in which they have already conducted the proceedings of the Conference here clearly demonstrates that they really deserve this election. They indeed will steer the proceedings of our Conference to their logical conclusion.

Malawi appreciates the support it continues to receive from the International Labour Organization both technically and materially. Apart from the many development projects the ILO is implementing, in conjunction with many government organizations and departments in Malawi, I am particularly delighted to note that the International Labour Office has finally established an International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) project office in Malawi for commercial agriculture, to cover specifically the tobacco industry, which happens to be Malawi's No. 1 foreign exchange earner.

As I am talking, the recruitment of staff for the project is under way and I am definitely sure that before the end of this month we will have the project staff in

place ready to start the activities we have lined up for the effective and thorough elimination and control of child labour in our country. This is by all means a dream come true for us, and our discussion of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) in November 1999 would not have been complete without concrete activities in the form of an IPEC project to fully implement the provisions of the Convention in question.

By the way, Malawi is now among the few African countries which has ratified all the eight ILO core Conventions on fundamental principles and rights at work. I therefore believe that the coming of the ILO's IPEC project to Malawi marks the beginning of the effective implementation of the provisions of the ILO core Conventions as well as of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work to ensure decent work in Malawi's workplaces.

Therefore, on behalf of the Malawi Government, we are greatly indebted to Mr. Juan Somavia, the ILO Director-General, for being so generous and supportive to Malawi's cause for the total respect and protection of human rights, which happen to be workers' rights too.

Mr. HYDER (*Employers' delegate, Bangladesh*) — The Director-General, as in previous years, has submitted to this Conference a comprehensive and erudite Report. The national delegations would have been helped immensely to contribute towards the deliberations of the important issues covered in the Report if it had reached them in good time.

The Report highlights the need for decent work. It is important in the context of the inability of over 500 million workers, almost entirely in the developing countries, to earn enough to keep their families above a poverty line of US\$1 per day and unemployment of more than 160 million people worldwide, again almost entirely in the developing world. This obviously threatens the quality of jobs and also the environment for business to operate so as to generate employment. In such circumstances, the organizations and the institutions through which social dialogue occurs and social choices are made, are particularly critical. It is the responsibility of the ILO to strengthen the process of dialogue with the social partners through a reaffirmation of support for the organizations engaged in the world of employment, namely the employers' and workers' organizations.

In many countries some of the organizations known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have acted in a manner on certain issues which has undermined the functions of employers' and workers' organizations. The selection of certain NGOs as collaborators or "listening points" can give wrong signals and can end up being counterproductive. There are NGOs whose mandates and activities are different from those of the ILO. Besides, many NGOs lack transparency and accountability. Collaboration with any such organizations, it is our fear, runs the risk of widening the decent work deficit, and as such should be avoided in view of the changing relationship in the workplace.

Mr. SMOLENOV (*Employers' delegate, Bulgaria*) — I have the honour of addressing you on behalf of Bulgarian employers, so let me first of all convey their best regards and wishes for the success of this session of the International Labour Conference.

In my country, profound transformations are under way as you may have been able to judge from the report delivered by the President of the Confederation of Labour "Podkrepa", Dr. Trenchev. The economic developments are by no means an automatic result of the general transition from the former command based administrative system to a market economy. Hopefully, one day, this will be a social market economy but so far little has been done along these lines and, as a matter of fact, social relations are largely distorted. Fortunately, the relationships between employers, employees and the State have been maintained on a proper level with all due respect for the three parties involved in the social dialogue. Only thus can we promote development that benefits both the workers and the employers, as well as social prosperity.

In an atmosphere of social tolerance, efforts should be made to synthesize some positions which formerly seemed controversial, and to harmonize interests which might have previously been considered antagonistic.

In effect, essential tensions should be reduced to resemble the antagonism of body muscles which, while opposing each other in their functional performance, make it possible for the body to move and live on.

