

## Twelfth sitting

Thursday, 13 June 2002, 3 p.m.

*Presidents: Mr. Arbesser-Rastburg, Mr. Rampak*

### REPORTS

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

*Original German:* The PRESIDENT (Mr. ARBEZZER-RASTBURG) — We shall now resume the discussion on the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. RAY GUEVARA (*Secretary of State for Labour, Dominican Republic*) — Our country has received a great deal of assistance in the general context of labour cooperation. We would like to thank the ILO for what it has done for my country in social dialogue, jobs, technical cooperation, tripartism, child labour and other topics of great importance in the labour world.

The Government of President Rafael Hipolito Mejia believes in tripartism and social dialogue as a method for promoting the fundamental rights of workers and for achieving social progress.

As regards social dialogue and tripartism on 22 February this year, the Dominican Republic launched a diploma course in labour relations under the auspices of the Relacentro Project, in which representatives of the Government, employers and workers will receive instruction from experts in labour law, business and union matters. The Relacentro Project has asked the Secretary of State for Labour to take care of national coordination of the course.

With regard to collective bargaining, the Dominican Republic, represented by the Secretary of State for Labour, last year concluded an agreement with employers' and workers' representatives from the Dominican Association of Free Zones (ADOZONA), the National Federation of Workers in Free Zones and FENETRAZONA. The agreement is aimed at the welfare of workers in the free zone sector and contains programmes for housing, education and social security, to be implemented taking account of the difficult situation facing companies in the sector as a result of the reduction in demand owing to the slowdown in the economy.

The national Government has continued to abide by the agreement on social progress concluded with the National Council of Trade Union Unity (CENUS) in November 2000.

We held the first employment fair from 8 to 10 March, and this is a new public policy instrument to promote employment as an effective means of combating poverty. Some 50 of the biggest private companies in the country took part in the event and the Ministry of Labour held 18 workshops for vocational

training. In April the project entitled "Young people and first jobs" was launched. This offers technical training to young people aged between 16 and 24 and vocational training in both new and established companies.

This year we aim to assist 2,000 young people who have dropped out of the school system. The Ministry of Labour is implementing this by means of government funds allocated to the Institute for Technical and Vocational Training (INFOTEP).

By means of the "Youth and Employment" programme under the auspices of the Inter-American Development Bank, the aim is to create jobs for young people on a low income and for displaced persons, promoting access to the labour market. In the space of three years, the programme will have provided training for more than 37,500 beneficiaries in jobs sought by the business sector. In the field of social protection, the Dominican social security system will begin to operate in November for health-related matters and in February next year for pension-related matters.

One of our essential concerns is to get gender policies established on a wider basis. For this reason we have set up an Under-Ministry of Labour responsible for promoting gender equality in employment.

Our country is seeking a basis of cooperation and solidarity, which generates jobs and is a true instrument of social inclusion and an effective means of combating poverty.

The Dominican Republic is working energetically to achieve the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. In the coming weeks we will begin the second phase of the successful Constanza programme, to be followed by the Azua programme, with the San José de Ocoa programme achieving excellent results. A national social awareness campaign is also being conducted on the theme of putting an end to child labour.

The Secretary of State for Labour considers that social dialogue, based on confidence between employers, workers and the Government, must be a key instrument for reconciling market demands and social justice. This dialogue should contribute towards giving the social dimension of globalization a deeply rooted humanistic content.

*Original Japanese:* Mr. ITO (*Workers' delegate, Japan*) — Thank you very much for giving me an occasion to speak to the plenary. I represent the Japanese Trade Union Confederation.

Under the leadership of Mr. Somavia, the ILO has divided its work into four sectors — standards, employment, social security and social dialogue. The ILO has been working hard to achieve the objectives

set for each sector. The ratification of the core labour standards, included in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, has been well advanced. I commend this achievement. However, it is disappointing to note that the effective application of these core standards in each country has been rather slow. In order to make significant progress in application, I believe that technical cooperation should be strengthened to analyse the causes of non-application, and to propose adequate technical assistance.

The content of the Global Report on child labour is improved by taking into account the experiences of previous discussions on the Global Report. I think there is much to improve. The discussions on the Global Report should be such that it could lead to clarifying difficulties of application of standards and contribute to finding effective technical assistance to reduce the numbers of children involved in the worst forms of child labour.

Last November, the Global Employment Forum was organized to discuss the nature of employment in the age of globalization. The opinions expressed in this Forum were reported to the 283rd Session of the Governing Body in March 2002. The Governing Body, in response, has adopted a Global Employment Agenda, which shows the direction of ILO activities for employment. I welcome this agenda, which constitutes the foundation of the ILO's employment strategy for decent work.

The ILO has established the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, composed of 25 prominent personalities, to analyse in detail the social aspects of globalization, including employment and social security. This committee is an epoch-making initiative for the ILO. In order for this committee to produce clear orientations, the ILO should propose philosophy and theories that are based on its concrete experiences.

I would also like to express my opinion on social dialogue. It is well known that the most important and the most specific feature of the ILO is its tripartite approach involving governments, employers and workers. It seems to me that this tripartism has become a little weakened within the ILO. The Bureau for Workers' Activities and the Bureau for Employers' activities should have a more important status within the Office, so that they can influence the ILO's structure and strategy. I regret that they have only a low status as part of the Social Dialogue Sector. ILO internal structure should be improved, so that tripartism is given a more effective role within the Office.

Recent Office activities give me the impression that tripartism and tripartite structures, such as the Governing Body and the Conference, the most important decision-making organs of the ILO, are gradually becoming a kind of seminar, meeting or forum, while NGOs are gaining influence. In other words, the Office may be becoming too much of a unilateral decision-maker with regard to ILO activities and, at the same time, reducing the role of tripartite organs such as the Governing Body.

I agree that the ILO has achieved good work in recent years. I appreciate it very much. But we must think about the future of the ILO. I think that the time has come to discuss very seriously, within the Governing Body, how to strengthen tripartism and what would be a more appropriate structure of the Office.

The ILO should be a beacon of hope for all people suffering cruelly under globalization. It is the duty of governments, employers, workers and the Office to make every effort to make this beacon brighter. After all, eradicating poverty and oppression would lead to the end of conflict throughout the world. Let us work together.

Mr. SWEENEY (*Workers' delegate, United States*) — Thank you for allowing me to comment on the Director-General's Report on behalf of the 40 million people who live in union households in the United States.

First, I commend the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, on the most professional and comprehensive report ever to be issued by the ILO. The candour and clarity of the Report are much appreciated. I believe that the Report reflects the impact of the management and strategic budgeting techniques instituted by the Director-General which have brought us closer to our goal of harnessing our tripartite potential, together for the common good.

We receive this Report at a time when this Organization, as well as many other international organizations, is struggling to meet the awesome challenges being presented to us by the global economy, and by the threats to peace and stability that can be seen all around our world today.

I believe, as the Report states, that we have indeed made great progress towards many of our goals. Certainly, the focus on child labour has been raised higher than ever.

I am proud that we have expanded our action and our commitments when it comes to fighting the scourge of HIV/AIDS, confronting the conditions and expansion of export processing zones and putting in place strategies to promote the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. I also believe the creation of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization is a long overdue measure of our increased commitment to make the global economy work for working families and to create decent work as a real worldwide effort to overcome poverty and exclusion.

The Director-General's Report also reminds us of the complexity of the tasks before us, and we need no reminder of the additional challenges we face as a result of increased conflicts and tensions around the world. AFL-CIO believes we must rise to these challenges not by instilling fear, but by fostering hope. This requires an increased global offensive for equitable, sustainable democratic development. It requires a renewed dedication to the defence of basic human rights, freedom of association and the right to organize, as well as freedom from starvation, homelessness, ignorance and disease. We fully realize that this requires new global attention, cooperation and action on the part of all nations in shaping the course of globalization.

The American labour movement believes now, more than ever, that we need to redouble our efforts to struggle for global justice because since there are no justifications for terror or aggression, we must not hesitate to change the conditions that can fuel such actions or to address the inequities that can result from future conflicts.

In that regard, in particular, we strongly support the Director-General's recommendations, including that of raising the resources to fully engage the ILO in the

work necessary, within the mandate of this Organization, to help Palestinian workers and their families rebuild their lives. The funding for this should come from donor countries and the ILO budget surplus.

As our AFL-CIO Executive Council noted last November, “in a global economy with nations, markets and people increasingly interdependent, we can defend an open society only by extending justice, spreading democracy, empowering working people and defending human rights”. No longer can islands of prosperity survive untouched in oceans of despair. Interdependence means we are all vulnerable to the actions of others. Justice demands not only that the guilty be punished, but that the innocent be empowered. Freedom means not simply the open exchange of goods, but the guarantee that every individual will have the economic and social freedom needed to develop his or her potential to the fullest. We believe that only by leading a global campaign to reduce desperation and empower peoples to determine their own destinies in a democratic manner will peace and security be realized for people all around the world.

We offer our deep appreciation to the Director-General for his fine Report and for his continued excellent leadership.

*Original Arabic:* Mr. EL FASSI (*Minister of Employment, Vocational Training, Social Development and Solidarity, Morocco*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, Compassionate! It is indeed a pleasure to present on my behalf and on behalf of the Kingdom of Morocco our congratulations on your election as President of this session, and we wish you every success in presiding over this meeting. I should like to join the previous speakers in reaffirming the importance of the achievements of the ILO during the period covered by the Report of the Director-General, particularly as regards the reinforcement and promotion of workers’ fundamental rights, social protection, promotion of employment and stimulation of social dialogue. I hope that we will, at the same time, emphasize technical cooperation programmes as efficient mechanisms for the achievement of the objectives which are the very foundation of the ILO, particularly in this age of globalization, which calls for a redoubling of the efforts, of the ILO, and giving attention to social development issues and the fight against social exclusion and unemployment.

It has become essential to develop an approach which will address in a new manner the question of the foreign debts of the developing countries as these accumulated debts constitute an obstacle to their economic and social development.

I should also like to take this opportunity to mention that our Organization must improve its performance with regard to the establishment of standards, and in particular in what concerns expanding the basis of consultation on the identification of potential areas for new standards.

Morocco has made the challenge of social protection a priority in the Government’s social programme. We have drawn up a draft code for basic healthcare coverage, reflecting a practical concrete implementation of one of the fundamental human rights — the right to health.

Social protection being one of the major areas of attention of the Government of Morocco, it is determined to pursue the implementation of policies aimed at creating many areas of harmony between the social

partners. That is why we have established a mechanism for consultation and dialogue between the Government and the economic and social partners. This has enabled the organization of several rounds of meetings in the field of social consultation, crowned by a declaration signed on 1 August 1996 and the signature in April 2000 of the agreement, which was in fact a new social agreement making the social question, labour-related and employment-related issues and housing one of the major objectives on the way to achieving social peace, a precondition for all economic and social development. Recently, we ratified the Worker’s Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135).

In order to encourage investment and combat bureaucracy, His Majesty Mohammed VI decided to delegate government competencies in this area to local authorities, and laid down a plan to combat poverty, and extend power and drinking water networks to the rural areas.

I am particularly pleased to stress the importance of the good technical cooperation relations existing between the Kingdom of Morocco and the ILO during the past two years, which has enabled the organization of a number of workshops, including debates on freedom of association, social dialogue, health, and occupational safety, as well as implementation of a large part of IPEC, and tripartite meetings with PRODIAP on social dialogue. Morocco would like to deepen its cooperation with the ILO in a number of other priority social areas, particularly those involving the stimulation of employment, improving working conditions, and strengthening social protection and social dialogue.

I believe it is necessary that the ILO develop its relations and cooperation with the European Union so that developing countries can benefit from such cooperation, particularly those which suffer from poverty and social exclusion.

I should like to take this opportunity to mention the efforts made by the Kingdom of Morocco to combat child labour. In this respect the Government has taken a number of measures for the protection of Moroccan children in general and children at work in particular. These efforts have culminated in the recent ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Finally, I must take this opportunity to mention the very serious situation in the Middle East, in particular the situation of all the segments of the Palestinian people as a result of the economic blockade and collective punishment practices by Israel, in its continuing aggression against the Palestinian people, in complete disregard of international conventions and instruments and security council resolutions. I should like to stress the importance of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Director-General concerning the situation of workers in Palestine, and the need to implement those resolutions. I hope that our Organization will be able to establish a fund for provision of assistance to Palestinian workers, to help them cope with unemployment and the negative effect of the economic blockade.

*Original Portuguese:* Mr. PAIS ANTUNES (*Secretary of State for Labour, Portugal*) — On behalf of the Portuguese Government, I would like to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their elections.

They have a great responsibility to manage the work of this session, and I am sure they will discharge their duties extremely well.

I would like to offer our congratulations to the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the secretariat of the ILO for the quality of the reports which have been presented to us, in which the basic challenges and objectives of the Organization are laid out before us. The challenges and objectives of the last two years have been dealt with successfully, as we move towards the general objective which is to provide decent work for all children, women and men. The programme and budget for the ILO for the 2000-01 biennium was the first to be designed on the basis of the prime objective of promoting decent work. This translated into the four strategic objectives which the ILO defined, i.e. the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work, the objective of full employment, social protection (as an expression of social development) and social dialogue. The ILO, as the organization responsible for defining fundamental labour standards and for promoting and monitoring their implementation, fulfils its mission with these four objectives, which it defined and which seek to tackle the main problems and fundamental needs as people all around the world.

For this reason, the Portuguese Government supports the structuring of the ILO programme and budget around these four pillars, the objective of which is to promote decent work.

The Director-General's Report on the ILO's activities over the biennium demonstrate the progress which has been achieved in respect of each of these four strategic objectives and also demonstrates that much remains to be done.

In regard to the first strategic objective — promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work — large number of Conventions have been ratified, which certainly demonstrates the will of the member States to improve the working and living conditions of their populations, irrespective of the political and economic systems in which they work and irrespective of their level of development.

However, we must also highlight that the ILO promotional and technical assistance activities have made a decisive contribution to achieving this progress in regard to the ratification of the fundamental ILO Conventions. Nevertheless, much still remains to be done in order to achieve these objectives, as is apparent from the report on child labour which the Conference has been analysing this year. The ILO should continue to be the locomotive of world mobilization against child labour, by means of its technical assistance and its system to monitor ratified Conventions.

A few words now about the second strategic objective — create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income. It is essential that fundamental rights be fully respected in this area. What remains to be done in this sphere is a task of considerable magnitude which is jointly the responsibility of the social partners, the governments, the regional organizations and the international community as a whole. It is necessary to create more productive work, and at the same time to promote the recognition and the effective application of the basic rights of the workers, particularly in the so-called informal economy.

The third strategic objective — enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all —

covers one of the most important aspects of the protection of workers, that is prevention, occupational safety and health. It is an area in which indicators are the source of great concern. Next year this objective would merit a general discussion in the framework of the International Labour Conference in order to define future guidelines for the ILO in this particularly sensitive area of social protection in the workplace.

The final objectives — strengthen tripartism and social dialogue — has a fundamental role to play in help with good governance, the promotion of the right of peoples to social and economic development, the prevention of social conflicts and the strengthening social cohesion. This social dialogue must continue to be based upon the tripartite mechanism which has characterized it to date.

The Portuguese Government recognizes the excellent work done by the ILO and appreciates the technical and financial support provided by the Organization. We welcome the fact that a regional office will be opening in Lisbon in the very near future, which will contribute to strengthening the participation of our authorities and the social partners in Portugal in the activities of the ILO. It will give us the opportunity to enhance our privileged relationship with the Portuguese-speaking countries, and particularly East Timor, which has recently joined the international community, a move on which we must all congratulate it.

I do not want to conclude without expressing the full support of my country for the Declaration by the Spanish Presidency of the European Union on the Middle East. The creation of jobs and social dialogue are indispensable elements to achieve peace in the region. It is an obligation of the international community to pay particular attention to this whole reconstruction effort.

Ms. BANNERMAN (*Minister of Manpower Development and Employment, Ghana*) — On behalf of the Ghanaian delegation, I would like to echo the sentiments expressed by various other speakers and warmly congratulate the President on his election. It is our conviction that, with the support of the other officers of the Conference, to whom we also extend congratulations, this Conference will accomplish its tasks successfully. I also wish to commend the Director-General for his erudite and insightful Report on the progress made by the ILO towards making the world of work a stimulating and rewarding place for all its stakeholders.

We live and work in a globalized market economy where the majority of the world's population still suffer inhumane and worsening living conditions and operate in a hostile working environment. We are confronted with serious problems of child labour, increasing poverty, and the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS. The magnitude of these problems requires us to review our strategies more frequently to help us determine our strengths and weaknesses and design appropriate responses with renewed vigour and sense of purpose.

The exploitation of children for labour thrives on poverty and ignorance. In Ghana, as in many developing countries, unscrupulous adults exploit the ignorance of poor parents and the innocence of children to recruit and exploit children for labour. Quite often, poor unsuspecting parents are lured into handing over their children to traffickers who pose as benevolent

prosperous people, offering to provide training and a better life for them.

Innocent children are often encouraged or coerced into working for small payments to meet their own immediate needs, or those of the family. Families and communities are often ignorant of the consequences of child labour, especially the fact that child labour perpetuates poverty. They therefore use their own children for labour instead of sending them to school, even if they can afford to do so.

Working children lose the opportunity to be cared for properly at home, to receive a consistent formal education, social guidance, and adequate nutrition and health care. The end result is that they do not have the opportunity for proper physical, emotional, educational and social development. At the same time, they are exposed to social and environmental hazards, leading to poor health. Most of these children grow up into adults with little or no marketable skills, and become caught up in the illiteracy-poverty cycle, with little or no prospect of breaking out.

Over the years the Government of Ghana has shown commitment in ensuring the survival, protection and development of the child by creating institutional structures to deal with issues relating to children, and passing laws, such as the Children's Act (Act 560) to protect children.

Our Constitution recognizes that every child has a right to be protected from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to its health, education or development.

In addition, Ghana has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). In March 2000, the Government of Ghana signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO for the elimination of child labour under the IPEC programme, starting with the worst forms of child labour.

To further our commitment a national steering committee on child labour has been set up and a child labour unit established to work with other development partners for the elimination of child labour from our country.

The elimination of the worst forms of child labour is now high on the Government's development agenda. There were previously no specific laws on child trafficking, but such a law has now been incorporated into our new labour bill. Meanwhile, our Criminal Code has been amended to include specific laws on human trafficking. Last year a statistical monitoring programme on child labour was commissioned.

In recognition of the indispensable role played by women in the development of children, a new ministry has been created with the sole responsibility of monitoring women's and children's welfare. In addition, a minister has been appointed to oversee the education of girls in Ghana.

The scale of the challenges arising from child labour is such that neither the ILO, nor its social partners can solve these problems acting alone. We are convinced that real progress will come only through coherent international action based on national policies that focus on children and lead to measurable, verifiable changes in their quality of life. With this in mind, we call for stronger interagency cooperation in fashioning responses that will emancipate families from poverty and ignorance. Such cooperation would

also eliminate duplication and promote efficient use of resources.

Notwithstanding all the various programmes and initiatives that have already been undertaken, a lot more still remains to be done and we are convinced that with commitment and determination we will be able to eliminate all forms of child labour in the not so distant future.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. VILLARAN DE LA PUENTE (*Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion, Peru*) — I would like to deal with one of the most important issues of this Conference, that of the informal economy.

Despite the great progress made in research, and the design of instruments and policies aimed at changing the situation, the informal economy is far from having been eliminated and, on the contrary, during the recent years it has grown in a sustainable way of greater opportunities and globalization.

As we have seen in the recent ILO report, decent work and the informal economy: "Contrary to earlier predictions, the informal economy has been growing rapidly in almost every corner of the globe, including industrialized countries — it can no longer be considered a temporary or residual phenomenon."

In the case of Peru, international cooperation agencies, including the ILO, NGOs, municipalities, academics and the State, we have successfully developed an efficient microfinance system and 87 financial institutions have grown at an annual rate of 15 per cent over the last ten years with 350,000 clients. There are more than 40 centres for entrepreneurship and technical innovation where we offer information, advice, training and commercial services to tens of thousands of micro- and small enterprises. COFORPI has granted more than a million titles of ownership to settlers, most of them entrepreneurs, in low-income areas of the country's cities. PROMPYME, a government agency, has channelled state spending towards micro- and small enterprises.

Despite all of this, the informal economy has grown. From being 58 per cent of the active workforce in 1990, it became 64 per cent in 2001. These statistics concur with the results of the ILO report on Latin America, in which they report that urban informal employment has grown from 50 per cent in 1990 to 58 per cent in 1997. We are talking about a majority of the people in our countries. Although our Government will continue to support and promote micro- and small enterprises through these and other instruments and policies, we are not satisfied and think that radical decisions must be made.

In December 2001, around 300 people died in a tragedy which took place in Mesa Redonda, a neighbourhood in Lima which is completely given over to the informal sector. A fire broke out which was impossible to contain and could not have been predicted. That was the day we understood that the informal economy is not only offensive and segregationist, but it also kills people. We came to the conclusion that we cannot put up with this type of situation any longer.

How can we halt the growth of the informal economy? How can we integrate the majority of the Peruvian population into the formal economy in a relatively short period of time? Although we must continue the efforts which we have made in trying to lower the demands of the current formal economy, it

is clear that this approach has not been effective in recent years.

This is why the proposal we are currently drawing up in the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion in Peru is that of designing a specific and temporary (between five and ten years) legal system for micro- and small enterprises. Rather than making them comply with a distant, rigid and inflexible legal system, our intention is to create a legal system which is closer to their situation, a set of standards and requirements which will enable them to become part of the formal economy in a short period of time.

This proposal is in line with the strategic objectives of the ILO which are to promote decent work, eliminate child labour, combat discrimination against women workers and entrepreneurs, implement realistic and applicable standards promote safety and health in the workplace and foster social dialogue, as reflected in the Director-General's Report.

We are designing a new legal system which has five well-defined areas: (i) the simplification of procedures and requirements; (ii) social security; (iii) labour systems; (iv) taxation systems; and (v) a complete framework for development.

It is clear that this is not going to be easy, and will involve breaking away from traditional patterns. Some people in the formal economy have suggested that we are creating "second class citizens" by proposing a legal system with fewer requirements and, therefore, fewer rights.

Our point of view is quite the opposite. We are not trying to reduce anybody's rights; we are trying to create rights for those who presently have none; we are trying to give the majority of the population which is excluded from the modern world access to its benefits.

We cannot allow for the majority of the Peruvian population, and populations in many other countries, to live outside the law, without any protection or rights. We must create a new social pact which involves everyone. Then, after we have created this social pact, we can establish dialogue with the minority of people who already form part of the formal economy, which we could call dialogue between two legal systems.

It would be wrong for the formal sector to be opposed to such dialogue, to insist on continuing as before and to deny the possibility of creating a new legal system. Not only would this have economic and social implications, but it would encourage the current incorrect strategy of tripartism, namely that of maintaining a privileged minority.

*Original Arabic:* Mr. AL-FAISALY (*Government delegate, Yemen*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! On behalf of my delegation it is an honour for me to congratulate the President, and the Vice-Presidents on their election to these high posts.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Director-General of my country's great respect for the tireless efforts that he has been making to achieve progress for the Organization. We have taken due note of the Director-General's Report and in particular, the section concerned with follow-up of fundamental rights and the details of the related technical programme.

With the assistance of the Regional Office in Beirut, Yemen has been able to devise a national em-

ployment strategy for 2001-02. We hope this will give rise to the convening of a symposium on employment, which would be the first of its kind in Yemen once studies of the macroeconomy, employment, salaries and wages, small businesses, working conditions and social security are complete.

Yemen has also taken measures in order to eliminate child labour. We have put in place a number of programmes and projects at national level in cooperation with social partners. Here, I would like to reiterate a point made by the Director-General about the need to strengthen cooperation within headquarters and between headquarters and the regional offices as the best guarantee for the success of this Organization.

The tragic fate of Palestinians — who are constantly the victims of genocide and attacks, whose goods and property are stolen and who are attacked by Israel — prove that Israel is making a mockery of international rights and violating human values, which are the very *raison d'être* of this Organization, which seeks to protect human beings. That is why the International Labour Organization must incorporate the Palestinian issue into its plans and programmes, in its capacity as a defender of wronged peoples. The attacks on Palestinian territory are sapping the efforts of the International Labour Organization in Palestine.

It is also absolutely imperative that we finish drafting the Recommendation on cooperatives in order to face up to the economic and social challenges resulting from economic liberalization. We also think that the proposed Recommendation will create a favourable atmosphere and strengthen the role of the Government in creating cooperatives. Cooperatives will then be able to become democratic undertakings whose efficiency will be based on the strengths of their members. The Government of Yemen has passed a law on cooperatives in line with the proposed Recommendation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say that it is absolutely essential that a new international instrument be drawn up to help governments to take up the challenges resulting from the informal sector. The informal sector has been expanding in countries in transition and in developing countries. It is a little known fact that Arab countries only receive about 3.8 per cent of the ILO budget for technical cooperation. We need a great deal more resources and that is why increased attention must be paid to this issue in future. We believe that the budget surplus for 2000-01 should be redistributed to the regions and countries that need it most.

Activities in the Arab and Asian countries and Arab and African countries are still to a great extent inadequate and lack coordination. That is why we hope that the Arab cooperation programmes will meet the aspirations of those countries.

We also hope that in future the Arabic language will be used more on the ILO's Internet site in cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization. This will make it possible for the 22 Arabic-speaking countries to better understand and keep abreast of the Organization's activities.

*Original Russian:* Mr. SAKHAN (*Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Ukraine*) — I would like to join those who have congratulated the President of the Conference and express my sincere hope that the

90th Session of the International Labour Conference, which is an anniversary Conference, becomes a milestone as we move towards our common goal of achieving decent work and social justice.

The reports submitted by the ILO Director-General and Chairperson of the Governing Body to the Conference are a response to today's challenges. They are truly very timely. Indeed, it is impossible to achieve the goals of decent work without providing social protection and suitable working conditions for those in the economy. Are the wide spread hazardous working conditions and occupational accidents and diseases there — as well as the absence of a mechanism to record and prevent them — in keeping with the principles of decent work?

The Government of Ukraine monitors the informal economy, and some of the results of this monitoring have been submitted in Report VI. With the help of this data, the Government is trying to influence the situation, particularly by requiring the registration of labour contracts between hired workers and employers who are natural — not juridical — persons. This allows the inclusion of workers in the existing social welfare system. But serious problems in the informal sector remain. The Government of Ukraine wholly supports the conclusions of the Report on the need to increase investment in the labour force, to assist the development of cooperatives, to create small businesses and provide the necessary political and organizational conditions for their development. These things will bring us closer to our goal: decent work for everyone.

We believe that international labour standards play a key role in this process. We also believe that the ILO should also examine such issues as the migration of workers and social protection for migrant workers because many of the work in the informal economy. Here, too, a lot of unsolved problems have accumulated.

I would also like to say a few words about the problems of child labour. In the past few years, all over the world, views on child labour have undergone significant changes. The concern expressed by the ILO, and the adoption of international standards, has not only transformed national legislation. It has also made the public at large increasingly aware that child labour is not merely the crippled life of an individual child. In the final analysis, it means the loss of generations.

It is with great pleasure that I can inform conference delegates that the Government of Ukraine is taking concrete political and practical steps toward ratification of Convention No. 182. This year for the first time, at the instructions of the Government, a state report was prepared on child labour. Ukraine has become a participant in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO.

In the past few years, cooperation between Ukraine and the ILO has become more dynamic and consistent. Ukraine has ratified 54 ILO Conventions, including the eight fundamental Conventions. Technical cooperation between the ILO and Ukraine encompasses many areas. ILO projects in Ukraine have practical results, they also influence state policy-making in the labour and social welfare sphere. For example, the ILO/UNDP project, financed by the Government of Switzerland and introducing a modular system of professional training for the unem-

ployed, is now included in the state employment programme. Another project, funding for which is still small, provides training for the handicapped. It is helping to create a new state policy as well as to change public attitudes toward this vulnerable category of people. Within the framework of the project "Ukraine: Furtherance of Basic Rights and Principles in the Labour Sphere", the Government and Ukraine's social partners are now receiving substantial assistance from the ILO in providing freedom of association and gender equality as well as in preparing a new labour code, which is being drafted by Ukrainian experts.

The Government of Ukraine has ratified a comprehensive programme against trafficking in persons.

Ukraine is grateful to the ILO for its plans, within the framework of technical cooperation, to help implement that programme.

We hope that in the future such cooperation will grow.

In conclusion, I would once again like to wish the Conference success.

*Original Russian: Mr. SHMAKOV (Workers' delegate, Russian Federation)* — My first comment is that the Report of the Director-General of the ILO submitted to the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference gives a comprehensive and detailed picture of what the Organization and its Members have accomplished in the past biennium.

These two years were years of intensive cooperation between the ILO and the Russian Federation within the framework of a programme of cooperation which we, as one of the partners of the social dialogue, think has been fairly successfully implemented.

In this connection, expressing the view of the vast majority of the trade union members of our country, I would like to express our satisfaction with the work that the experts of the ILO have done in analysing and presenting recommendations which have undoubtedly had a positive impact on the contents of the new Labour Code of the Russian Federation, especially insofar as they are consistent with the provisions of international labour standards. The Code has been adopted, it has begun operating and the hullabaloo surrounding it is dying down. Of course, the text is not ideal and cannot in itself completely satisfy the interests of all strata of Russian society. However, I would like to say that, this is the first time in the history of modern Russia, that legislative a text of such scope has been adopted as a result of true tripartite cooperation. In principle, if we cast aside speculation arising as a result of fears about a possible infringement of privileges, I stress privileges and not rights, then it is possible to consider the new Labour Code as a quite progressive document in the area of regulating labour relations. We think that the practice of conducting social dialogue at the national level could serve as an example for other Members of the Organization.

Two years ago, from this rostrum, I expressed our concern about a legislative Bill concerning the introduction in our country of a single social tax. Unfortunately, Russian lawmakers did not heed the opinion of trade unions. As a result, almost everywhere there has been a drop in the social protection of workers and their families. What is most worrying is the cut in support for the healthcare system and for the rehabilitation of individuals and, what angers us more, for the recreation and medical treatment of children in the

school holidays. The trade unions of the Russian Federation have sharply criticized this policy and demand that the Government of the Russian Federation abolish this single social tax and return to the insurance principles of social security.

Yesterday, the international community united in the International Labour Organization marked the first International Day to Combat Child Labour. It must be acknowledged that, in the Russian Federation (and this is confirmed by the Global Report of the ILO), this is a very topical problem. Unfortunately, until recently, this issue has not received enough attention in our country. But we hope that with the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), this year, the situation will improve and the Russian trade unions will do everything they can to contribute to that. We also hope that the presidential programme to combat child homelessness, which has been adopted this year and which the trade unions as a responsible social force have supported up to the hilt. This phenomenon which is a disgrace to our country.

In March of this year a third programme of cooperation between the ILO and the Russian Federation was signed. In the course of signing this document, the representatives of the workers of the Russian Federation touched upon a topic which, on the one hand, might seem not to have a direct connection with the event in question but which, on the other hand, is a *sine qua non* for the achievement of the underlying goals of the ILO.

What I mean is establishing a sustainable atmosphere of trust as a factor for the economic development of society. All participants in the social dialogue are interested in the strengthening of mutual confidence. The State requires the trust of society in order to satisfy the interests of society, it being the vocation of the State to serve society. If their businesses are to succeed, employers need the trust of the Government and their employees. Workers are the largest component of society and, at the same time, are the direct creators of all types of wealth. They must therefore also be confident that their abilities will be demanded in keeping with their investment in the development of society, business and the State.

We are deeply convinced that the interdependent chain of interest which promotes economic and social progress and the building of an effective civil society must form the basis of any dialogue, especially a dialogue which constitutes the very essence of the philosophy and work of the ILO.

I believe that the ideas of social dialogue will be further developed in our country as a result of the visit by the Director-General of the ILO, which is scheduled for July of this year. At all events, the Russian trade unions will give all possible assistance in that respect.

*Original French: Mr. THYS (representative of the World Confederation of Labour) —* We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General on his commitment to ensuring that the ILO's voice is heard and to gaining recognition for its rightful place on the international scene. We support him wholeheartedly in his efforts to place the International Labour Organization on the same level as the WTO and the Bretton Woods financial institutions. We feel that effective cooperation among these organizations and addressing the social dimension of globalization are all factors that can contribute to nar-

rowing the world's inequalities. Indeed, the international financial institutions have to understand the need to include in their action plans the social aspect, on the one hand, but also recognition of the fundamental principles and rights at work relating to the Conventions on freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

This is the context in which we would like the ILO to participate more significantly in major United Nations conferences such as the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey and the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg.

We all know that democratization of international organizations is necessary. To this end, at our World Congress in Bucharest we took a stand in favour of building a regional and international trade union countervailing force to stand up to neo-liberal globalization and supported the creation of an Economic and Social Security Council within the framework of the United Nations. This body would be charged with ensuring socio-economic regulation of the globalization process, with representation of trade unions and non-governmental organizations.

The World Confederation of Labour has always been very much involved in the standards-related process of the ILO, be it in the drafting of standards or in the supervisory machinery and complaints procedures. We are convinced of the need for a modern and strengthened ILO normative system. Such a review of the system will only be possible, as the Workers' group has stressed, when all three groups are jointly committed to improving the ILO's normative activities — not to weakening them. Unfortunately, it would appear that this joint initiative is still very much a Utopia today, given the positions taken by the employers and many governments.

Standards, like laws, are a specific response to a specific problem. The World Confederation of Labour, one of the ILO's partners, considers that modernization of the ILO's normative system implies that the ILO should be capable of genuinely protecting all workers and that it should seek the most effective means of promoting social justice, that respect for each person's dignity should be mandatory and, lastly, that standards should become the basis of a body of supra-national social legislation that cannot be evaded, the development of which should be managed on a tripartite basis.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the International Labour Organization on the creation of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Every effort must be made to ensure that it achieves its ultimate objective: that globalization should be a means of reducing poverty and unemployment in favour of growth and sustainable development. We would like to take this opportunity to sound the alarm against the current trend of criminalizing the social struggle. All too often criminal sanctions are imposed on defenders of social justice.

The World Confederation of Labour also expresses its solidarity with the workers and the people of Palestine. The spiral of violence is currently reaching a level rarely equalled in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



The WCL considers the military attacks on the Palestinian people to be unacceptable, just as it firmly condemns the terrorist acts which cause the death of innocent persons. We are convinced that the origin of the suffering of the Palestinian workers and people lies in the constant violation of the United Nations resolutions which stipulate the right of the Palestinian people to their own territory and State.