Thus, generally speaking, we have been able to pave the way towards tripartite partnership in a country like Bulgaria, which is undergoing radical changes in a very difficult transition period. Many traditional branches and fields of activity have to be reorganized, unemployment unfortunately goes up to unprecedented levels and, in order to fight it, the joint efforts of the employers' organizations, the labour unions and the State are needed. It is, of course, a matter of restructuring and new investment policies. But above all, this is a matter of social responsibility. There is an urgent need for an elaborate strategy for the creation of new jobs and this is not a matter of wishful thinking nor is it an argument to revive bureaucracy in state institutions or public offices.

It takes a higher degree of social cohesion and holistic self-organization of the social partners to promote new ideas and new products, new forms of business interaction and new instruments to meet the challenge of change. For instance, working with the Committee on the Promotion of Cooperatives, I found it useful to get to know the Employers' point of view as compared to that of workers'. I took part in a unique optimization process leading to a better understanding of the motivation of the two groups, which are altogether necessary, but not sufficient unto themselves, to solve a problem.

My conviction as a scientist and as representative, of the Association of Bulgarian Employers' is that a lot remains to be done. The aforementioned problems touch upon the general understanding of democracy as the freedom to produce by way of decent work. This should be equally important to employers and to employees, and to the State itself, if it is to be a democratic state.

Finally, I wish to refer to a possible contribution that my Bulgarian colleagues are willing to make, provided that the ILO finds that it is worthwhile. We stand ready to deploy in Bulgaria a regional office for the promotion of cooperatives, given the centennial traditions of my country in this field as well as the need to create new opportunities for decent work for more and more people.

Original Russian: Mr. MUKASHEV (Workers' delegate, Kazakhstan) — First of all I should like to extend warm greetings to all the participants in this world labour forum and wish you success in your work, good health and well-being. I should also like to express my thanks for the honour which has been given to me with this opportunity to speak to you.

The Reports of the Chairman of the Governing Body and the Director-General of the International Labour Office contain a detailed analysis of problems of social welfare. Many of the points made in the Reports vividly mirror the situation in our young Republic, which has just celebrated the tenth anniversary of its independence.

In Kazakhstan we attach great importance to cooperation with the ILO and appreciate its assistance and participation in educational and training programmes. In just the last three years, we have held several symposia and conferences with ILO participation on the problems of social development in a period of globalization.

In Kazakhstan we consistently implement all the provisions of the tripartite programme of cooperation signed between our country and the ILO. I should like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and our thanks to the specialists in the Moscow Area Office, and I would also like to thank the directors of the International Labour Office for their assistance.

We, for our part, will be happy to inform our colleagues from the International Labour Organization about the social and economic situation in Kazakhstan. We would also like to report on the work of our trade union federation to develop mutually advantageous and constructive cooperation. In the last few years we have seen major political, economic and social changes in Kazakhstan, and there has been far-reaching reform. We are gradually concluding our shift to a mixed economy and free market economics, and we can now clearly see positive social and economic development. The average salary, minimum wage and pension levels in Kazakhstan are the highest in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and are continuing to rise. We have paid off arrears on wages for people in the state sector, and pensions are now being paid on time as well. We are paying more attention to domestic producers and agricultural workers and are developing medium-sized and small businesses more quickly. With the participation of the trade unions we have drawn up and are implementing a basic concept on the reform of labour relations and a national programme to combat poverty and reduce unemployment. We have also adopted new laws on labour and employment. We recently adopted the first law in a former Soviet republic on social partnership, which will allow us more actively and effectively to develop collective bargaining and to conclude agreements which will now have the force of law. We have also drawn up a draft state programme for social protection which defines a basic approach to a national social insurance scheme and includes further reform of the social welfare system in general.

Our trade union federation is now working to develop a partnership with the executive and legislative branches and with employers having any form of ownership. We are fighting for the protection of the constitutionally enshrined social and economic rights of our members and are participating fully in the changes taking place in the country. The trade unions consider it very important to draft a new law on

wages, in line with international standards on minimum subsistence levels and on other social benefits.

Our workers, like workers in so many developing countries, face a serious obstacle in unemployment. The unemployment level remains high. We also have problems with occupational safety and health. Our country and our trade unions need more support and technical assistance from the ILO to deal with these problems.

With ILO support, we have participated in an educational programme for trade union activists and workers to deal with these problems. We are grateful for the Organization's assistance.

Until recently, our country dragged its heels in ratifying the core Conventions. I can now report to the Conference that the Parliament of Kazakhstan recently ratified 15 Conventions, including all the core Conventions. We are attempting to ensure that the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is observed and implemented so as to strengthen democracy and the inalienable rights of workers. We are determined to develop further our links and cooperation with the International Labour Organization so as to enhance the solidarity and unity of trade unions around the world, so that we can achieve social justice and the noble goals of the International Labour Organization.

Mr. JEETUN (*Employers' delegate, Mauritius*) — I would like to thank the Director-General for his Report that deals with a wide range of issues of direct relevance to the ILO. Given the short time at my disposal, I have singled out three themes for consideration in my address. The first theme deals with decent work. The Report attempts to shed light on this concept. The basis for decent work remains the ILO Declaration which is promotional in nature. Decent work is a qualitative notion, a dynamic one that is bound to evolve over time, but which would not overstretch the concept. Decent work should not be given a quantitative dimension, a mathematical connotation. If it is difficult to define decent work, it will be still more difficult to understand what constitutes a decent work deficit. There is no objective criteria for measurement, and the Report admits that it is a very subjective concept. Each country should be free to define and interpret decent work depending on its own expectations and level of economic and social development.

If the ILO would like to define its vision, as the Report purports to do, it should not focus on deficit, which is a negative approach, it should try to promote a sense of ownership worldwide and seek to attain consensus which would improve the scope for success of the decent work agenda. It should be unifying, forward-looking, positive, and make all of us look to the future with hope for a better workplace, for a better business environment, and for a better world.

The second point that I would like to discuss is the Global Compact. The Global Compact emanates from the UN Secretary-General, but has an important component relating to the ILO. It will be essential for the ILO to be in the forefront in the promotion of the Global Compact. It will help the ILO to strengthen its network with other international institutions, to raise the profile of the ILO in the multilateral system and, at the same time, to reinforce its links with its constituents. It is a unique opportunity to promote the Declaration as well. In May this year the ILO, IOE, the

Pan-African Employers' Confederation and UTICA (Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie du Commerce et de l'Artisanat) held a symposium on the Global Compact in Tunis that came up with a Declaration on the Employers' Strategy for the promotion of Global Compact in Africa. The Pan-African Employers' Confederation endorses the Global Compact which is a voluntary initiative and which proposes acceptable principles and does not aim at fixing standards or rigid codes. Its implementation is flexible and based on the policy of social dialogue. The Global Compact can lead to greater social initiatives on the part of employers for the benefit of society at large. It deserves our full support.

The ILO can do a lot to spread the message of the Global Compact and carve a niche of its own as the most relevant social organization in the UN system.

The ILO has the advantage of being close to its constituents. It can help in training, in investment in human capital, in strengthening employers' organizations for dissemination of information, for sharing of experiences and of good practices. The Global Compact will also help networking and enterprises of all sizes, employers' organizations, main institutional actors like the ILO, IOE and other agencies of the UN system.

The third point of my address is devoted to the informal sector. It should not be forgotten that large, medium, small, micro and informal operators belong to the same family of enterprises — they all stand on the same solid foundation of entrepreneurship, initiative and private enterprise; they all contribute to employment, economic growth and the creation of wealth. It cannot be denied that the informal sector operates under numerous constraints attributed to a lot of adverse factors, political, economic and social. The informal sector is sometimes a symbol to show that the spirit of enterprise is still alive, but it is part and parcel of the private sector. There cannot be two private sectors, one old and one new, just as there cannot be two public sectors in the same country.

However, we will not render them a service or a favour if we further perpetuate the conditions of informality. The growth of the informal sector should not constitute a viable policy in itself. It is a self defeating strategy that will keep them excluded from the fruits of growth. The success of any action to help the informal sector should be gauged by the extent to which this sector declines. This may appear paradoxical, but there is no other path. For this to happen, there should be a broad framework, an appropriate strategy, and targeted policies to bring the informal enterprise in the mainstream of the overall economic structure. Such an approach will be beneficial to the entrepreneurs, their family, the workers, to the economy and to society at large.