We condemn all forms of violence and appeal for a just and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel. Peace in the Middle East will only be possible if the United Nations resolutions are respected and applied. The international community must take all the diplomatic action necessary to secure the end of hostilities and the initiation of negotiations aimed at making it possible to set up a Palestinian State. The creation and implementation of an international peace-keeping force under the auspices of the United Nations would constitute a guarantee in this respect while strictly observing the United Nations resolutions. The ILO must strengthen its action in the Middle East in order to ensure that the rights of Palestinian workers are guaranteed.

Just and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel will be a key contribution to global détente and the peaceful resolution of other conflicts. Peace is crucial to achieving a world order based on solidarity and social justice as the foundations of real globalization with a human face.

*Original Arabic: Mr. AL-JUMA (Minister of Manpower, Oman)* — It is an honour for me to convey to you the greetings of the Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Qabus Bin Saïd, and those of his Government, and to express to you his wishes for full success in carrying out the work of this Conference. Allow me to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this session of the Conference. We have every confidence that his skills will guarantee the full success of this Conference, so that we may attain the goals which we have set for ourselves.

The Director-General, justly so, has highlighted a number of points in his Report, particularly the issue of child labour, in conformity with the basic principles embodied in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. You are undoubtedly aware of the social dangers of child labour, when children leave their homes too early in order to earn a living, and find themselves at the mercy of people who may exploit them, who may abuse them and force them to work.

The situation prevailing in the world today, with wars, disasters and poor economic conditions, has had evil consequences for children. This makes it incumbent upon the rich countries to fulfil their humanitarian duty to the poor countries, to guarantee a decent life for the children and shelter them from exploitation. We are following with great appreciation the efforts undertaken by the International Labour Organization in its standard-setting activities in pursuit of the effective elimination of child labour.

We have listened attentively to a number of delegations which have addressed the issue of globalization, and it is our wish to state here that unfortunately globalization is inevitable and we are all obliged to deal with it, and try to develop its positive aspects while trying to limit its negative effects, with the aim of improving the global economic situation for the benefit

of all peoples throughout the world, and for the achievement of the justice, peace and security to which we all aspire.

Throughout its history humankind has never known borders and frontiers, especially now in the era of globalization where transportation and communications are facilitated. People can emigrate today far more easily than ever, and that is the reason for emigration from developing countries to industrialized countries, which is increasing despite all the restrictions placed on migration. It is therefore in all our interests that the economic situation be more equitable.

With its rich heritage, and on the basis of the principles of the Islamic sharia, in compliance with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Sultanate of Oman has adopted economic and social policies which guarantee a better life for children, so that they can better fulfil their potential. It is our duty to protect children, to guarantee that they will have a better future.

The Sultanate of Oman passed legislation which provides children with social protection, health coverage and education. These efforts culminated in our ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The Sultanate of Oman is convinced of the importance of human development, as the pivot of development. That is why the government has attached great importance to the formulation of educational and training policies to prepare young people for the labour market, and to ensure opportunities for a dignified life for all, by concentrating on the principle of cooperation in training and employment, involving the tripartite partnership of the government, the employers and the workers.

In conclusion, it is clear that repressive practices of Israel have created an inhumane situation and have in particular inflicted suffering on Palestinian workers, depriving them of their most fundamental rights. The Israeli war machine has destroyed the health, social and economic infrastructure. This is a flagrant violation of international law and of the United National Charter, as these practices deny the workers all prospects of dignified work. We endorse the Report of the Director-General on the situation of the workers in the occupied Arab territories.

It is our hope that security, peace and stability will reign in this world, so that we can all live without war and without conflict. We pray that we will be able to live in a better world, in a world of peace.

*Mr. KHAN (Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh)* — We warmly congratulate the President and other members of the Office on their election. We have faith in their leadership and assure them of our full support and cooperation. I thank the Director-General for his Report and his statement. He has rightly highlighted the plight of the Palestinian workers in the occupied territories. We are gravely concerned about the situation of the Palestinian workers and express our full solidarity with them. It is imperative that we act decisively and urgently to protect their rights.

Bangladesh has ratified 33 ILO Conventions, including seven out of the eight core Conventions. We are committed to the full and effective implementation of our obligations under these Conventions. It is because of this conviction that we support the ILO's

decent work initiative. We hope this initiative can provide the basis for a new development paradigm to effectively address the new challenges faced by employment owing to the process of globalization. We look forward to the ILO launching the pilot project on the decent work initiative in Bangladesh soon. With an estimated 35 million unemployed people in Bangladesh, there is no time to lose on embarking on this initiative.

In the context of globalization and its potential negative impact on developing countries, we believe that the scarce resources spent on preparing for war and other destructive purposes should be diverted towards development and creating employment.

The ILO is closely associated with our efforts to eliminate child labour. Our approach to this problem is pragmatic. We recognize that underlying poverty and economic necessity must also be addressed to bring about a realistic solution. Legislative or administrative actions or coercive measures are not in themselves sufficient. The Government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is fully committed to eliminating child labour. She has undertaken innovative programmes, including that of food for education. Moreover, the Government has introduced a monthly stipend for up to two children in each family to increase enrolment and stop children from dropping out of school for economic reasons.

The MOU signed by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the ILO and UNICEF for the elimination of child labour from the ready-made garment industries has been implemented successfully. We are in the process of launching another major time-bound initiative for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, with support from the ILO.

I now wish to raise the subject of international labour migration. While we have liberalized the movement of goods and capital, we have not done much to create a regime for the orderly movement of labour. The short-term movement of workers from our countries to meet labour demands in the industrialized economies helps both sides. This subject is of particular interest to us since an estimated 300,000 people leave Bangladesh every year for better jobs abroad. There is a need for urgent global action to develop an orderly migration regime, in which the ILO could take a lead.

I would like to conclude by briefly touching on the particular needs of the least developed countries. On account of our inherent structural weaknesses, we are unable to integrate effectively into the emerging global trade and labour market intricacies. If these difficulties are not addressed, the decent work paradigm may remain elusive for us. The activities in the ILO for the LDCs need to be strengthened further, with new programmes and additional resources. We would urge the ILO to continue to attach high priority to implementing programmes in the LDCs, concentrating on decent work.

Mr. NUWA WEA (*Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesia*) — Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Indonesian delegation, to express our warm congratulations to the President on his election to preside over this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. I am convinced that your great experience and long association with the Organization will guide this important session of the Confer-

ence to a successful conclusion. I should also like to congratulate the Vice-Presidents on their respective elections.

I should also like to compliment the Director-General on his comprehensive Report to this Conference, which the Indonesian delegation fully supports. It is my opinion that we are moving progressively towards the goals of decent work and that this general debate will contribute significantly to the future work of the Organization.

I would like to give you a brief overview of the measures which the Government of Indonesia, in collaboration with other participants, is actively striving to implement in order to conform with ILO objectives, in particular how best to promote the principle of rights in the workplace and employment on a national scale. Efforts have been made through a series of activities country-wide to ensure the full implementation of the ILO Core Conventions, all of which Indonesia has ratified.

Perhaps I may mention briefly here a number of problems which Indonesia is currently facing in its labour and employment sector. These include in particular the relatively high rate of unemployment, limited employment opportunities, and less than conducive industrial relations. In this connection I should like to express my sincere thanks to the Director-General of the ILO for responding positively to the proposal put forward by the Government of Indonesia to become the lead country in the Young Employment Network Programme.

Despite the national laws and regulations which prohibit children under 15 years from working in Indonesia, child labour proved difficult to eliminate. This is due to the fact that most working children are found in the informal economy. Nevertheless, the Government remains steadfast in its attempt to eliminate all the worst forms of child labour. As a follow-up to the ratification of related Conventions, a National Committee was established in 2001. In the same vein, on 20 May 2002, the Government of Indonesia launched the National Campaign on the Elimination of Child Labour.

The Government of Indonesia is sincere in its desire to apply the principles of freedom of association to help restore harmonious relations between the various parties and encourage them to solve their differences through a series of social dialogues. Today, these government efforts have largely paid off, and the prospect of improved industrial relations is now brighter.

I should not like to conclude these remarks without expressing my deep regret over the ongoing violations in Palestine. Indeed, I sincerely hope that the ILO will lend its weight to resolving the matter.

Finally, it is an undeniable fact that, since its inception, the ILO has played an important constructive role in the history of mankind. Indonesia sincerely hopes that it will continue in this path. Moreover, we have always supported the Organization, and have full confidence in its ability to deal with the multiple problems which confront us today. We maintain this faith and look forward to another half-century of dedicated work by the ILO on behalf of social progress and justice for all.

Mr. SULKOWSKI (*Employers' delegate, Poland*) — The Director-General's Report pays remarkable attention to the issue of successful social dialogue. For

this reason, speaking on behalf of Polish employers, I would like to present two cases that illustrate our positive experience in this area of cooperation of social partners in the past year. These are first, the establishment, based on new legislation, of an institution for social dialogue in Poland and, second, a tripartite agreement on the draft of a new law on occupational accidents and diseases insurance.

In the first case the partners had to consult and agree on the issue of principles governing the selection of representative organizations and on the mode of the dialogue. This involved the answer to the question of whether the institution of social dialogue in Poland should function based on a tripartite model, with the participation of the Government as a partner, or on the basis of an autonomous dialogue from the very outset. For example, it is the bilateral dialogue that is found in the majority of the European Union countries. In the end, there were two main factors that argued in favour of adopting a tripartite mode of operation: the still important role of the State as an employer and an anticipated large scope of privatization in the restructuring process.

The principle of selecting representative organizations for the purpose of the institution of social dialogue was the subject of controversy between the two employers' confederations active in Poland. The fact that they reached a compromise on this issue made it possible, in a short period of time, to conclude the tripartite agreement between the social partners, to pass a new law and to appoint the tripartite committee on social dialogue that has operated since November of last year. We acknowledge it as a success for the social partners in Poland.

One initiative that is quite innovative indeed in the area of social security is the draft of the Law on Occupational Accidents and Diseases Insurance. It is now before the legislature in Poland. As a result of the tripartite committee's work on the draft of this law, amendments had been introduced to take into account the postulates presented by the trade unions and employers. As a result, it was possible to reach an agreement regarding this draft between all parties on the tripartite committee. One of its special advantages is that it not only includes compensation provisions, but also preventive measures. It differentiates the amount of contributions paid by the employers depending on workplace conditions and previous occurrences of accidents at work and occupational illnesses. We are counting on a quick adoption of this law by the Parliament, and expect that its entry into force next year will quickly become a factor encouraging the employers to take proper care of workplace conditions. On the other hand, it will eliminate unfair competition in respect of the observance of labour protection standards.

We are open to sharing our current and future experiences in this respect through the International Labour Organization.

Mr. RYSSDAL (*State Secretary, Norway*) — I am very honoured to have the opportunity to address the International Labour Conference.

The Report of the Director-General, *ILO programme implementation 2000-01* demonstrates the benefits of strategic budgeting; but the Report also indicates clearly that strategic budgeting is a long-term process which has just started. Establishing reliable, measurable performance indicators is of vital

importance in this context. My Government will follow this reform process with great interest and support. We believe that reforms are necessary to make the ILO more relevant. Institutional reform is necessary to enable the ILO, together with its partners in the United Nations system, to respond more effectively, and in a more coordinated fashion, to the global challenges of our time.

Norway has always given full political and economic support to the ILO's efforts to combat social injustice and promote fundamental rights at work. I therefore notice, with great satisfaction, the very successful ratification campaign following the adoption of the Declaration in 1998. The ILO core Conventions are indeed becoming universal. However, we all know that among the countries which have as yet failed to ratify the core Conventions, the need for our support is great. The ILO's mandate is to assist those countries in improving working conditions and legislation in order to make it possible for them to ratify the core Conventions.

Since I did not speak in yesterday's debate on child labour, allow me a few brief remarks on that issue.

The Norwegian Government remains strongly committed to the fight to abolish child labour. Child labour in its worst forms is, in my opinion, one of the most pressing social and human rights issues of our time. We are outraged that millions of children are sold for prostitution and pornography, trafficked and treated like slaves or exploited in hazardous work.

We are therefore very pleased that the progress of ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), has already reached the number of 122. This year's Global Report *A future without child labour* presents us with a large number of actions to deal with this cause. Still, we read that some 180 million children are exploited in the worst forms of child labour. I believe that the elimination of these most intolerable forms of child exploitation should currently be the single most important objective of the ILO and its member States.

I visited the huge building of ILO headquarters for the first time today. It is an impressive building and I was a bit surprised to learn that this building is not big enough to house the Geneva-based staff of the ILO but has to be supplemented by a temporary office building. In this situation, I would recommend that the Director-General consider the distribution of staff between headquarters and the field. More ILO staff should be moved to the field rather than increasing the staff at headquarters. It is, after all, in the field that the real work is done.

The Director-General's report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories describes a situation where poverty, unemployment and economic decline are advancing at an alarming rate, leading to a widespread humanitarian crisis. We support the conclusion that the ILO should immediately reassess existing programmes of technical cooperation in the light of this new situation. First of all, we must all make a true effort to encourage the parties to resume political dialogue and to reach a permanent settlement. Only then will the rights and interests of the workers of this region be safeguarded as they deserve to be. No one could be satisfied with the present situation.

Mr. FARIDI-ARAGHI (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, Islamic Republic of Iran*) — Allow

me to start, as a member of the delegation of the Iran Confederation of Employers' Associations to this Conference, to congratulate the President on his election to chair this august gathering.

As many of you may know the Islamic Republic of Iran, with almost three thousand years of written history, is a vast country with an area of more than 1.6 million square kilometres and a population of approximately 65 million. It is located in one of the most strategic and politically sensitive areas of the world. Our country possess national resources and wealth, such as goldmines, gas, copper and other resources, and also has considerable and significant possibilities in the industrial and agricultural sector. We believe that the most valuable worth of our country remains our human resources, which include a great number of specialist and academic graduates, including men and women from renowned universities within our country and abroad.

Despite all this potential, the country, unfortunately, faces at the present time the problem of having approximately 3 million people unemployed, most of whom are educated and highly talented individuals, with approximately a further 1 million people being added to those seeking employment each year.

We believe, as Iranian employers, that the ILO should concentrate its main attention on the subject of solving the unemployment problem in the world, although the activities of the ILO aimed at eliminating the various types of discrimination, especially in respect of female employment, minorities and child labour, are outstanding, and are promising for the future. If we do not pay real attention to real needs, the general outcome and losses and damages incurred will definitely be unpleasant and costly. There is no need to elaborate this case to the participants in this Conference, who are experienced and specialized in economic and social affairs. It is sufficient to remind them that the consequences of such unemployment, especially the unemployment of young people, could include corruption and crime, and could be very detrimental to individuals' personalities.

Since this problem indeed exists in our country, we, the Iranian employers, expect the ILO to act on and consider directly the labour-oriented problems and issues of concern to Iran. It should re-establish its office in Teheran and furnish the necessary guidelines.

As Iranian employers, we believe that the ILO can and ought to play active, constructive and determined roles in facilitating the access of Iranian industries and services to the global market. Furthermore, it is advisable and necessary that foreign investment, with the participation of the private sector in Iranian industries and services, be expanded. This has already occurred in the Iranian oil, petrochemical and gas sectors. Such an approach could have a direct impact on lowering unemployment statistics. In this context, no one can deny the important role of the ILO in presenting guidelines and approaches for foreign investment, with preventive measures for any possible negative consequences.

To conclude, I would once again like to express, ladies and gentlemen, my sincere appreciation for your kind attention and patience, and I wish you ever-increasing success.

*Original Turkish: Mr. MERAL (Workers' delegate, Turkey)* — At the outset of my address I extend my

deepest regards to all here, on behalf of all the working people in Turkey.

The Turkish working people wholeheartedly support the strategic objectives specified by the Director-General. I would like to thank the Director-General for the initiatives of the ILO to eradicate child labour, for the IPEC project implemented in Turkey, and for the Report presented to the Conference on this subject.

Turkey showed its determination to fight child labour by ratifying Convention No. 182 last year.

Globalization, under the control of and in line with the interests of transnational companies, is leading to social unrest in Turkey, as in all developing countries. It is also seriously harming small and medium-sized enterprises.

Because of the policies imposed on my country by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which are representatives of transnational companies, agriculture and animal husbandry have been seriously damaged, and millions of peasants are moving to the cities to further swell the ranks of the army of the unemployed. Productive capacity is decreasing and tens of thousands of workers are losing their jobs because of reductions in the size of the public sector and privatizations. The dismissals of tens of thousands of workers and public servants through compulsory retirement schemes is on the agenda. In short, unemployment and poverty are increasing rapidly all over the country. Decent job opportunities are not being created, and the informal sector is growing rapidly. I urge the ILO to draw the attention of the IMF and the World Bank to the economic, social and political disruption that their policies lead to in developing countries.

An important aspect in my country and for the working people is our relationship with the European Union. We want Turkey's accession to the European Union. Our Government and the Grand National Assembly are, with this objective in mind, taking steps to meet the legal requirements to honour Turkey's obligations. I hope that the European Union will not prolong the accession process by demands that cannot be realized in the short term.

I would like to state that our politicians, our Government and the workers' and employers' parties are cooperating in the endeavours to overcome the economic, social and political problems of my country. Our Government has taken positive steps to prevent unemployment in spite of the unnecessary interventions of the IMF. In addition, it has been possible to ensure the continuous employment of about 100,000 temporary workers whose labour contracts were valid only for a short period of time. To promote the organization of workers in trade unions, under a recently promulgated Act, certain employers' payments have been postponed. On the other hand, the Job Security Bill, requested fervently by working people has been submitted to the Parliament, and we are expecting its enactment as soon as possible. The workers, employers and the Government are furthering their cooperation to eradicate problems in labour legislation. Within this context, I would also call for the full exercise of trade union rights public employees.