The informal sector cannot flourish on its own — it is a myth — to flourish, to improve the quality of life and levels of income, it has to be integrated gradually into the overall economic system. The informal sector operators have to be given the opportunity and facilities to grow into micro or small enterprises and graduate into medium or large enterprises. This is no doubt a long process. We can make it happen if the general business environment is conducive to enterprise development, if policies are right and attitudes change.

Finally, the ILO, in particular, can accelerate this process, especially the Employment Sector that has

the competence to help in the development of a framework for the integration of the informal sector into the economy. There is a need for more studies and research by the ILO to facilitate this integration.

In such a framework employers' organizations will have a key role to play as the representative and recognized voice of employers nationally, both vis-à-vis the Government and trade unions. Our role will, inter alia, encompass developing linkages, management training, institutional support, access to markets and so on. We can thus promote sustainable economic and social development in an integrated manner so that no sector is left aside.

Original French: Mr. GAUTERIO-GALLO (*representative, World Union of Professionals*) — The expression “decent work” that the ILO uses to define the quality of integration into the labour market and into society, including the conditions of social protection and security in the future, reflects exactly what we, as professionals have been struggling for all over the world. Professionals are increasingly present in the labour market, especially in the so-called services sector, as a result of the globalization of knowledge and the technological breakthrough arising as inevitable developments.

As our ways of living and working change, a process of international integration and competition constrains the corporate world, as well as professionals and specialists, to adapt in order to survive. As a result of such adaptation, new strategies and structures must emerge as essential means to ensure adequate representation and participation. An organization such as ours, with millions of professionals from all over the world, cannot be excluded from the social dialogue needed to achieve decent work.

Workers and major employers enjoy the right to organize and to be represented in the International Labour Organization. Professionals, specialists, micro-industries and small industries should also have access to social dialogue and be allowed to contribute to the drafting of new fundamental standards that reflect more accurately today's globalized economy, in which employment is more and more precarious, whether in offices, production plants or in the fields.

We professionals, whatever our specialization, be it technical, humanistic, legal or medical, health, do not want the number of people excluded from society to increase, or poverty to expand further, while the possibilities of enjoying more social justice and equal rights continue to shrink. We want a society of inclusion, not a society of excluded people.

Currently, Labour laws favour employers' unilateral decisions. Wages are set in a situation of submission. Employers have a strong power that is not boundless and yet does impose itself.

Labour contracts are not contracts between equal partners. Therefore, basically the ILO Convention legislators worldwide should contribute a labour law, allowing for the weakest to be protected thanks to collective clauses. Whenever we meet to discuss a new world order, why do we not dare to dream of new rules and policies, able to regulate the globalized economy so that the process reaches more people and not only a few?

The very concept of decent work cannot exclude ethical principles from its scope. It must go beyond, be more comprehensive, and incorporate concepts of

human rights. As economically advanced countries incorporate such concepts in their legislation, what is going to happen to countries of the so-called periphery? Shall we have the capacity to access decent productive jobs, to make them freer, more equitable, secure and dignified? Professionals and their organizations, chambers, council associations or unions are essential agents in their countries, bound to act as human rights defenders and to oblige national authorities to respect and implement the ILO Convention.

Decent work should be applicable to an increasing number of people — professionals, corporate executives, most of whom do not work in a single working place any more. They do not go to the office, the office comes to them, via the information highways. Information and communication technologies are changing the labour configuration map. Home working, itinerant jobs, virtual offices and temporary services and other, more precarious work modalities that allow the strongest economically to exploit the weakest in a world of wired, unfaithful competition.

The World Union of Professionals believes that this campaign launched by the Director-General Mr. Somavia will be successful. Professionals remain on his side in the struggle for the dignity of work.

Ms. KNOWLES (*Employers' delegate, New Zealand*) — I should like to congratulate the President on her appointment and offer her my best wishes. The Director-General's Report is both detailed and thought-provoking, but I note with real concern that its late arrival has left constituents such little time to study it and certainly not in the depth that it warrants. It would be unfortunate if, given the lack of time for comprehensive study and input, there were disquiet that the ILO was not fostering true debate but had already come to its own conclusions.

This year the focus of the Report is on making decent work happen. What is meant by decent work is far from clear, but there can at least be agreement that the principles set out in the ILO Declaration form a minimum floor, and that understandably, once the minimum has been reached, more will be sought. It is also agreed, as the Report emphasizes, that decent work is a highly subjective concept and one that each nation must define for itself. What is not clear, however, is how to achieve decent work for all.

The Report states that the ILO has reorganized its work programme around four strategic objectives, of which the first is standards and fundamental principles and rights at work. However, it has to be remembered that the process by which standards are arrived at is not necessarily an indication of general agreement. Employers particularly may often feel their point of view has been neglected. I raise this here because as an Employer Vice-Chair for the discussions leading to the adoption of the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), I feel a special responsibility for following its progress, given the express disappointment of the Employers' Group at the prescriptive nature of the final document and the consequent concern that few countries would find it ratifiable. Thus far there have been two ratifications. This compares with 30 for the same period for the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which was unanimously accepted by the Conference and which a mere two years later has 74 ratifications.

As I also said last year, for the ILO to retain its unique position and credibility on the world stage demands a move to widely ascribed principles, not prescription-creating barriers to employment.

Nothing can substitute for good governance and sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies to create and foster sustainable employment. That is not to say social goals must be sacrificed to economic efficiency but it is a question of accepting that there is no one right answer and an integrated policy strategy focusing on fostering job creation is vital.

Because there is no doubt that the best way to avoid a life of poverty is through paid employment. Accordingly, there can be little argument that the overriding priority for each member State must be job creation. Indeed, so fundamental is this that it must be the standard against which all ILO programmes and policies are tested. The question: will this policy encourage or hinder job creation?

Providing genuine jobs for individuals is not something governments can do on their own. A thriving private sector is essential. Governments must adopt policies that encourage entrepreneurial activity, foster sound investment and enable markets to function effectively. It goes without saying that jobs cannot be created to order. The economic climate must be supportive if real job creation is to occur.

The ILO must focus more strongly on those conditions needed to create sustainable employment. It must likewise identify barriers preventing enterprises from providing ongoing decent work. And, most importantly, it must not itself create barriers by devising standards that have the paradoxical effect of safeguarding and enhancing jobs for some, while excluding others from even starting work.

I agree with the Report's subtitle that the decent work deficit is a global challenge that needs to be addressed, but I caution that just as decent work is itself a subjective notion, so too will be what comprises any deficit and how to rectify it. One thing is certain, however, and will be common to all: there is no quick fix, no one size fits all remedies that can be applied.

The ILO has a dual role in assisting the attainment of decent work. By encouraging member States to adopt healthy policy mixes based on examples of best practice and providing practical help and assistance, the ILO is well placed to ensure that countries find their own answers.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the ILO's unique importance in providing practical help to constituents. Much is made of its move towards a knowledge organization. I would hope that that move is not at the expense of ILO delivery of high-quality technical cooperation projects.

If that focus is not maintained, then there is a real danger of decent work becoming just another philosophical mantra. That must not be allowed to happen.

Mr. KHAN (*Workers' delegate, Bangladesh*) — I congratulate the President on her election to chair this session and convey my warmest greetings to all participants of this International Labour Conference. I heartily thank and congratulate the Director-General for having presented a lucid and realistic Report depicting the latest progress of the decent work approach, globalization and relevant activities by the ILO and its constituents following the evolution of the present requirements to fulfil the strategic objectives set forth.