As Turkish working people, we advocate peace in the world and in our country. The first victims of wars and terror are the working people and the wealth they have created. Wars and terror are the greatest

enemies of human rights and democracy. As Turkish working people, we call on all the countries which believe in human rights and democracy to serve peace and to contribute especially to the construction of peace in the Middle East. We reiterate emphatically that we want no wars in our region.

I believe that this Conference, under your competent presidency, will also serve the cause of peace.

*Original Arabic:* Mr. EL AZALI (*Workers' delegate, Egypt*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Permit me to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents of this Conference on their election. I wish them full success and am certain that under their guidance, and on the basis of their experience, the Conference will make a very useful contribution to ensuring the welfare and progress of humanity.

This session of the Conference, like the 89th that preceded it, is a link in a chain aimed at laying down the basis for a better world, a world shaped by labour in a climate of peace, freedom and social justice. We are united around these noble objectives here today, despite our different origins, continents, religions, races and languages. We are all here, united under the banner of sacred human values. We are particularly proud of these values, which we uphold and which are enshrined in the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, the Declaration of Philadelphia and the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This unity has now been shaken by the terrible fate of Palestinian workers and employers. We see in the media that the Israeli occupation army continually violates the rights of Palestinian citizens. We have seen that all people of honour in this world, even within Israel and in Jewish communities, have criticized these practices. They have been condemned by the Rabbi Weiss and his movement, Neturei Karta. We have seen massacres perpetrated in Jenin, Tulkarm, Ramallah and Bethlehem, crimes which are against the very sacred principles of the Torah itself. In Egypt we have suffered from terrorism, which we refuse and condemn. The President, Hosni Mubarak, launched a warning about terrorism in 1986 and called upon the international community to combat it by convening an international conference with the aim of drawing up a treaty. And we were among the first countries to support the international campaign which was launched against terrorism just after 11 September.

We condemn terrorism in all its forms. However, we must make a clear distinction between those who use the legitimate right to defend themselves against an occupier and those who commit violent acts with the aim of sowing terror in a people whose land they continue to occupy. The situation in the Middle East, in spite of all the destruction, does show that there is a people defending its land and struggling to recover its rights. Some may call this terrorism, others will call it resistance. It is nonetheless undeniable that there are Palestinians who are resisting and who are battling to recover their rights, their homeland. The dire consequences of these situations for the employers and workers in Palestine include the fact that the occupation forces have paralysed production, devastated land, fields and crops, and have destroyed factories. Thousands of workers are therefore without a source of income and the same is true of the employers. We call on the international community to shoulder its

responsibility for alleviating the sufferings of the widows, the orphans, and the people as a whole. It is up to the international community represented here to come to the aid of the Palestinian economy so that it can recover its dynamism, create employment, and pursue its development. But this objective cannot be achieved without a just and lasting peace based on dialogue, legitimacy and respect for the rights of others. Recognition of the right to establish a Palestinian State is an absolute necessity for both parties and for achieving peace in the region. May I refer to the Declaration of Philadelphia, which states that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity". This objective requires closer cooperation between the social partners. The wealthier must help the poorer. Those in a position of strength must help those in a position of weakness because the international community cannot accept a world where there are islands of wealth and prosperity in an ocean of poverty and misery.

It is the responsibility of the major powers and wealthy countries to help the weaker countries, by means of the ILO's technical cooperation programmes, and this should benefit the African countries in particular.

We are pleased to note that the ILO's efforts and concerns are in line with those of the international community as a whole, seeking as they do to ensure that human rights are respected and peace, security and social justice achieved. These are all objectives which require cooperation between the social partners and regional and international cooperation in a globalized world.

Reinforcing the role of cooperatives is an appropriate solution which will contribute to the growing economies of the developing countries.

We must combine our efforts if we are to achieve a world where peace, justice and security reign supreme.

*Original French:* Mr. KASSEY (*Minister of the Public Services and Labour, Niger*) — It is an honour for me to take the floor to address this august assembly. First of all, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the President on his election to preside over this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. In electing him, delegates wanted not only to pay tribute to the important work which he has already carried out in the service of our Organization but also to ensure that the work of this Conference be carried out in an efficient and effective manner.

The International Labour Conference gives us the opportunity, as constituents of the ILO, to examine the way the Organization works and to seek out new possibilities to enable us to rise to the challenge facing all humanity of how to create and maintain true social justice, which is the foundation of lasting social peace.

I am very pleased with the quality of the work carried out by the International Labour Office, as seen in the Director-General's Report, as part of the implementation of the strategic objectives and efforts made by the Organization to put a human face on globalization. I should also like to congratulate the Director-General for the results already obtained and for the

courage which this Organization has shown in seeking to find solutions to problems in our country.

Niger adheres fully to the ideals of peace and social justice. It is working where possible to implement the ILO strategic objectives, standards and the fundamental principles and rights at work. I should also like to point out, that Niger has ratified all eight of the core Conventions adopted by the ILO to date.

As part of our efforts to overcome obstacles in implementing the fundamental principles and rights at work, an important forum was held in November 2001 on the issue of forced labour, bringing together traditional chiefs in Niger, influential and respected authorities, particularly those in the rural areas. The forum was a great success, and a declaration was adopted by the traditional chiefs who made a commitment to implement the fundamental principles and rights at work.

Closely linked to forced labour is the issue of child labour, which is of deep concern to our Government. Therefore, in accordance with the ILO strategies on this issue, we have put child labour high on our list of priorities for specific action. To reinforce action already being taken to apply labour legislation, my Government has also signed on to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

In the area of employment it should be pointed out that in cooperation with the ILO we have begun a process to define a national policy which should enable us not only to comply with the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), but also to establish a more coherent and consistent framework for dealing with these issues in our country.

The forum on employment, organized by the ILO in November 2001, has led us to hope that this issue will be given a higher priority in the future.

I cannot conclude without acknowledging all the efforts made by the ILO on behalf of my country to find innovative ways to address the complex yet vital issues for developing countries such as decent work, the informal economy and cooperative organization as an alternative in the current world context. It is my wish that these issues be resolved in a way that will help our countries to find a dignified role to play in today's globalized world.

*(Mr. Rampak takes the Chair.)*

Mr. MAGAYA (*Minister of Labour and Administrative Reform, Sudan*) — Allow me to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. I am sure that, with his experience, we will reach fruitful conclusions in our deliberations.

At the outset, I would like to commend the Director-General for his Report and his efforts to move the ILO forward. I would like also to commend the programme of activities of the ILO for the years 2000-01 and to express my appreciation for the assistance rendered to African countries. Yet, a lot remains to be done in the areas of employment promotion and poverty alleviation. This can be achieved by providing support to countries to build and strengthen their capacities in policies relevant to employment and by supporting and initiating labour-intensive and self-employment projects.

In this context, the Sudan has accumulated good experience. Labour-intensive projects were implemented with the assistance of the ILO in different

states in the country, especially in the drought-stricken states. Through these projects, thousands of employment opportunities were made for the rural poor. Recently, the Government launched a programme for self-employment projects for university graduates. The Government allocated a special revolving fund for the implementation of these projects, and the idea of these projects will be extended to cover more graduates. We have asked the ILO for assistance in this area.

The Ministry of Labour and Administrative Reform in the Sudan has included in its plan for the year 2002 a host of activities to contribute to the process of poverty alleviation. Among these are: first, the promotion of productive employment and promotion of rights at work; second, the development of the capacities of the vocational training institutions to reduce unemployment among graduates and school drop-outs; third, improvement of quality and working conditions; fourth, revision of wage policies to be more equitable; and fifth, linking education policies to society's needs.

The fourth item on the agenda of this session is directly related to poverty alleviation, namely the promotion of cooperatives. The World Summit on Social Development, which took place in Copenhagen in 1995, had committed Heads of State to the possible measures likely to launch economic and social development in a bid to eradicate poverty and social exclusion. To this end, cooperatives were formally identified as a tool that should enable the most underprivileged levels of society to be self-reliant.

In addition, the cooperative formula serves the four strategic objectives of the ILO: respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, promotion of decent employment, social protection and social dialogue. Assistance is greatly needed by African countries in this area, and I believe the ILO can play a major role in this respect.

Another important item on the agenda of this session of the Conference is the informal economy, which has expanded rapidly throughout the world. In the developing world this sector plays a great role in the creation of job opportunities and the reduction of unemployment.

However, a lot needs to be done to promote this sector, especially in the following areas: reliable statistics and information to enable drawing a solid policy regarding the sector, capacity building in suitable technologies, provision of funds and credits in a reasonable and acceptable term, provision of simple and cheap productive equipment with easy conditions of payment, provision of legal and social protection.

All that I have just mentioned needs technical assistance and financial support.

Economic and social development in the Sudan is negatively affected by the protracted civil war, which destroyed infrastructure and caused the displacement of refugees, and increased poverty. The Government associated itself with a number of initiatives to put an end to the conflict. A peace agreement was concluded in 1997 between the Government and a number of the warring factions. Since then, initiatives have been adopted to reach peaceful settlement with the other factions. This year, in January, an agreement on a ceasefire in the Nuba Mountains was reached between the Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Nuba, under the joint me-

diation of the Swiss Confederation and the Government of the United States.

The ceasefire involves the cessation of hostilities between the parties, it provides for the free movement of civilians and goods, including humanitarian assistance and a prohibition to lay mines. I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the United States Government, the Swiss Government and the countries of the European Union to realize peace in the Sudan and thank them for the humanitarian assistance provided to the people in war-affected areas. The Nuba agreement is functioning very effectively and we are committed to a peaceful political settlement of the conflict.

The situation of Arab workers in Palestine is deteriorating fast. The people are subjected to aggressive practices by the Israeli occupation, which include the imposition of economic blockades, collective punishment and the destruction of civil and productive infrastructure. The result is the loss of the lives of innocent people, economic destruction, increasing unemployment and destruction of buildings. We denounce all this and demand the withdrawal of Israel from Palestine and other occupied Arab territories. We call on the ILO to provide all available assistance to the Palestinian workers.

In conclusion, I wish you all a successful Conference.

Mr. LALL (*Union Minister for Labour and Employment, India*) — It is my privilege to congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. I deem it an honour to address the distinguished participants present here today.

I would also take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General and his Office for the very exhaustive Report, *ILO programme implementation 2000-01*. It is heartening to observe that India figures prominently in the works programme during this period.

I propose to focus my attention on two of the major issues that have been included in the agenda of this session, namely child labour, decent work and the informal economy.

I congratulate the Director-General and his team for bringing out an excellent Global Report: *A future without child labour*. The extent of its worst forms identified in the Report is both revealing and alarming. India is home to the world's largest population of children. As a nation we have always followed a proactive policy in the matter of the elimination of child labour. Our very clear constitutional and statutory provisions, combined with a range of development measures, have been the cornerstone of our efforts to eliminate child labour. The strategy of the Government of India has been to eliminate child labour sequentially, beginning with the most hazardous forms and subsequently moving towards the less hazardous forms. The Government of India set aside US\$50 million in the plan for the period 1997-2002. During the current plan we propose to double this allocation.

The Global Report has rightly mentioned that poverty and child labour are closely interlinked. Large population size, along with slow demographic change in the developing countries, is also making the problem formidable. The Government is therefore addressing the issue through the implementation of its national poverty eradication programmes and has had

reasonable success over the years in reducing the number of people below the poverty line. We think that with the eradication of poverty and a simultaneous sustained effort at providing primary education to children, child labour could be tackled on two fronts successfully. The Government of India conveyed the details of this strategy at the recently held United Nations Special Session on Children. I am also proud to state that our Parliament passed the Constitution (93rd Amendment) Bill in May 2002 to make education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years a fundamental right.

I would now like to touch upon the issue of decent work and the informal economy. The excellent study report reflects the range of issues. The selection of this subject comes not a day too soon because of the challenges this sector is facing in the context of globalization and its after-effects. In the developing countries, particularly, globalization and liberalization also result in the casualization of workers, thus adding further to the already large workforce in the informal sector.

For countries like India which have more than 90 per cent of their workforce in the informal sector, we need to look at the strengths of the informal sector and the prevailing social and economic conditions. This situation would be vastly different from that in the developed and industrialized countries.

We look to the developed countries for international financial assistance in the immense task of upgrading the social infrastructure and workforce skills of the developing countries. This subject matter should not only be seen in the perspective of the rights issue alone as, above all, the foremost need of the unemployed is work itself. Quality jobs may not immediately be in the offing in large numbers. Developing countries will, therefore, need to continue with a "jobs first" approach. Disproportionate importance to one or the other strategic objective could take away the resilience and flexibility which the informal sector provides as a source of employment and could well be counter-productive for desperate jobseekers.

In this connection, I recall the fruitful and unanimous conclusions reached at the 13th Asian Regional Meeting in Bangkok whereby, in order to attain decent work the first imperative is to ensure employment for everyone, and it is only after this that measures conforming to decent work conditions would be possible.

India has always believed in the dignity of labour, which our great saints like Sriman Ravi Das and Kabir Das have taught us. We deprecate those conditions which force men to do work below their dignity. We see decent work as creating decent conditions everywhere.

I hope that this session of the International Labour Conference and the deliberations that occur during it will highlight the potential for action in the important areas we have chosen for debate and bring fresh insight to complex issues and problems for the ultimate betterment of the toiling masses all over the world.

*Original French:* Ms. KAYITESI (*Minister of Public Services and Labour, Rwanda*) — On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Rwanda, and on behalf of the Rwandan delegation to this session, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating the President on his election to head the present session of the International Labour Conference. My

congratulations also go to the Officers of the Conference. The way in which they have accomplished their tasks up to now augurs well for the future of our Organization.

I would also like to take this opportunity to repeat my sincere congratulations to the Director-General of the International Labour Office on the high quality of his Report, which is of considerable substance.

Concerning the first objective described in this Report, I would simply like to point out that my country has just adopted a new Labour Code which is broadly based on the provisions of ILO Conventions, including some provisions concerning the protection of children. Like employment policy, the problems of social protection and social security are a matter of concern for the Rwandan Government. Increasing the possibilities for men and women to get jobs is a prime objective of our employment policy and of our industrial policy.

We have thus begun to make an inventory of job opportunities in all sectors of national economic life in order to facilitate the reclassification or retraining of workers laid off from the public service, victims of job cutbacks in the private sector and of young people looking for their first job.

As far as social protection is concerned, the Rwandan Government recently took action on one matter of concern, when it revised the law on social security. The aim was to extend social security coverage to a larger number of beneficiaries, particularly in the informal sector.

Regarding the strengthening of tripartism and social dialogue, my country has already entered into an undertaking to join the Promotion of Social Dialogue in French-speaking Africa (PRODIAF) programme of activities. The studies carried out by an ILO consultant will serve as a reference framework on which to build a more active form of tripartism and a permanent social dialogue with the social partners.

In the field of training, we wish to thank the Office for having organized training courses on labour inspection and several worker education seminars on trade union rights, industrial relations and health and safety at work.

These activities are a mark of cooperation which is strongly desired in the areas of human resources skills enhancement, and they promote respect for human rights.

As far as the promotion of cooperatives is concerned, the Rwandan Government recognizes the cooperative as a form of private enterprise which is capable of creating a large number of jobs. Thus, our Government encourages the promotion and development of this type of enterprise by Rwandans, by creating a favourable climate and by centring its role on the core function of government, which is to draw up legislation and to monitor its implementation.

We are convinced that the informal sector is quite capable of regulating itself to a large extent, and that for this reason it responds very well to the genuine needs of the population and constantly adjusts to changes in the population's requirements without intervention by the public authorities being necessary.

I would like to express the conviction that in a fast-changing world, our Organization, being faithful to its ideals, will be more able in the future to contribute effectively to ensuring the recognition and defence of fundamental rights of human beings to dignity and freedom.

Mr. THAILUAN (*Workers' delegate, Thailand*) — In my capacity as the Thai Workers' delegate, I have great pleasure in delivering a report to the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference and would like to take this opportunity to update the assembly on two issues pertaining to the current labour situation in Thailand.

The year 2002 sees Thailand slowly recovering from the recent global economic downturn. The Government has resorted to an acceleration in exports while imposing so-called economic stimulus measures that support in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in order to effectively reduce unemployment from the estimated figure of 1.6 million. This is because a considerable number of smaller businesses have closed down during the recent economic slump. In the meantime, efforts to invigorate small and medium-sized enterprises in Thailand eventually stalled after large, foreign-owned discounters invaded the Thai retail industry and are now firmly established among thriving small and medium-sized entrepreneurs with rapidly expanding businesses, especially in the retail sector. These include the discount superstores and convenience stores such as Tesco-Lotus, Carrefour, Big C and Seven Eleven, which, as capital-intensive enterprises, stand to benefit both from the free trade scheme and from the fact that Thailand does not yet have legislation to deal with retailing through large enterprises. On the positive side, their presence does create job opportunities for Thai workers, but this does not greatly influence the local job situation as a whole, especially when compared with the enormous adverse effect they are having on our own small and medium-sized enterprises that have gone out of business as a result. Together they employed a far larger number of workers than the foreign-owned retailers do.

Hence, I strongly urge the International Labour Organization to address squarely the issue of the business expansion of these foreign-owned retailers and its impact on the Thai retail sector.

The second issue I would like to raise involves the severe trade and non-trade barriers imposed on Thailand's food and manufacturing exports to European countries. As it happens, more and more stringent and excessive conditions have recently been imposed on our exports by the developed countries within these two groups. The conditions, which are obviously trade and non-trade barriers in nature, include, for instance, environmental issues, alleged chemical residues in food items and child labour abuse, despite the fact that Thailand has been taking drastic action to curb child labour abuse and gender inequality involving women workers.

All these factors have dealt a severe blow to the local employment situation, with numerous enterprises compelled to resort to downsizing, job termination and minimized fringe benefits to reduce export costs and boost their competitiveness in the international arena. Consequently, unemployment has been on the rise. It is thus worth remarking here that if developed countries genuinely wish to grant aid to the developing countries, it would be extremely helpful if they would notify the latter well in advance of any additional trade conditions that are going to be imposed. In this way, the developing countries would be allowed enough time to make due adjustments before the new conditions take effect, while unemployment in these countries — especially Thailand, where a



large number of employees are engaged in the food and manufacturing export industries — would be substantially reduced.

I would like to appeal to the ILO on behalf of the Thai workers to immediately set up a task force, particularly commissioning the ILO in Thailand to address this issue and find a solution to narrow the gap between developed and developing countries for the benefit of workers.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for having been granted the opportunity to deliver this report today. I have every reason to believe that my appeals did not and will not fall on deaf ears.

Ms. LILLEVÄLI (*Government delegate, Estonia*) — It is a special honour for me to participate in the discussion of the Report of the Director-General. The importance of the Report to the development and future of the member States cannot be overestimated. All four strategic objectives dealt with in the Report are of the utmost importance, but in my remarks today I would like to concentrate on the issue of employment. More specifically, I would like to address the changes brought about by information and communication technologies.

The Government of the Republic of Estonia, in cooperation with the ILO, recently organized a tripartite international conference, *Information and Communication Technologies and Decent Work: Finding Solutions in the Information Society*. This event offered an excellent opportunity to discuss the issues raised at the Sixth European Regional Meeting and to mark the 80th anniversary of Estonia's membership in the ILO and the tenth anniversary of Estonia's rejoining the Organization. The aim of the Conference was to analyse the impact of the changing economic environment and modern technology on working life. The rapid development of means of communication has changed the key pillars of labour law namely, the provisions on working time and the workplace. As a result, there have been changes in the forms and nature of work, as well as labour relations. Working life today is considerably more diverse than it was in the past. All this calls for a change in the rules. But there are no easy answers, and it is reasonable to look for solutions together. I am pleased to see that the International Labour Organization is aware and supportive of these concerns.

Estonia, together with other countries in a similar situation, has faced more challenges owing to the transformation and integration processes. On the one hand, changes in ownership result in major changes in employment and lead to the reform of labour law. The restructuring of the economy has brought about an entirely new phenomenon: a high rate of unemployment. On the other hand, this period has been marked by the rapid development of information technology, affecting both employment relations and employment in general. As a result, we have to adjust to these two major changes at the same time.

The development of information technology brings with it challenges and opportunities, but also dangers for working life. On the one hand, the use of information technology creates jobs, but on the other hand the increased intensity of work made possible by information technology tends to reduce the number of jobs. Information technology helps to raise the level of education of employees, but can at the same time

cause brain drain. The number of self-employed increases but often their social security problems remain unsolved.

Education, especially adult education, plays a key role in facilitating the integration of States and internal integration within society. The rapid restructuring of the economy and implementation of new technologies require systematic and comprehensive training and in many cases, retraining. Raising levels of education and lifelong learning are important preconditions for reaching the "information technology highway".

One of the main postulates of sustainable human development is that future generations should not have fewer choices than the present generation. What is important here is to avoid marginalization of certain groups in society.

However, one has to admit that technology is not a magic cure for society, nor is it a guarantee for a sustainable society. Making technology part of the various ways of achieving sustainability depends on the willingness and ability of society to realize the potential offered by technology. Changes in the life cycle, resulting in ageing populations and reduced work, have made lifelong education and learning crucial to enabling people to cope in periods of unemployment. Broad-based education, communication skills and information handling skills are assets that are selling increasingly well on the labour market. Increased flexibility at work and in the labour force is becoming critical in organizing work — flexible forms of work, combining training and work, better human resource management: these are key factors in a learning organization and knowledge management.

I believe that our common efforts in finding solutions are important for all countries and help create an enabling environment for decent work. I do hope that our cooperation will yield valuable results.

To conclude, I would also like to take this opportunity to inform the Conference that Estonia was the 100th State to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

*Original French: Mr. IVALA (Minister for Labour and Employment, Gabon)* — Allow me first of all to discharge a very pleasant duty, that of addressing to the President, and all the Officers of the Conference the warm congratulations of the Gabonese delegation on their election and for the excellent way in which they are leading our deliberations, which, I am sure, will be crowned with success.

My congratulations also go to the Director-General of the ILO for the quality of the reports which have been tabled.

The priority objective of many developing countries is to achieve a threshold of economic growth which will permit the harmonious development of all components of their societies. One of the strategies for attaining that goal consists in promoting decent work.

In Gabon the problem of employment is a constant concern of the Government. However, no matter how determined the Government's action may be, it cannot alone provide all the solutions for absorbing unemployment.

That is why, while we are consolidating our action, it has become vital to involve the traditional social partners in the process of combating increasing poverty by measures such as the promotion of self-employment and the promotion of existing support structures and mechanisms.

This is one of our country's commitments in terms of strategic objectives. On a wider scale and in an increasingly interdependent economy, we would hope that the conclusions of the Global Employment Forum which was held last November, will be translated into action and that the "Jobs for Africa" programme will produce practical results.

I would now like to make some comments about certain technical questions which are on the agenda.

Gabon, which is an immigration country, welcomes the inclusion of the report on decent work and the informal economy in the agenda for this session. The report entitled *The dilemma of the informal sector*, which was examined by the International Labour Conference in 1991, stressed that in Gabon, the informal sector was monopolized by foreigners.

It is true that the economic crisis being experienced by the country has made nationals jobless and has driven them into the informal economy, but there is no reverse trend.

The informal economy absorbs most illegal foreign workers, including children who have been the victims of cross-border trafficking and who are exploited mainly by persons who come from the same countries as they do, either in jobs where they are not subject to the scrutiny of the public administration or in types of employment where the labour inspectorate is not very active. Obviously, no category of workers in the informal economy receives proper social coverage.

The solution to the problem is indeed complex, particularly in the case of children who have been the victims of trafficking. For this reason Gabon has become a partner in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour with a view to rapidly eradicating this phenomenon.

We also believe that it is by discussion in forums like this that we can find inspiration in the conclusive experiences of various other countries with this kind of question, with a view to providing protection for those who wish for decent treatment. With regard to industrial accidents and occupational diseases, we are committed, thanks to the active support of the ILO, to reorganizing the whole of our system to prevent and compensate for occupational risks. Undoubtedly, the conclusions of this Conference will help us significantly in this respect.

As for the promotion of cooperatives, we support the finding that cooperatives are increasingly contributing to the creation of jobs, particularly jobs for the young, and also to economic and social development.

We hope that the Conference will adopt an instrument which is practical and adapted to present circumstances. We can assure you that in the very near future this instrument will serve as a legal basis for the formulation of our national policy to promote cooperatives as a priority development objective.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. GURDIÁN CASTELLÓN (*Minister of Labour, Nicaragua*) — The delegation of Nicaragua, which I head, would like to express its pleasure at the election of the President to lead us during the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, and extends its congratulations to the Director-General for his role in promoting the notion of decent work, as well as for the important strides made in fulfilling the ILO's strategic objectives, which are reflected in this year's Report. These are objectives that we have adopted in order to achieve har-

mony in labour relations and to face the challenges of globalization.

We welcome the creation of ILO InFocus programmes, such as the programmes on strengthening social dialogue, on promoting the Declaration, and on child labour, as these have brought better coherence and a higher degree of integration to the co-operation and technical assistance provided by the ILO.

I would like to highlight the role played by the sub-regional offices in the implementation and follow-up of the international instruments that have been ratified in the country, and in the promotion of those Conventions that have not yet been ratified.

I would like to highlight the support received by Nicaragua concerning modernizing our labour administration. Fostering employment and drawing up an employment policy of national scope constitute stabilizing factors in our society. We are convinced that in providing access and conditions conducive to full employment we are allowing the poorest sectors to create their own development alternatives, cooperating in this way in the economic, social and cultural development of our country. We also feel that one of the objectives of our Government, headed by Enrique Bolaños, is, specifically, job creation by fostering domestic and foreign investment through economic and social strategies and policies that promote this noble objective.

Nicaragua is pleased to know that throughout this process we will be accompanied by the International Labour Organization. Specifically, it is noteworthy that we are giving new thrust to the development of the cooperative movement along with the skills development and training in cooperatives of every type, especially in savings and credit cooperatives; and it is the intention of our country to create an institute to foster the growth of cooperatives.

We are involved in a longstanding, head-on struggle to eliminate child labour, especially in its worst forms. We cannot allow our children to continue living this tragic situation. We have formulated a national policy against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and have set up programmes focused on sectors where hazardous forms of child labour exist.

We have made strides in this area, but we are still not satisfied. Our efforts continue to be directed to laying the groundwork so that the seeds we sow today in favour of the rights of Nicaraguan children can grow vigorously.

It is also in our interests to defend the rights of women workers, with specific attention to export processing zones in our country, an area that has been the object of standard setting based on the principles of equality and social justice so as not to deny fundamental rights or allow discrimination.

We are endeavouring to ensure, to the best of our ability, that there are no violations of general working conditions so that the rights that are established in the political constitution, the Labour Code and international conventions are provided to all workers and employers alike.

We believe strongly in social dialogue as a means of levelling the differences between sectors at a national and subregional level. The Nicaraguan Government is increasingly imbued with respect for freedom of association and trade union autonomy, guaranteeing the inalienable right of workers to defend trade union or

personal interests with employers and to sign individual and collective agreements with their employers.

In conclusion, I should state that though we still have much to do before we set up a Ministry of Labour that responds to the real needs of the world of work, we are aware that good labour relations are the main pillar on which we will build a more just world of work.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. PACHECO SALAZAR (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Costa Rica*) — Over half a century ago, Costa Rica adopted a Labour Code, which together with our Constitution, which was adopted at the same time, has become the document that sets out the standards that guide the lives of thousands of working men and women in our country.

Over the years, and throughout the changes in international labour markets, from which our small country has not been spared, we have persevered in the difficult task of implementing and adjusting our labour administration institutions to economic, political and social realities which have been greatly changing in today's world. These labour administration institutions ensure that all workers are guaranteed the full enjoyment of their rights in the workplace. With a similar focus, Costa Rica has been working towards developing a culture of social dialogue between the Government, employers and trade unions. Under this policy of creating a worker-friendly labour environment, in the past year, our country has taken significant steps to protect the rights of unionized workers and further the right to collective bargaining.

The Costa Rican Parliament is currently studying constitutional reform which will provide legitimacy, at the highest standard-setting level, to the right to collective bargaining in the public sector. This reform has received the full support of trade unions and employers.

In addition to what I have just said, and as a necessary element for a speedy and definite implementation of this important constitutional reform, the Executive has proposed a legal reform to add a clause to the framework law of public administration which sets out the scope of constitutional standards fully in line with the union rights and guarantees stipulated in ILO Recommendation No. 143. By the same token, this text sets out the topics subject to negotiations, which include the application of disciplinary sanctions, income tax regimes and the drafting of job description manuals, amongst others.

The Legislative Bill intends to provide legal certainty and transparency by clearly describing the procedures for negotiations, the requirements for taking part in negotiations and the specific steps to be followed in each negotiation process.

Not content with these efforts, the Executive has submitted a draft law to the Congress to reform the chapter on the freedom of association of our Labour Code, and to guarantee that all workers enjoy this right without being persecuted or dismissed. At the same time, it makes sure that unionized workers benefit from a series of guarantees and prerogatives for exercising their rights.

This measure gives trade unions the possibility of defining the criteria for shaping, implementing and making proposals on policy to the Government, but at

the same time gives them a leading role in the mediation of socio-economic collective disputes.

Furthermore, the draft Bill sets out a mandatory procedure that every employer has to follow, prior to any dismissal for just cause, or the decision will be overturned.

Last but not least, our country has taken very important steps, with the help of the ILO and the enthusiastic support of the Government, to strengthen social dialogue, which is an area where we have begun to forge very important socio-economic agreements, within bipartite and tripartite forums.

In August 2001, a tripartite agreement and an action plan to strengthen social dialogue were signed. This historic agreement sets out specific guidelines to reform the Supreme Labour Board, the National Salary Board and the Council of Occupational Health, which are the main tripartite bodies for national co-ordination.

Employers and workers in Costa Rica have made considerable progress in bipartite dialogue, with the main goal being that of presenting coordinated, concrete proposals which make it possible to promote productive investment and the creation of good jobs in Costa Rica.

As you have seen in the issues I have just mentioned, the Government of Costa Rica has undertaken specific and tangible efforts to comply with the Recommendations made by the various bodies of the ILO, and with the firm intention of achieving social peace.

In conclusion, I would like to quote the words that Dr. Martin Luther King said 40 years ago: "We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers".

Mr. BARBERINI (*representative of the International Co-operative Alliance*) — I am very honoured to address you today on behalf of cooperative organizations, in over 90 countries that 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 to combating poverty, promoting decent employment and increasing social dialogue. 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 member needs. Cooperatives help people meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and thus secure human dignity.

Today, cooperatives promote over 100 million jobs around the world, over 20 per cent more than those created by multinational enterprises. As they are rooted in local communities, they mitigate the negative consequences of globalization by maintaining jobs and thus ensuring livelihoods. These are important facts illustrating the enormous potential of these self-help, people-centred enterprises.

The International Co-operative Alliance therefore welcomes the second discussion of a new ILO Recommendation to provide guidance to governments, workers and employers on what a cooperative is and what constitutes an enabling environment. We have been heartened by the discussions between Govern-

ment, Workers' and Employers' Representatives, which have recognized the important role of cooperatives in the economy, the need for the new Recommendation to be universal in character and application, to be flexible in addressing the needs of all types of cooperative organizations in all sectors of activity, and to focus on ensuring that enabling conditions exist for co-operatives to function and thrive, especially with regard to the role of the State.

The important issue of autonomy, the special characteristics of cooperatives — its values are internationally recognized principles — have been discussed within the ILO and in our view have led to clearer understanding of the cooperative enterprise. The essence of a cooperative approach is disarmingly simple: maximize the capacity of people to control their own destiny through institutions they own and operate in a democratic manner. It is an approach that can be remarkably successful, simultaneously providing economic benefit while sustaining cultural vitality and fostering democratic practices. We know, too, that the cooperative model works in different cultures, building upon traditional values. When operating effectively, the cooperative model can become a powerful voice for people in major economic and societal discussions. It is an approach that needs more attention from those who would search for the most empowering and self-reliant ways to overcome poverty wherever it is found.

ICA is committed to working with the ILO in strengthening 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 take advantage of market dynamism to find ways to deliver social justice as well as economic benefits to all.

Mr. MOUSHOUTTAS (*Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Cyprus*) — On behalf of the Cyprus delegation, I would like to congratulate, most warmly, Mr. Jean-Jacques Elmiger on his election to the presidency of this year's session of the International Labour Conference.

Reading the Report of the Director-General, *ILO programme implementation 2000-01*, we cannot but be impressed with the remarkable progress achieved during this period, in relation to the targets set under each of the four strategic objectives of the ILO. This has come as no surprise to my Government. Our participation in the Governing Body during its last term gave us the opportunity to witness the tremendous input of the ILO towards these achievements through its various InFocus programmes.

A staunch supporter of the ILO's standard-setting activities, the Government of Cyprus shares the ILO's pride in achieving near universal ratification of the core Conventions contained in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Cyprus is currently examining the possibility of ratifying the new Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). Drawing on this Convention and the European *Acquis*, we have recently improved existing maternity legislation to cover all aspects of the protection of expectant and nursing mothers. We do hope that this year's Conference will result in updating the list of occupational diseases, annexed to the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 (No. 121), so as to reflect today's realities, and that a mechanism will be adopted for its regular review.

Coming to the second strategic objective on employment, we would like to congratulate the ILO on its draft Global Employment Agenda, which is a true milestone. We endorse the view that employment should be a prime goal of economic policy, and that a sound strategy should integrate macroeconomic development and labour market policies. The overall objective of employment and labour market policies in Cyprus is to maintain conditions of full employment through policy responses that will lead to a high and sustainable rate of growth of the economy, and to prevent labour market constraints on overall economic growth emerging and intensifying. Within the framework of the latter, our labour market policies focus on increasing labour market flexibility and improving the quality of the labour supply, as well as promoting gender equality. Existing gaps in our legislative framework are being filled by the introduction of two pieces of legislation, currently before Parliament, guaranteeing the principle of equal treatment of men and women in the fields of employment and pay.

We take the opportunity to thank the ILO for the technical assistance offered to us in connection with equal pay. Moreover, more active employment services and labour market programmes aim to improve access to employment and training for important target groups, particularly women.

We have noted with particular satisfaction the statement in the Director-General's Report that under the strategic objective of social protection, 80 per cent of the targets established were fully met or exceeded. We are pleased that the ILO is following up the conclusions adopted last year by the Conference on social security, which gave it a clear mandate to extend social security coverage.

We took part in a tripartite ILO working group last month that explored the idea of a global social trust. The trust would ask people in the rich countries to support voluntarily the development of social protection schemes to meet the basic needs of families in the poorest developing countries.

My Government would like to congratulate the Director-General on being entrepreneurial in the fight against poverty and social insecurity faced by families. We believe that if that idea is rigorously pursued and a tripartite alliance between government, workers and employers in all rich countries is constructed, we could together make a real contribution within a decade to reducing poverty and hence to achieving the ambitious millennium goals. I can assure you of my Government's commitment to assisting the implementation of this innovative idea in any way it can. We hope that this year's general discussion on decent work and the informal economy will have a successful outcome.