The Report in three parts, entitled *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, provides a very pragmatic analysis of the complex implementation process of the decent work approach. It is rightly observed in the Report that there has been a big rise in income and the capacity for innovation and work creation, but these gains are accompanied by persistent inequality, growing exclusion, insecurities caused by economic fluctuations and the feeling that the ground rules are unfair. The gaps and imbalances between countries are vast and growing. The Report currently reflected that in today's world there are two competing visions of globalization. One defines globalization as the source of wealth and welfare, viable and sustainable, and the other views globalization as systematic destruction of the planet and its workers in the interests of the wealthy few and multinational corporations. Far from being a source of progress, it is a menace to humanity.

I fully agree that the ILO's tripartite structure is a crucial asset in the endeavour to meet these challenges, for the legitimacy of policies, standards and recommendations based on a tripartite consensus is strong. Its success entirely depends upon basic trends, in mindsets and methods of work.

The Director-General's Report on the situation of the workers of the occupied Arab territories as regards new development, labour legislation, industrial relations and social security as well as the economy and the labour market, and the report on *Forced and compulsory labour: a dynamic global picture* are accurate, informative and significant and merit the attention of this Conference. The problems need to be addressed as human issues of employment and labour.

Since his appointment, the Director-General has deserved the highest appreciation for his commendable and innovative performance and humanitarian approach to those teeming millions of silent destitutes.

Following the barbaric assassination of the Father of the Nation, Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family, along with his very young son Russel, Bangladesh had to undergo autocratic rule in different forms for about 21 years. The right to vote or the will of the people was virtually snatched away. Sheikh Hasina, after a hard and continued struggle, was able to restore the fundamental rights of the people and started democratization of the society at all levels.

Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh is now not only self-sufficient but has surplus food production and has managed to overcome the adverse effects of the Asian economic crisis and bring in some discipline in banking and the distribution of inputs in agriculture. Other achievements are the reduction in severe poverty and illiteracy and the introduction of micro-credit and modest social safety nets as well as different forms of poverty alleviation programmes to accelerate social development. Sheikh Hasina is a pioneer for urban development and rural employment of women. Now she has turned out to be one of the rare personalities and the champion of peace, progress and democracy.

This ILC is being held at a time when with the implementation of WTO policies and compulsions in the member countries, especially the developing countries, domestic industries are struggling to survive under the ever-increasing fierce competition of products from the developed countries. The Government of Bangladesh, like those of many other developing

countries, is being sandwiched under the pressure from donors, WTO and the banks to accelerate the pace of effective reforms and restructuring without loss of time on the one hand, and the immediate practical impact of trade liberalization along with denationalization on the life of workers and ordinary people on the other. The present Government of Bangladesh is greatly concerned to protect the interests of workers and is in vigorous pursuit to find different alternatives to reform and restructuring.

Bangladesh, as a developing country, can face the challenges and consequences of globalization during the transition only if the flow of FDI from donors, Bretton Woods institutions and other external aid-giving agencies is increased by leaps and bounds without harsh unrealistic conditionalities and technical assistance is provided, including planned development of human resources and export of manpower to the developed countries without restriction or hindrance.

Dialogue amongst the ILO and its constituents and with banks and donors should be introduced and strengthened with fundamental changes in mindsets and methods of work. The concept of global days of peace and tranquillity shall remain a mere dream if millions continue infinitely to be forced into poverty, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, underdevelopment, untold miseries and subhuman conditions. Poverty anywhere is bound to jeopardize peace everywhere. We look forward to enhanced ILO assistance and cooperation for all the days to come. I wish the ILC a every success. Long live Bangladesh! Long live the ILO!

Original French: Mr. WADE (Employers' delegate, Senegal) — It is indeed a great pleasure for me once again to bring to you the message of the Senegal employers in such a distinguished forum and before such a diverse and varied audience. I would like to congratulate the President wholeheartedly on her distinguished election to the Presidency of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. I extend my congratulations and good wishes to the members of the Bureau, who will make a valuable contribution to the fulfilment of these important tasks. I would also like, on behalf of the employers of my country, to tell you how happy we are to share with you here at the 89th Session our vision of one of the most important concerns concerning economic and social development, namely reducing the decent work deficit.