At the national level, we have put an even greater emphasis, during the last two to three years, on enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all. Not only have we complemented the legislative framework with a series of new laws and regulations — particularly as regards terms and conditions of employment, and safety and health at the workplace — but we have also boosted the capacity of the implementation mechanism by strengthening our labour inspection services.

The Government of Cyprus has been jointly organizing with the ILO for more than 15 years, seminars on topical issues for the benefit of ILO constituents. Rec-

ognizing the importance of social protection in the new environment of globalization and trade liberalization, we have proposed that next year's seminar be devoted to social protection financing. This year's seminar dealt with pension reform in transition countries.

Coming to the fourth strategic objective on social dialogue, I would like to emphasize, on the basis of the Cyprus experience, that this should be an ongoing process. Labour and social policies cannot be successful unless formulated and implemented in close cooperation with the social partners through genuine dialogue.

Within the framework of its longstanding, well-established practice of social dialogue, the Government of Cyprus has involved the social partners throughout the preparatory work for the legislative harmonization with the European *Acquis* in the labour and social field. We feel optimistic that, with their support and constructive cooperation, we will be able to meet successfully the challenges that lie ahead of us, in view of our forthcoming accession to the European Union. We are also counting on a pronounced sense of responsibility and cooperation from our social partners in making the necessary reforms to our social insurance legislation, given the challenges imposed by an ageing population and changing labour market patterns.

By way of conclusion, I would like to express the conviction that this Conference will meet the aspirations of the ILO and its constituents.

Mr. OBBO (*Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, Uganda*) — Permit me to join the other distinguished speakers in congratulating the President on his deserved election to preside over this session of the International Labour Conference. I also congratulate the other Officers of the Conference. I wish to thank the Director-General for his progress report on ILO programme implementation during the period 2000-01.

Today's world of work is faced with many challenges, such as globalization, unemployment, the worldwide spread of poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unfair international competition and the debt burden. These conditions have affected my country as well. I therefore reaffirm my Government's commitment to the promotion and realization of international labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work. These are enshrined in our Constitution and in the various legislations enacted therefrom governing trade unions and industrial relations systems in the country. We are committed to creating opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income.

Another aspect we are working on is in the strengthening of dialogue and tripartism with the aim of effectively dealing with social and economic issues. We recognize that social dialogue is an important means of achieving social integration and growth, so as to foster efficiency in general.

In order to meet the challenges of unemployment and poverty, Uganda has adopted the following strategies: the poverty eradication action plan, the plan for the modernization of agriculture, educational reforms including the introduction of universal primary education, continuation of the structural adjustment programme. As a result of these efforts, the percentage of people in absolute poverty dropped to 35 per cent in the year 2000, from 44 per cent in 1996.

Gender mainstreaming has been identified as one means of ensuring that poverty does not retain its hold in the country. Uganda's gender policy has the overall goal of mainstreaming gender concerns in the national development process in order to improve the social, legal, civic, political, economic and cultural conditions of our people.

I now wish to express my Government's appreciation to the ILO for the commendable work being done towards the progressive elimination of child labour in my country. I appeal for further extension and widening of this programme to allow a wider outreach, and for capacity-building and sustainability to be developed.

Let me comment now on the informal sector. Over 80 per cent of Uganda's production units fall into this sector. However, it is under-served, unorganized and unsupervised. We therefore hold the view that poverty reduction strategies should be formulated, with the help of our friends, to target the informal sector as well.

The problem of HIV/AIDS in the world of work requires serious attention because of its crippling impact. Over 80 per cent of HIV/AIDS infections in Uganda are among people aged between 15 and 40 years. It has affected agricultural production, which forms the backbone of my country's economy. It has led to the loss of skilled and experienced workers and this, in turn, affects production, reduces incomes for workers and profits for employers. It has caused increased labour costs in terms of recruitment, training and retraining. Moreover, it has rendered large portions of our nation orphaned and widowed.

Uganda has tackled the HIV/AIDS pandemic vigorously. We have managed to reduce the infection rate of this pandemic from over 25 per cent to the current 6 per cent in ten years. Yet there is the threat that the infection rate can easily jump up again. In order to maintain this momentum of tackling HIV/AIDS, I wish to re-echo the appeal for assistance which we have made elsewhere, to enable the resultant combined action of our social partners and ourselves to eliminate the damage caused by this disease in the country.

Mr. AHMED (*Workers' delegate, Pakistan*) — On behalf of the Workers' delegation of Pakistan and myself, I feel it appropriate to convey our sincere congratulations on the occasion of the President's election and the election of the other Officers, including the election of my countryman and friend, Mr. Farhat Hussain, as Vice-President. I take this opportunity to convey sincere good wishes and fraternal greetings to all the distinguished participants of this historic Conference. I also take this opportunity to convey our deep appreciation of the Report of the Director-General on ILO programme implementation, as well as the report on the activities of the ILO Governing Body.

The International Labour Office and the Governing Body, under the able leadership of Mr. Juan Somavia, have accomplished various good works during the year. These include the holding of the Global Employment Forum, strategic budgeting, the promotion of the concept of decent work in the ILO InFocus programme, the Asian Regional Meeting, the work of various branches of the ILO, including those devoted to standards, IPEC, ACTRAV, social protection, health and safety, employment and educa-

tion, training, gender issues, technical cooperation, the work of the Turin Centre, industrial relations, and activities related to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Also of note are the setting up of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the successes of the campaign for the ratification of core labour standards, which included the ratification of ILO Convention No. 182 by my own country. The good work being performed by the Asian Regional Office, helped by Mr. Nodera, and that done by the ILO Area Office in Islamabad are also to be mentioned.

We also convey our deep appreciation for the contributions of the Workers' group in the Conference and the Governing Body, ably led by Lord Brett.

The Director-General of the ILO, in his Report, advocates for the promotion of decent work among the member States. This requires strong political will, both at the national and international level. I submit that we have a world which has 1 billion people who are either unemployed or have no sustainable level of work, or who suffer from abject poverty, and almost 1 billion people who have an income of one dollar per day. The number of unemployed will further increase themselves in the next decade. There are almost 250 million children engaged in child labour, while almost 186 million are victims of the worst forms of child labour. Almost 60 per cent are in Asia. We have a world where 5,000 workers die every day due to unsafe working conditions. Almost 120 million workers leave their homes in the hope of finding jobs elsewhere because of mass unemployment in their own country.

I submit that this Organization's Declaration of Philadelphia strongly upholds the principle that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. We are in a world where the gap between the rich and poor countries, instead of lessening, has been increasing. For example, in 1960 per capita income and GDP in the North was 18 times that of the Third World, and it is nearly 40 times greater now. The income of the Third World, in exporting commodities in the world market, has shown a sharp decline, from 43 per cent in 1980 to 24 per cent in 1996.

The financial crisis in Argentina and South-East Asia demonstrated the urgent need for a reform of the international financial system and for a Bretton Woods policy with a social dimension. Similarly, we must address the burden of heavy debt of Third World countries. Currently, some 47 nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America are considered poor or heavily indebted.

It is the duty of the international community to assist the people of the Third World through debt relief, fair international trade and an increase in official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of GDP, transfer of technology, the establishment of a special fund like the Marshall Plan, the reduction of the digital divide and the promotion of peace and security in the world.

In this context we welcome the statement adopted by the Workers' group calling upon the leaders of both India and Pakistan to avoid confrontation and enter into a meaningful dialogue to settle their basic dispute peacefully and in the interests of the peoples of both countries and the region for the promotion of peace, security and development. At the national level, strong political will with an effective action plan is required for the promotion of decent work, including the pursuit of a policy of national econ-

omic self-reliance, the development of human resources, the introduction of agrarian reform and respect for core labour standards. This should involve positive industrial relations, a team spirit between workers and management, the defence of the dignity of labour, special measures for children, women and the working class, and a transparent, democratic political system with multiple political parties. In Pakistan, there has been a policy of development that includes the concerted struggle of the working class with the holding of tripartite discussions. We commend the report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, and demand the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories. We support the establishment of a special fund by the Director-General, and hope that this historic Conference will prove a landmark in the promotion and defence of the basic ideals of the ILO — the promotion of social justice and a world of peace, dignity, and freedom.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. LEITZELAR VIDAU-  
RRETA (*Secretary of State for Labour and Social Security, Honduras*) — The Republic of Honduras, a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 and hence a founding member of the International Labour Organization, once again stands before this world parliament, as a testimony to our confidence, gratitude and support for the persistent efforts of this Organization in the areas of information, training and cooperation, particularly during the period under review.

The labour administrations of the countries of the Central American and Caribbean subregion have been beneficiaries of this excellent work, as well as employers' organizations, workers' organizations and our societies as a whole in their efforts to achieve social justice.

It is appropriate to mention here a transcendental event that recently occurred in the city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, where, on the occasion of the subregional tripartite meeting on labour relations, social dialogue and democratic governance, the Santo Domingo agreement was signed with a view to adopting a subregional tripartite labour agenda which emerged from the social dialogue among the stakeholders.

This agreement includes an important list of basic topics aimed at the effective performance of the tasks and functions of our labour administrations, including mechanisms to generate decent work, the adoption of national and regional policies on the informal economy, respect for fundamental rights and principles, and strengthening social dialogue in bipartite and/or tripartite bodies in order to consolidate sustainable human development in our societies.

Following on from this tripartite agreement, the social partners that are parties to this agreement request the ILO, through its multidisciplinary team in San José, Costa Rica, and through its technical assistance programmes and projects, to provide the necessary assistance for the implementation of the subregional labour agenda through the national tripartite bodies, existing regional forums such as the Council of Ministers, the subregional employers' forum, and the workers' forum which is currently being set up.

In my country, Honduras, the body in question will be the recently established Economic and Social Council, which represents all the social partners, and

we hope that we will achieve positive results with this tripartite social dialogue.

We welcome the fact that the agenda of the Conference includes topics such as those contained in items IV, V and VI. We hope that the second discussion of the promotion of cooperatives will result in a new effective international instrument. The updating of the list of occupational diseases (item V) is critically important for the adoption of a Convention or a Recommendation in this area. The general discussion on the informal economy is of prime importance for our developing countries, since the growth of this sector means that there is a pressing need to adopt policies and mechanisms to deal with it.

I would not wish to conclude my speech without expressing our concern on the following problems which are emerging in the world of work. First, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is, as pointed out in a publication of this Organization, a global crisis and one of the most serious challenges facing development and social progress. In order to combat this scourge, we support the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work adopted at the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work held in this city in May 2000, and we recommend that it be used for dissemination and awareness-raising purposes.

As a token of our willingness to combat this scourge, our Government, having obtained a consensus in civil society and the private sector, has prepared a project proposal and sent it to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, and we hope that it will be approved.

The second social and labour issue relates to the protection of seafarers in cases where their vessels are seized or immobilized in any other way, and the seafarers are abandoned and deprived of their freedom.

The third concern has to do with the negotiation of free trade agreements and the subordination of other agreements within them providing for mechanisms relating to labour standards. On this point it is important to reaffirm that the International Labour Organization is recognized worldwide as the only United Nations specialized agency competent in the labour field to supervise and apply international labour standards.

To conclude, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Honduras, I would like to reaffirm our support of and confidence in all the policies and actions carried out in the area of monitoring and defending fundamental labour rights by the International Labour Organization, under the skilful management of our Director-General and the Governing Body and, particularly, our gratitude to the area office and its multidisciplinary team in San José, Costa Rica, for their efficient support and solidarity in our sub-region.

*Original French: Mr. GJINUSHI (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Albania)* — It is a great pleasure for me to take part in the work of this Conference, and in Albania we are particularly interested in eradicating the worst forms of child labour.

Child labour is quite a recent phenomenon in Albania, as a result of the socio-economic and demographic changes since the 1990s which brought unemployment, emigration, abandonment of schooling, the growth of poverty and the emergence of an informal economic sector.

According to some studies, approximately one quarter of Albanian families live below the official poverty line. Consequently, for three years now we have been applying a national anti-poverty strategy to reduce the level of poverty, and unemployment in the country. Poverty has led to migration of the population within and outside the country. In most cases, people have difficulty in finding new employment and children are often viewed as a source of revenue for their families. They work largely in the informal sector or in family economic activities.

One serious concern is the emigration of minors unaccompanied who often end up becoming involved in crime. The Albanian Government is making efforts to eliminate child labour, notably through a memorandum of understanding concluded with the ILO and IPEC which has made it possible to set up a national programme to combat child labour. We have drawn up a national strategy for children and a national strategy to combat trafficking in human beings both of which are now being applied. The objective of these strategies is to develop policies in order to take appropriate measures to eliminate child labour, to create the necessary legislative framework and law enforcement agencies and set up an infrastructure, firstly to prevent trafficking and secondly to counsel, rehabilitate and reintegrate the victims of such trafficking.

The Albanian Government has ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). To bring our labour legislation into line with international norms, we have recently drawn up a Labour Code, the first revised draft of which places great importance on protecting women and children.

We are now also drawing up strategies for employment and the distribution of social services. The main objective is to improve policy on employment and professional training, and provide a wider diversity of improved social services in the community.

Cooperation with social partners is increasing, in order to coordinate efforts to minimize the informal economy, which in the last two years has been reduced by 7 per cent to 23 per cent.

In presenting the efforts and steps taken by the Albanian Government to eliminate trafficking in human beings, I would like to emphasize the need for yet more intensive cooperation between the countries in the region with the same objectives. We feel that establishing possibilities for the free circulation of human beings would considerably reduce this trafficking, as well as unemployment levels, and hence poverty.

Noting the serious commitment of the ILO under the stability Pact we are very interested in pursuing and developing such initiatives, which we consider to be a significant contribution to promoting understanding, particularly in south-eastern Europe.

Finally, I would like once again to express my best wishes for the success of this Conference and emphasize my country's commitment to implementing its conclusions.

*Original French: Mr. CAMBUS (representative of the International Confederation of Executive Staff)* — First of all, on behalf of the International Confederation of Executive Staff whom I have the honour to represent today, I congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their election to the presidency of

the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference and wish them success in their work.

I would like, first of all, to commend the work carried out by the ILO to insure that the changing world economy will see women and men benefiting from growth rather than being adversely affected in the name of competitiveness, flexibility, and other adjectives which characterize the effects of capitalism seeking responsibility and ethics.

I truly believe that our Organization is currently experiencing both a historic and particularly difficult period of new strategic constraints associated with lasting development and the shift from an economic system which had consumed and degraded without restraint many national resources, towards a capitalism which I dare to qualify as responsible. More specifically, with respect to the programme of this session, I would like first of all to congratulate the Director-General and his staff for the quality, clarity and concision of the 2000-01 activities report based around the four strategic objectives. We particularly appreciate the objectives/results approach, with the increased involvement of the ILO constituents in defining the objectives of the biennium, and the increased involvement of beneficiaries of technical assistance of the ILO in the definition and implementation of solutions adapted to economic and social realities.

Secondly, I would like to commend the Director-General for the success of the campaign led by the ILO for the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), since, in three years, virtually two-thirds of the member States have already ratified this Convention to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. This exceptional result is thanks to the Organization's mobilization to convince governments that child labour is not a lasting inevitability, and must be approached as a major obstacle to the economic and social progress of a country as a whole and to its development. This success is also that of governments which, by ratifying Convention No. 182, have undertaken the commitment to protect and educate those who constitute their future.

Allow me, thirdly, to emphasize the importance in this general discussion of at least identifying the foundations of the informal economy, if not of reaching a consensual definition of it. Contrary to the widely held belief, the informal economy does not only exist in developing countries or countries with emerging economies — industrialized countries are also affected to different degrees and in different ways. If it is true that the industrial sector is losing importance to the services sector, in exchange, *inter alia*, we have the growth of employment under precarious contracts if not purely and simply informal contracts, as is sometimes the case in the hotel, restaurant and seasonal tourism sector.

Finally, a fourth point, speaking on behalf of the executives I represent as spokesperson of the International Confederation of Executive Staff, our workers demonstrate a high level of skills, responsibilities, involvement and the capacity to anticipate. They are the locomotives of progress and they are aware of their social responsibility.

How can we not be surprised, and that is putting it mildly, to note that their need and their right to organize within trade unions, or in specific associations, and to participate in collective bargaining is not met in many member States. In many countries, for example

the United States, Canada, some Member States of the European Union — notably Belgium, Austria and Spain — the two fundamental principles of our Organization, the two essential rights for men and women at work — freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining — are not applicable to executives. This is a matter that we will have to raise, and that we do raise unceasingly, in the Organization until a suitable solution has been found.

Thank you very much for enabling me to speak before the plenary of our Organization to underscore this particular point. Once again, I wish you full success. I thank all of my colleagues who, at this very late hour, have paid attention to my statement.

Mr. ZHARIKOV (*representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions*) — We welcome efforts to introduce new working methods if they are more cost-effective and can enhance the capacity of the Organization to deal with emerging problems and deliver solutions.

We recall the statement made by the Director-General two years ago that “democratizing globalization is the role of the ILO”. The question is, how far have the ILO programmes advanced in this direction? How far has the ILO taken into account the present concerns of the global movement of trade unions and other democratic organizations against the colossal, negative economic and social consequences of the ongoing neoliberal version of globalization, which brings more unemployment and more poverty every day?

Recently, there were nationwide strikes and mass demonstrations in India, Italy, Germany and other countries and continents protesting against the plans of governments to reverse the major social gains achieved by the workers and the trade union movement over a whole century and more.

In recent years, there have been such trade union protests ranging from the trade union actions against the consequences of financial crises in Asia and other regions and leading up to the recent people's protests in Argentina, Peru and other countries, which led to the fall of the governments.

These massive protest actions drew attention to the havoc caused to the working people because of the neoliberal economic policies which are imposed through the IMF, World Bank and WTO, as well as the plans to impose a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas against the interests of peoples and countries. There are big protests every day against the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization.

The trade unions are engaged in big struggles, horrified by the fact that such key issues as job security and labour protection laws could be eliminated from the social agenda on the grounds that they allegedly hinder implementation of “globalization” policies.

If the present offensive of neoliberal globalization continues, it is understood that all the efforts of the ILO to formulate and promote international labour standards would be neutralized. The trade unions strongly feel that the principles upheld by the Declaration of Philadelphia and summed up by the well-known statement that “labour is not a commodity” are being thrown overboard by the protagonists of neoliberal globalization.

The kind of globalization imposed by the neoliberal ruling circles is now seen more like at-



tempts to reinforce financial imperialism and neo-colonialism, as it has been pointed out here by the distinguished Prime Minister of Malaysia. The United Nations Charter and international law are undermined and the sovereignty and rights of nations and peoples grossly violated. Such policies have resulted in a further increase in poverty and destitution, a further rise in unemployment and underemployment, and a further worsening of the global economic and social development crises.

The global oligarchies are taking control of the information media and using it to confuse and divide the people while the anti-social forces intensify their attacks on basic human rights. Trade unions the world over are greatly concerned about the efforts being made to turn the ILO itself into just another neoliberal tool like the IMF, World Bank and WTO.

The WFTU strongly condemns the fact that, while social programmes are not being implemented due to an alleged lack of financial resources, huge sums are wasted on arms budgets and for the pursuit of military adventures which threaten peace and security for all peoples on our planet.

We believe that the ILO programmes should take into account these concerns of the trade unions and social organizations as highlighted by the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and the call for democratic international development strategies in order to create more and better jobs, decent work standards and safe working conditions.

Against this background, we are constrained to remark that the composition of the ILO World Commission on Globalization is weak when it comes to participation by the world trade union movement, especially its representation of the millions of working people who are opposing neoliberal globalization.

In the same spirit, we also hope that all concerned will make efforts to ensure that social dialogue at the ILO includes all trends at the international and regional level, and the Workers' group of the ILO Governing Body becomes fully democratic, representing all elements and structures of the world trade union movement.

There are principles and practices which are in vogue in all UN agencies, keeping in mind the need to ensure that all regions and interests are adequately represented.

We call your attention to the fact that it is also logical that such considerations also apply to the composition of the Workers' Relations Department and other bodies of the ILO.

It is difficult to avoid saying that, while making loud noises about human rights and democratic liberties, militarized regimes like the present Israeli ruling circles are implementing a policy of genocide in order to consolidate their illegal occupation of Arab lands in Palestine, Syrian Golan and parts of Lebanon.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the ILO should concentrate its efforts on promoting implementation of the ten commitments and programme of action adopted by the World Summit on Social Development. The WFTU believes that the main thrust of globalization in the present day world should be the implementation of agreements from that and the other UN world summits. In this, you can rely on the support of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

*Original Spanish: Mr. ARTHUR ERRAZURIZ (Employers' delegate, Chile) — On analysing the*

Director-General's Report, it is clear that there is concern over the implementation of the ILO's basic aims in respect of employment and social protection. We can only applaud the efforts described, but we also feel that it is necessary to share with you some of our experience in this area, and above all, our ideas for the future.

Chile is said to be one of the Latin American countries with the most efficient macroeconomic indicators in the region, yet along with the rest of the continent, we have to cope with unemployment rates which upset our social harmony. Our current unemployment rate is 8.8 per cent. This means that 521,000 Chileans do not have a steady job.

This is certainly one of the most pressing socio-economic problems affecting our country on account of the ensuing and all too familiar bitterness and sense of insecurity about the future.

All the labour aspects analysed in this Conference are of supreme importance, but I think the most urgent is employment. In this context we must try to innovate and to generate legal norms which provide incentives to take on workers, while at the same time doing away with initiatives which ostensibly help workers but which in fact are detrimental to them.

Unemployment is something which should preferably be at the centre of our deliberations. The right to work should lead to the formulation of laws on incentives for employers and employees. The term "incentive" implies motivating the creation of jobs on the basis of granting certain benefits to employers which have no permanent effects on workers.

In our country, some norms of this kind have proved to be efficient. World economies depend on these sort of incentives and they would give the right sort of balance to labour relations.

In this context, we need to create temporary incentives at times of high levels of unemployment, which would make it possible to take on the long-term jobless. Our obligation is not only to represent the labour sectors and employers, but to interpret employers' desires, but sometimes this is not done for political reasons or for reasons of advisability.

I should point out that recent labour reforms introduced in Chile produce the opposite result. They did not act as incentives to employment and put those who opted for them at a severe disadvantage.

The ILO has enough experience to differentiate between labour laws which protect workers and those which have an adverse effect on them, despite appearances and their initial popularity. There is tripartite responsibility to take suitable action. In the case of Chile this is of particular importance, since our country has recently decided to become a trading partner of the European Economic Community with all the risks and advantage that this entails. This is a demonstration of trust in our economy and should bring us benefits in the medium term. We should therefore introduce domestic laws allowing us to compete on equal terms.

One of the aims of this Organization is to provide and increase the efficiency of social protection and to that end it has been suggested that there is a need for action to secure better funding and governance of present pension schemes.

Faced with a crisis in this sector caused by far-reaching demographic changes, 21 years ago my country replaced the old system with one based on individual savings and the privatization of pensions.

After 21 years, we can say that the system has functioned well not only in terms of improving pensions, a success which speaks for itself, but also in terms of contributing to the economic development of the country, in that savings are channelled into activities with the highest economic potential in our country.

These results enable us to meet one of the challenges facing the ILO, that of contending with economic and social insecurity. It is certainly a reliable pensions system, since the funds belong to the workers investing in them and those funds are invested safely at a high yield. This is a guarantee against the insecurity that development sometimes brings.

More than 20 countries in America, Asia and Europe have carried out similar reforms and we are talking about over 100 billion dollars which are being administered by these funds.

I would conclude by repeating my conviction that it is vital to protect employment; but first it has to be created. For this we need imagination and a responsible social dialogue so that we can promote employment and those that harm employment, despite the names given to laws.

Ms. DELAP (*representative of the International Save the Children Alliance*) — On behalf of the International Save the Children Alliance I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. We work in over 100 countries across the world and form the largest independent movement aimed at promoting children's rights.

Save the Children would like to commend the ILO on its success in achieving many of its targets regarding child labour in the reporting period.

Especially impressive is the large number of member States that have ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). We were delighted to read in the Director-General's Report of the increased donor support to the IPEC programme and the research carried out on child labour issues by many member States. We feel that this, and the widespread ratification of Convention No. 182, reflects the true importance of effectively tackling harmful and exploitative child work. However, we were disappointed to read of difficulties in gaining member States' commitment towards time-bound programmes. We hope that the commitments expressed by many delegates in yesterday's debate to addressing child labour will be followed up with rapid and effective action. We also hope that this commitment extends to ensuring that child labour concerns are reflected in national and international economic policies.

In commenting on the issues of child labour in the Director-General's Report, we also feel that it is relevant to make reference to the Global Report, *A future without child labour*, tabled earlier in the ILC and cited in the Director-General's Report.

We made some comments on the Global Report yesterday, but would like to use this opportunity to elaborate on two further points.

Firstly, we welcome references made in the Global Report to the importance of civil society engagement and feel that there are significant opportunities for further engagement between the ILO and the NGO community on the issue of child labour. We believe that there are opportunities for the NGOs and the ILO to engage on all three pillars of action outlined in

the Report. For example, we feel that we can help reinforce the work of IPEC and, at the same time, develop our own work, by sharing lessons learnt in areas such as participatory research, involving working children.

We can engage with the ILO in mainstreaming child labour issues into the Decent Work Agenda. For example, we can share our knowledge and our experience of the links between children's work and discrimination issues.

We can also engage with the ILO in forging closer partnerships in the fight against harmful and exploitative child work. We believe that we have much to share on effective ways for achieving the participation of communities and children in the child labour debate.

Secondly, we would like to emphasize further the importance of children's participation in responding to children's work. We congratulate the ILO's recognition in the Report of the importance of children's participation, but feel that there is much that we can all do to ensure that this participation is achieved. Children's involvement in decisions that affect them is a fundamental principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We believe that children should be involved in all stages of the process, from determining which forms of work are worst forms to the monitoring and evaluation of project activities. We are pleased to hear about the new child labour research initiatives, outlined in the Director-General's Report, and would like to ensure that these initiatives include participatory research with working children.

We understand that the concept of children's participation is new and challenging to many. However, from over 80 years of experience in working with children, we know that children offer unique insights into their own lives that often differ fundamentally from adults. Children's participation is therefore crucial for ensuring that the way we act is in the best interests of children.

We welcome the participation of some working children in yesterday's debate; we see this as an important first step in ensuring that children are fully and meaningfully involved in debates on child labour in the International Labour Conference in the future.

Mr. SUPARWANTO (*Employers' delegate, Indonesia*) — First of all, on behalf of all employers of the Republic of Indonesia, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this session of the Conference. I have every faith that his experience and proficiency will enable us to accomplish the objective of this session of the Conference. I would like also to congratulate the two elected Vice-Presidents.

Before I join in the discussion of the Director-General's Report, I would like to thank the ILO Office in Jakarta, which has made great efforts to strengthen the Indonesian Employers' Association. I greatly appreciate its hard work.

In response to the excellent Report prepared by the Director-General, I would like to draw the attention of the Conference to the following points.

First, the ILO's main objective of promoting decent work has brought employers together through the Organization's tripartite structure. To bring the decent work concept into action, it is necessary to promote and realize the shared values of the stake-

holders, which has indirectly involved employers in certain activities. Hence, the Indonesian employers' delegation attending this session of the Conference will search for a better method for implementation at the national level, particularly at the plant level.

With the ratification of all eight of the core ILO Conventions on the fundamental principles and rights at work, all parties in the tripartite body are committed to their application in law and practice. One of the forms of partnership is labour reform law, which resulted in the trade union law of the Act No. 21 of 2000.

In the meantime, employers are also involved in drawing up two draft bills on manpower protection and development, and labour dispute settlement. These draft bills are now in the last phase of deliberations in Parliament and should be adopted by the end of September 2002.

Secondly, the financial crisis that hit Indonesia in mid-1997 had a severe impact on employment. Today, there are approximately 36.9 million unemployed people and 40 million people live in poverty, and this condition has a tendency to rise. This condition has led to the growth of the informal sectors which have notably helped the survival of the Indonesian economy since the collapse of the formal sectors. The symbiotic relationship between formal and informal sectors is highlighted in the ILO Report VI, *Decent work and the informal economy*, which shows that a close correlation between the two sectors will make a positive contribution to the economy. As regards this matter, employers will support efforts to develop operational and technical programmes for informal sectors, in order to make a conducive environment for job creation in the formal sectors afterwards.

The Indonesian Employers' Association strongly believes that in order to reduce the problems of industrial relations in Indonesia, the first priority should be considered to be that of building bipartism. Workers and employers should sit down together to seek ways to overcome all of our problems. Both partners should have a common understanding of how to increase industrial peace.

Thirdly, the main priority for conducting social dialogue is that of establishing regular dialogue between workers or trade unions and employers at national, provincial and plant level. This is necessary in order to have a common platform as a medium to discuss issues arising from the application of industrial relations.

According to the Global Report, Indonesian employers were involved in and supported the national launch of the Global Report, *A future without child labour*, on 20 May 2002. We have also built a partnership with IPEC to support the activities of the ILO, which acts as a social partner for eliminating child labour in order to improve the future situation in our country.

Before concluding my remarks, I would also like to express my deepest sympathy for the situation in Palestine. I hope the situation will soon improve with the support of the ILO.

Mr. SIMEONOV (*Employers' delegate, Bulgaria*) — I would like first of all to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents on their election and wish them, on behalf of the Bulgarian employers, success in guiding the Conference.

The Report of the Director-General and the report of the Governing Body show a clear identification of

aims and a concentration on the most important tasks of the mission lying before the Organization. The activity of the ILO, as reflected in the Report, is very impressive. I have to point out that the presence of the ILO has been even more significant in Bulgaria since the previous session of the International Labour Conference. At the same time, considerable efforts were made so that the ILO would feel the tide of reforms and direct itself even more effectively.

Since the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, the activities of the Bulgarian employers' association have received a further impetus, with regular consultations among members and the development of joint proposals which have been submitted to the Parliament, the Government, and other institutions in order to defend employers' interests.

Furthermore, the association maintains close contact with other employers' organizations which cannot meet the criteria for national representation. The most important issues are coordinated with them or are brought directly to a single new body which defends employers' interests — the newly established Council for Economic Growth, under the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. The Bulgarian employers take an active part in the social dialogue, in the work of tripartite bodies and in the management of the social funds.

On the whole, there has been an improvement in social dialogue. However, the dialogue still requires more opportunity for feedback and needs more justified and well-founded answers from the Government, especially when the employers' proposals are not accepted.

The Bulgarian employers are convinced that the Bulgarian economy should be further liberalized by reducing regulation regimes, eliminating the need for certain permits and licences and replacing them with a registration regime. This will also decrease the share of the shadow economy and its consequences, such as the avoidance of labour contracts, non-payment of social security contributions and non-observance for the minimum wage.

It must be recognized that if a requirement cannot be complied with by the majority of employers, then it is on excessive requirement and has to be amended.

The legislation has to take into account also the conditions of the transition period. It must not push companies into the shadow economy.

These difficulties, as well as some others which result from the crisis in the Balkans, from a delay in the process of structural reform process and high tax and social security payments imposed on employers, have brought about increased unemployment.

Furthermore, flexible forms of employment have to be introduced to make way for greater competitiveness and efficiency of invested funds. The Bulgarian employers are united in their willingness and efforts to make the business environment in Bulgaria more attractive. The introduction of preferences for specific categories of companies and sectors is not beneficial to the economy. Therefore, we are going to work in the direction of improving the entire economic environment, which will affect all companies, big and small, and both Bulgarian and foreign investors. A favourable economic climate and tolerable taxes are the best means to fight the shadow economy. Those are the conditions that do not hamper companies from investing in innovation and engineering and that allow them to provide incentives and sufficient motivation to their workers.

In recent years we have been working more actively on occupational safety and health. Projects in this area have been carried out successfully. This is to the credit of the last two governments. We shall have to direct our efforts towards preventive activities, because we are still dealing with this problem in a curative rather than preventive manner. In this sense there is still an enormous work to be done in Bulgaria. We expect the ILO to provide us assistance in this area.

*Original Arabic:* Mr. AL DEBSS (*Employers' delegate, Syrian Arab Republic*) — I am very pleased to be with you this evening and to represent the Syrian employers at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. The Syrian Arab Republic continues to promote labour and working conditions in conformity with the policies of our President, Bashir Al Assad, and in the framework of modernization, with close collaboration between the Government, the employers and the workers. A number of laws and decrees have been promulgated, including a law on private banks, one on social insurance, and Law 10 on investment, all of which are intended to reinforce the private sector in The Syrian Arab Republic and encourage investment. The interest shown by international companies and banks in investing in The Syrian Arab Republic proves the confidence of the international community in investment opportunities in The Syrian Arab Republic, and in its political, economic and social stability, particularly following the conclusion of free trade agreements with a number of Arab countries. Partnership negotiations between The Syrian Arab Republic and Europe are close to completion. The situation in our region has deteriorated considerably, particularly since the beginning of the year, due to assaults by the Israeli occupation authorities, which have spared no-one, children or old people in Palestine or the other occupied Arab territories. This aggression is sapping the chances for the just and comprehensive peace to which we aspire, and the situation in the region has become explosive.

We have read carefully the annex to the Report of the Director-General and are surprised and confused to see on page 22 of the Arabic text the term "The Arab population of the Golan". The correct term is "citizens, Syrian Arab citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan". The information presented is general and requires further detail in order to give a clearer picture of the reality of the violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupational forces in the Golan. Moreover, footnote 2 on the same page, quoting the Israeli occupational forces, is unacceptable, as it totally contradicts resolutions by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, notably Security Council resolution 499 of 1981, which states, inter alia, that Israel's decision to impose its laws and authority on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void.

The Syrian employers refuse to accept the situation prevailing in Iraq and the unjust and unjustified blockade, particularly since Iraq has fulfilled the conditions required for international legitimacy, a blockade imposed on Iraq on the pretext that it was necessary to destroy biological and chemical weapons, at a time when another country in the region has an arsenal of such weapons and is acting recklessly and irresponsibly.

We hope that this Conference will distinguish between the just and the unjust, and we also hope that

this Conference will adopt Recommendations and resolutions which match reality and which meet the expectations of all social partners.

We also hope that they will condemn that aggression and restore the legitimate rights of oppressed peoples, and that Israel will return their occupied territories to the Arabs.

Finally, we wish to confirm that the Syrian delegation calls on the ILO to contribute in an efficient manner to the creation of a special fund to promote employment and social protection in Palestine, ensure the protection of Palestinian workers and guarantee their right to decent work.

Mr. MUSENGE (*representative of the International Social Security Association*) — It is my very great pleasure to extend to this International Labour Conference the greetings of its close associate, the International Social Security Association.