In this context, our institution will be a safe harbour for all those who can no longer believe in a world that has lost hope. Consequently, we need to enforce credibility and effectiveness with courage, lucidity, perseverance and originality in order to try and find solutions to the problems facing humanity.

Indeed, we must rise high to become the beacon for the organizations oriented to the future, economic action and social progress.

The ILO needs to be considered henceforth as a modern organization capable of adjusting to rapid and deep changes in the world, which are swift and far-reaching in equal measure.

While we welcome the decisive activities conducted by the Director-General which have contributed so much to the defence of human rights and the notions of dignity and freedom, we also have to question the relevance of some Conventions which have become obsolete over the years.

We have to cover new points, new items, which relate to today's problems and today's issues but we also have to abandon those texts which are no longer in line for today's requirements.

We must make tripartism our main force and impose it on all national and international tribunals. All our strategies should be built around enterprise.

The 89th Session of the International Labour Conference comes at a time when we are looking for solutions that are not only original but also sustainable, which can reinforce the competitiveness of enterprises and safeguard employment as well as combating unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Today, in the context of globalization and rapid technological development, every enterprise must develop a strategy for better integration into the world market. In this context, what can the enterprises do? Just like employers' organizations, they must reduce the decent work deficit while facing the problems of unemployment, under-employment and poverty in these, the so-called "least developed countries".

During the third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels in May this year, I had the privilege as a member of the tripartite delegation of the ILO to present the vision and role of the employers to create jobs and fight poverty.

I said repeatedly that the responsibility of employers should be both civil and social and therefore it is up to us to ensure that every man and woman should have access to productive, decent work in conditions of liberty, equality, security and dignity.

Personally, I remain convinced that decent work will only become feasible if there is a joint stance and a united vision by the social partners in each country.

Therefore, the role of the employers should be, more than ever before, to promote activities to adjust the contractual framework in order to facilitate new forms of work that reconcile the creation of jobs, quality of life, solidarity and productivity. This is why I consider social dialogue a method for examination of all questions relating to enhancement of the competitiveness of enterprises and the world of work.

We, in our country, have a long tradition of dialogue. Dialogue in all social strata functions as a regulator and moderator. The generalization of social dialogue and the consolidation of its foundations will reinforce social security. Social dialogue has the advantage of bringing together different points of view and thus finding mutually acceptable, reasonable, prompt, clear, win-win solutions. Our Government organized last January the first national forum on national dialogue, and the result was a draft voluntary social taxes scheme, based on tripartism. I would also like to inform you of a recent initiative by our organization, the National Council of Employers of Senegal, to set up a permanent mechanism for cooperation by the private sector and the legislative authorities on the examination of all issues of enterprise and employment.

As regards the informal sector, any direct action can only prolong its existence in Senegal. Very few activities are undertaken by informal sector organizations to identify and set up pathways between the informal and the formal sector, encourage the economic operators of the informal sector to show greater responsibility and solidarity in terms of employment, decent work and social protection, and move gradually towards an enterprise culture.

I remain convinced that, first of all, we shall not resolve the problem of employment or decent work by reducing productivity, which is a positive influence on employment and a source of economic efficiency and competitiveness and secondly we shall not resolve the problem of employment or decent work if we impede investment. Investment and employment also interact; they are complementary, they are not competitive.

To conclude, I can assure you of our support and our willingness to continue examination of this issue.

Original Spanish: Mr. ROCHA (Workers' adviser delegate, Mexico) — The fourth report of the board and the Director-General's Report are documents with which we can fully agree, and we recognize that decent work deserves to be the central part of our discussion. I am going to offer a few comments on behalf of the Mexican workers.

In this rapidly changing world, we see that many of the changes are beyond the visions of our society as a whole, and this leads us to reflect about where we are and where we are going. In a world so varied and complex, in which so many of the social actors and interlocutors have disappeared, others have changed substantially, and some are surviving and growing stronger.

In this battle, the union movement has been called into question and very seriously weakened, often by its own members. This is no doubt because its credibility and legitimacy have been exhausted. This affects modern, solidarity-based unions as well as old-fashioned corporate ones. Any enterprise or business in any sector will always require quality and optimum efficiency from its workers, however, for workers to be able to offer quality and productivity, they have to be first to benefit in terms of working conditions and salaries, the unions must have a thrust to their struggle.