This is a particularly noteworthy year for the International Social Security Association, known to many of you simply by the abbreviation ISSA. The ISSA is indeed celebrating this year its 75th anniversary. The ILO was, of course, present on the occasion of the founding of the ISSA in 1927 in Brussels, when a small group of sickness insurance institutions met to lay the foundations of the International Social Security Association. One could even say that the ILO was, from the very beginning, a parent of the Association, encouraging and facilitating the development of the ISSA over the course of the subsequent decades. I am very pleased to inform you that this very special relationship continues up to the present day.

Why did the ILO foster the growth of the ISSA, beginning in 1927? The simple, but historically accurate, explanation is that the ILO realized at a very early date that the administrative bodies of national social security systems would, in many instances, operate outside the oversight of the national ministries of labour. In fact, in many countries the social security institutions would become autonomous public institutions, administered by representatives of the social partners, the workers and the employers alongside the representatives of government.

The ILO therefore felt it necessary to bring together these social security institutions at the international level both to promote the development of social security protection and to gain support for the ratification of the growing number of ILO Conventions and Recommendations dealing with the social security field. This ILO policy proved to be very far-sighted indeed, since today the ISSA has become a worldwide organization, counting among its members nearly 400 social security institutions in close to 150 countries. These ISSA members work together to extend and improve social security protection for workers and their families everywhere.

I would like to invite all of you, whether you represent your government or the social partners, to take part in an important event to be held at the invitation of the Government of Canada in Vancouver on 10-12 September of this year. This international conference will focus on an issue of critical importance to both the ILO and the ISSA: how to strengthen the security in social security. This conference follows closely the important work carried out by the International Labour Conference at its session last year when it adopted a consensus document on the ILO's social security policy. The Vancouver conference is thus an

important occasion to bring the ILO's message to the hundreds of social security policy-makers, directors and managers who will be present on that occasion.

The Vancouver conference is an opportunity to reflect together on how social security coverage can be extended to the vast majority of the world's workers who presently do not benefit from any formal system of social security protection. This issue of social security coverage is, of course, one of the major preoccupations of both the ILO and the ISSA, since there is a growing realization around the world that we cannot assume that the growth of social security protection will follow the historical course witnessed in many of the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America. In these industrialized countries, which today enjoy high levels of social security coverage of their populations, the extension of coverage was gradual but steady, stretching over many decades until nearly universal coverage was achieved during recent decades.

Clearly, this historical pattern is not being repeated in many developing countries. The world itself is very different from the one in which the older national social security programmes were introduced and developed. Today's world is more globalized with respect to markets and financial transactions. The predominant economic model is that of the market economy, which brings along with it strong pressures to privatize and to reduce the size and the role of government in many sectors of public policy, including social security. And, it is well known and documented that, in many countries of the world, the new jobs being created by the restructured national economies are in fact in the informal sector, where there exists virtually no social security protection outside of the traditional forms of family and community support.

It is therefore not surprising that, in the wake of economic downswings and national economic restructuring policies, there are a number of countries in the world where social security coverage is today actually declining rather than growing.

What I have just said about the crisis of social security coverage in the world is therefore a reality that we cannot and should not ignore. The ISSA Vancouver conference this year, as well as the extensive programme of technical activities, will focus on this issue of the coverage gap. We are confident that we will be able to count on the close cooperation of the ILO and particularly its technical staff in the Social Protection Sector to analyse and to find practical solutions to address this major social protection challenge.

I have placed particular stress on the close cooperation between the ILO and the ISSA in addressing the social security coverage gap. There are, of course, other important areas where such cooperation is ongoing and where it can be even further reinforced in the future. For lack of time, I will make mention here of only two additional examples: firstly, training for social security officials, and secondly, the development of international social security information and statistical databases.

I look forward to coming back to you next year with an update on how we are improving ISSA-ILO cooperation in these two areas, as well as in the others mentioned previously. The 25 years of ISSA-ILO cooperation is an achievement but, as in any family, it takes work to get on well together. We are committed on the ISSA side to rendering this special relationship

ever more beneficial to the member States, to the world's social security institutions and to the millions of persons they protect around the world.

*Original Spanish: Mr. MIRELES (Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Mexico) —* We would like to greet the representatives of the ILO, especially the Director-General, Juan Somavia, trade union delegates, government officials and entrepreneurs from various countries who are participating in this great event, where strategic subjects are under discussion with a view to developing the international workers' movement.

We have to contribute our experiences gained in the trade union movement, share our achievements, recognize our limitations and promote projects that strengthen relations between workers, employers and governments. We will continue fighting in order to have the demands of the worker movement met, which contributes to the production of goods and services under a new development model imposed by modern society on the world's economies.

As a result of globalization, the influence of which extends beyond any geographical border, competition is becoming more and more aggressive. Modern society is committed to making free trade easier and achieving productivity and profit. However, this free trade structure has not solved the situation of developing countries where there is access to a larger quantity of goods at lower prices but substantial sections of society are excluded from these markets because of their poverty.

We are feeling the effects of a deterioration in the world economy as a result of international terrorism, with the closure of businesses and heavy job losses. By the same token the informal economy has grown as well, helping to generate income and avoid a major crisis in society.

Globalization has caused an enormous increase in the informal economy in the last 20 years. At the 1991 session of the International Labour Conference, the informal sector was defined as having little investment capital, rudimentary technology and unqualified labour. Employment in this sector is unstable and people are excluded from social protection. However, according to official figures from August 2000, 12.7 per cent of the GDP was generated by the informal economy.

This has allowed us to become members of the Workers' Congress and to participate in making collective requests to the Government. We have also signed agreements with the Mexican Social Security Institute and with entities dealing with housing, thus being able to offer our members the advantages of trade unionism. It should be emphasized that workers in the informal economy in the state of Nuevo León are protected by a new law.

In this era of globalization workers in the informal economy are able to organize themselves, and the challenge for trade unions in all countries is to try and bring them under the social security umbrella and involve them in increased trade union activity at an international level.

The ILO was founded in 1919 after the First World War, the objective being to establish international labour standards in order to protect employment and uphold justice, freedom and social security. We therefore hope that our trade union proposal is in line with these lofty goals.

The biggest trade unions in Mexico, CROC and CTM, under the leadership of Alberto Juarez Blancas and Leonardo Rodriguez Alcaine, are preparing to march on towards their destiny and continue the struggle to improve conditions for the workers. The challenge is to achieve unity, which is the only way forward for workers and employers.

Mr. PEET (*Minister of Labour and Immigration, Bahamas*) — The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas joins in congratulating the President in his election and the Director-General for his Report *ILO programme implementation 2000-01*.

The Report reflects the tremendous work undertaken on behalf of the ILO and its constituents. Thanks to the enormous efforts undertaken, the machinery of the Governing Body has moved the InFocus Programmes, initiated two years ago by the Director-General, forward; and the achievements in ratifications of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), demonstrate the value of tripartism and social dialogue in decision-making, which impact the working and living conditions of men, women and children throughout the world.

My Government is committed to strengthening our approach to participative democracy by consultation and dialogue. My Government, the Progressive Liberal Party, having the overwhelming support of the electorate, was returned to power after an absence of some ten years during the general elections held in the Bahamas on 2 May 2002.

My Government reaffirms its strong and historic ties with workers and organized labour in the Bahamas. My Government has pledged to the people of the Bahamas that we will create a true tripartite relationship between Government, workers and employers, so that public policies on labour will reflect what is best and reasonable for our democratic society. We are committed to improving labour relations in the public sector, improving labour legislation by incremental changes after proper consultation with employers and unions.

My Government will pursue a new approach, based on tripartite consensus on decent work. We fully support minimum wage laws without reducing existing benefits. Our commitment to fundamental principles and rights at work will be strengthened through tripartite cooperation. Through these practices, we will strengthen employers' and workers' organizations and labour administration, and reinforce social dialogue.

We are committed to training and improving the well-being of our citizenry. Undoubtedly, this will create greater opportunities for men and women, and secure decent employment and income. We are supporting these commitments by providing budgetary allocations for improved educational levels and training opportunities through skill-training development and investment in health and safety at work to improve productivity.

My Government is committed to improving the employability and adaptability of the Bahamian labour force through active labour market policies, including the fight against all forms of discrimination and targeted programmes for low-income workers, particularly in the informal economy. Social safety nets are being instituted to provide assistance and support to displaced workers, retirees and the indigent.

The InFocus Programme on Social Security has brought focused attention to the need to promote activities strengthening social issues in occupational safety and health, HIV/AIDS and social security.

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas has ratified the eight core Conventions, and is actively considering the ratification of others, upon the recommendation of the social partners. We are committed to promoting ILO standards and policies at a national level, thus giving effect to practices of decent work. Our greatest challenge is to develop and implement strategies that give young people a real chance to find decent and productive work.

Our economy, like that of the other CARICOM member States, is still rebounding from the international impact of the events of 11 September. Nonetheless, we are moving "our plan" forward for a stronger Bahamas and a brighter future for all workers there.

Finally, as the newly elected member of the Governing Body for the Caribbean, I would like to thank the CARICOM governments, and other governments, for supporting the Bahamas.

Ms. ROMCHATTHONG (*Employers' delegate, Thailand*) — Let me first congratulate the President on his election and convey to him, the Director-General and all of you, the good wishes of the employers of Thailand. It is a privilege to be addressing you on this occasion, at a time when there are great threats to stability in the same way that there were in 1919, when the ILO was first created to combat poverty. At this Conference there is a discussion taking place on the informal sector. We need to bear in mind that many people are in this sector because they have no hope of obtaining secure employment, or have lost secure employment due to economic recession, such as that which we experienced in Thailand not long ago. We need to have an in-depth understanding of the issues related to the informal sector which could vary from country to country. Generalizations could be dangerous.

I would like, on behalf of my organization, to stress the need for employment creation which, in turn, requires the appropriate infrastructure and skills. There is a need for the social partners to work together to create jobs and also to help sustain jobs through competitiveness.

As employers we face a challenge, to show that it is the free enterprise system which will see us through these difficult times. This creates an onus on us to be responsible to society, and this is the reason why the Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT) has given highest priority to the Global Compact. We are proud that ECOT has taken a leading position in the region in promoting the Global Compact. We recently organized a high-profile conference to mark the first anniversary of our involvement with the Global Compact. We have established links with the academic world, and have influenced their thinking, as it is vital that we are not only relevant to the needs of society, but that we start reaching out to future generations of leaders. What we need is harmony in our workplaces, and it is time to put aside our differences and work together as one group of concerned people, whether we represent government, employers or workers.

Competitiveness is the key to enterprise success, and we need to focus attention on workplace cooperation as a means of ensuring that enterprises can compete successfully at a global level. Competitiveness

can be achieved by having appropriate policies in the workplace, where employees are encouraged to contribute their knowledge and skills to support management through the adoption of a “win-win” approach.

Governments should not only provide infrastructure but also be responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities and desire for learning and ongoing training. What contribution do we require from the ILO? We need support to provide up-to-date skills for our young people and senior workers, who need their skills upgrading. We need capacity-building for employers’ and workers’ organizations, so that they can be self-sufficient in the provision of the services required by their constituents.

In some of our countries there is a fragmentation of employers’ and workers’ interests, which is unhealthy, and as much as we respect the freedom of persons to associate in any manner they think proper, we are also aware of the dangers of fragmentation. This makes an organization weak and unable to respond to the real needs of employers and workers. The ILO should launch a programme to encourage greater unity, which would in turn improve tripartite activity at national level.

Thank you, Chairperson, for the opportunity to speak, and I wish you all every success for the Conference.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. HERRERA ROA (*Employers’ delegate, Dominican Republic*) — On behalf of the Employers’ delegation of the Dominican Republic, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, on his very important Report, in which he gives us the results to date of the implementation of the strategic objectives and cross-sectoral activities, which is an innovative step because it has allowed us to monitor the effects of the policies approved by this Organization.

The Report of the Director-General motivates us to work to expand decent work in our countries.

The Dominican Republic has enjoyed harmonious labour relations for the past few years, thanks to the social dialogue that the social partners have promoted in order to achieve a balanced solution to our conflicts. This climate of peace has resulted from the ratification and implementation of the core labour Conventions that have provided the framework to promote freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

Tripartism, the fundamental corner stone of this Organization, is respected in all the decisions and activities in the labour sphere, and it is also a model that is repeated in other sectors of the country’s economic and political life, emphasizing solutions based on consensus and not on conflict or confrontation.

It is a pleasure for us to be able to say that, in the Dominican Republic, workers’ and employers’ organizations are always consulted in matters of adopting laws and regulations that are compatible with the highest national objectives. As an example, we can quote a law adopted recently, which has created the Dominican system of social security, with the active participation of social stakeholders for an equitable and fair implementation, without excluding a single Dominican citizen.

We are committed to rejecting the worst forms of child labour, although we realize that in our countries many children unfortunately are heads of households.

However, we are against exploiting children and we are doing everything we can in order to oppose most strongly these practices.

We are encouraging the creation of new and better jobs that are well paid and with protection against unjustified dismissals and occupational hazards and we are at present developing a campaign to prevent these and also to prevent problems that might arise from HIV/AIDS.

Another activity that we consider to be very important is that of training the labour force. This is a genuine investment, especially when globalization is forcing us to constantly retrain and adapt to technological changes.

In this domain, international cooperation, especially that provided by the ILO, is extremely important and relevant for fully recognizing the efforts made by women workers, who must be acknowledged and protected.

This session of the Conference is taking place at an important moment for world peace and for protecting the way of life that as a civilized community, we have always promoted. For this reason, we deplore and reject all types of terrorism because we believe in a democratic system based on participation and the rule of law as a guarantor of social and human rights.

To conclude, we appreciate the efforts made by the ILO which has adopted standard-setting policies to the new global realities, and we hope that this shall continue as a necessary basis for establishing more and better decent work.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. ORTEGA (*Workers’ delegate, Venezuela*) — May I congratulate the President and the other Officers of the Conference on behalf of the Venezuelan Workers’ delegation. The very successful manner in which the Conference has been proceeding confirms how appropriate their election was. We would also like to congratulate the Director-General on the Report that he has presented to us. We can see, with satisfaction, in this Report that progress and achievements have been made towards strengthening the four strategic objectives which define decent work and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

It is with regret that we must denounce here, in this Organization which defends freedom, democracy and social justice, that coinciding with the application of the Declaration, in Venezuela we are experiencing a process which is undermining all these principles, which is the work of a Government that does not recognize its international commitments in the labour sphere and that with systematic violence is undermining the most elementary rights of workers and their organizations on a daily basis.

In Venezuela the Government has banished social dialogue. The violation of Convention No. 87 was cemented at the Constitutional level when it was established that the State may intervene in trade union elections and when steps were taken to dissolve the trade union movement. Attempts were made to intimidate trade union leaders through controls only applicable to public officials and they tried to impose a referendum which was illegal and spurious from every point of view with the aim of dissolving the whole movement. Based on ILO Conventions and principles, the Venezuelan Workers’ Confederation (CTV) called for abstention at this referendum and 97 per cent of people obliged. As a result, there was no

mandate for supervised elections. However, the State continued to manoeuvre matters in such a way that trade union elections were imposed. Workers and their leaders undermined this manoeuvre by the Government and now we have 70,000 men and women who have been elected by universal and secret ballot by over a million workers and that gives our trade unions a strength they have not had in the past.

As the supervisory bodies of the ILO have established — the Committee of Experts, the Committee on the Application of Standards, the Committee on Freedom of Association — in Venezuela freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are constantly being violated and this in a climate of economic deterioration, exclusion, growing unemployment and constant threats to freedom. This Government tried to violate the ILO Constitution and the Standing Orders of the Conference by trying to prevent the legitimate participation of the Workers' delegate. It was only by decision of the highest court of the land, handed down just a week ago, that this violation was prevented.

The stifling level of labour unrest prompted by the Government, affecting even the oil industry, led the CTV to call a 24-hour general strike on 9 April last. The obstinacy of the Government in attending to our calls for negotiation and its failure to recognize the movement forced us to extend this action. This led to us holding a march on 11 April in which the CTV, SEDECAMARAS, political parties and civil society organizations expressed their solidarity with workers in the oil industry. They were asking for President Chavez to resign and for a return to the rule of law. It was a peaceful demonstration involving a million people which as it approached the Presidential Palace, in the regime's most repressive action, was crushed by the Government's paramilitary bands

leaving a lamentable 17 compatriots dead and hundreds of people injured. It is with pain that we denounce these facts and call for those responsible to be punished.

Fortunately, we have not been alone in trying to combat the Government's aggressions and its authoritarian aspirations. To the internal solidarity of other sectors of society we have been able to add international solidarity. We would like to mention the actions of the ICFTU, the ORIT and trade union confederations on the continent and throughout the world. Many of their actions have played a determining role in our struggle.

It is with immense gratitude that we note the firm and transparent approach taken by the ILO in helping us to defend the values and principles that are the duty of this Organization. The various missions and officials that have visited the country have our deepest respect and appreciation. ACTRAV, the multidisciplinary teams and the ILO regional office have always given us the technical support we wanted.

Venezuela's future is full of uncertainty. The workers will do everything they can to defend democracy. Totalitarianism is a real threat. There is no genuine rule of law, and we are being asked to accept an economic package that is incomplete and badly planned, which will lead to more poverty and exclusion. Our institutions are unstable and the current levels of corruption are unprecedented.

We hope that we can continue to count on the effectiveness, vigilance and solidarity of the ILO and on support from the world's workers and all of the democratic powers represented at this session of the International Labour Conference.

*(The Conference adjourned at 7.50 p.m.)*



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