Talking about decent work involves calling for greater respect for human rights, respect for migrants' rights, respect for minorities and differences, but above all the workers must have the opportunity to participate in the transformations which affect their income. Decent work does not just offer immediate rewards: it provides retirement at an appropriate age, with social and economic security. We think that private initiative in the form of employers plays a fundamental role in creating employment, but the State also must participate and must see to it that labour legislation and international labour agreements are complied with.

In Mexico, ongoing social dialogue is a clear signal of change. The relationship between workers and employers, while antagonistic, is essential. It has been influenced by different ideologies over the centuries, but real change can only be attained with new talents and renewed efforts.

More than ever, workers are responsible for their own jobs. A static form of unionism and apathetic workers are the antithesis of decent work. The State, the business community, corporations and the workers have to be guarantors of the process of transformation, and they must think always of the common welfare. Decent work requires us to abandon lethargy and indifference. Protests must give way to proposals based upon reality and not cocooned in ideology. Decent work requires us to embark on transformations, and will be our judge and companion. Unions have great responsibilities in this process without re-

nouncing the smallest achievement, we must struggle to defend the interests of the workers, wherever they may be. We union members have to move towards renovation. We also have to open ourselves up to the world and foster a renewed, participatory brotherhood. A government which claims to be a democracy must first of all correct inequalities. Inequalities can be cleared away by the creation of decently paid work and the extension of social security coverage. Freedom can only be secured through solidarity.

In this Conference, we are all united with dignity. We are united in demanding respect for our rights, and united in our struggle for decent work.

Mr. TEKLETSION (Employers' delegate, Eritrea) — It is with great interest that the Employers' Federation of Eritrea has studied the Reports of the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. We wish to express our satisfaction on the quality and clarity of presentation of the Director-General's Report *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. It is an excellent stock-taking on the progress thus far attained regarding the refined objectives of our Organization, and it facilitates our focus in the debate on the efforts required to further strengthen the ILO in its effectiveness. The list of steps taken in this sense is laudable. The need to develop the integrated approach in the decent work agenda, nationally and globally, is worth pursuing.

In the global and national effort progressively making up the decent work deficit consisting of the employment, the social protection and the social dialogue gaps, the private sector and employer organizations, in particular, have a serious contribution to make.

Let me now briefly mention what we in the Employers' Federation of Eritrea have done, modestly, in this regard during this last year. I had the honour and privilege personally to represent the IOE and to share my young Federation's experience in New York at a meeting called by the United Nations to discuss the role of the private sector in zones of conflict, to promote the Global Compact's nine principles. I took this opportunity to essentially evoke the productive and growth dividends of decent work and to address the labour standards component of the principles of the Global Compact in addition to those on environmental protection and those of respect for human rights.

In outlining the impact of conflict on the private sector, as well as the role of this sector in tackling the problems in zones of conflict, it was evident to me to emphasize the decent work agenda and approach of the ILO encompassing its tripartite approach of involving all the stakeholders in the problem.

Among other things, I cited the example of my Federation's efforts at bridge-building with the similar organization of our neighbouring country even during times of conflict and the national workshop my Federation convened to discuss the private sector's contribution in addressing the problems following a conflict.

The Employers' Federation of Eritrea carried out during the current year a brainstorming workshop to develop a five-year strategic plan with ILO assistance. In addition, my Federation has just established a National Committee on HIV at the workplace. We will be seeking funding resources for

programme development and implementation soon. We appeal to the ILO to continue to respond to our needs in this regard.

As the Director-General of the ILO has indicated on many occasions, decent work requires training and human resource development. In this respect the Employers' Federation of Eritrea is currently preparing to launch a programme of human resource develop-

ment to meet the acute, rehabilitative and developmental needs of the private sector emerging from periods of conflict. We hope the ILO and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Office will continue to provide critical help to meet our needs.

(The Conference adjourned at 7.45 p.m.)