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Presidents: Mr. Hussain, Mr. Arbesser-Rastburg

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

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

Original Portuguese: Mr. LOPES CORREIA (*Minister of Labour and Solidarity, Cape Verde*) — Allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cape Verde and also on my own behalf, to convey my greetings to this august assembly, conveying my very best greetings for the success of this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. I wish to offer my warmest congratulations to the President on his election. I am sure that his vast experience and qualifications will make a great contribution to the success of our session.

Equally, I wish to congratulate the Director-General for the clarity and comprehensiveness with which he dealt with issues in his Report, a document that we welcome.

I wish to stress the importance that we attach to the issues that have been put forward for discussion in this forum, namely the promotion of cooperatives, occupational accidents and diseases, and the informal economy. Indeed, for a country such as Cape Verde, whose main objective is development and the struggle against poverty based on sustainable development, such issues are particularly relevant and pertinent.

As Cape Verde is a poor country with a reduced economic base and as it depends upon the outside, with little internal savings, and has a population growth rate of 2 per cent per year, in a largely young, demographic context, with 70 per cent of the population being aged under 30 and with a high rate of fertility, the drop in emigration combined with school drop-outs raised serious problems of unemployment for the country. From this standpoint, it is clear that poverty and unemployment affect a large portion of the population of Cape Verde and therefore public policies are necessary to solve these problems that I have just mentioned.

The informal economy plays a fundamental role in the economic and social fabric of Cape Verde. It is responsible for about 40 per cent of employment, and its employment creation potential is due to the flexibility of the economic stakeholders in the sector, mainly small entrepreneurs, to the low level of skills of the workers and the low level of technology. The sector therefore developed as a kind of social buffer in order to solve problems of underemployment and,

consequently, also problems of poverty and socio-occupational exclusion.

A 1997 study on the informal economy shows us that of a total of 2,888 economic units surveyed, 84.2 per cent belonged to the informal sector and of these 94.8 per cent had less than five workers. These data clearly demonstrate the importance of the informal economy in our country and the need for it to be organized in a consistent manner so that it may play its true role in the process of development. Likewise, one of the greatest constraints concerns the lack of class spirit, which means that the people who work in the sector cannot get together in order to increase their bargaining power, gain access to credit, or conquer more demanding markets.

My Government, in its programme, acknowledges the roles of cooperatives and mutual societies as important instruments of self-promotion to solve the many socio-economic problems that exist in our country. It also realizes that a promotion strategy is necessary, aimed at creating a cooperative culture which will make it possible to relaunch its principles and values, so that the movement can occupy its true place in the global process of national economic and social development.

Our Government, amongst other measures, wishes to contribute to the creation of a political environment favourable to the development of cooperatives as well as to the definition of a suitable institutional framework for the movement. It wishes to support actions favouring the restructuring of the cooperative sector, the promotion of scale economies and the consolidation of the sector as a structured entity. It also wishes to stimulate and support the emergence of financial institutions, both cooperative and mutual, in order to facilitate access to credit for units operating in the social economy sector and which involve themselves in the individual or collective self-promotion of their members.

If it is true that promoting and providing incentives for cooperatives must be a major focus for the Government as a way of reducing poverty, it is also true that prevention and safety at the workplace must also represent an important factor for the success of our enterprises and to improve the quality of life of the workers, taking into account the potential risks and hazards that exist in various production activities. It is therefore necessary that we define the risks and find out where the occupational accidents and diseases occur and why, in order to be able to decide how to combat them and that we decide the degree of priority to attach to each preventive measure.

From a legal standpoint, Cape Verde has already done a great deal. The publication of Legislative

Decree No. 55/99 dated 6 September 1999 on safety and health in the workplace, originating from the ratification of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), made it possible to address important issues in order to reduce the rate of accidents and occupational diseases. In this regard, the Government attaches great importance to the integration of occupational accidents and diseases into social security and the updating of the disability tables as well, in order to make social protection in Cape Verde consistent and reserving a role of complementarity for the private sector. We are nevertheless aware that the legal texts are in themselves not sufficient to bring about change in working conditions.

To conclude, I would reiterate my wishes for the success of this session and I call for the strengthening of ties within the ILO in a world that I hope will enjoy increasing solidarity and social equity.

Original Spanish: Mr. TORRES MONTALVO (representative of the Latin American Central of Workers) — On behalf of the Latin American Central of Workers (CLAT), I am particularly pleased to greet the President and thank him for the possibility of addressing this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference.

We do not come from the poorest continent, but certainly from the one which is the most unjust and incoherent, and this makes us ask why there are such big contradictions within international institutions, including the ILO, in comparing the rich heritage of standards with the situation suffered by our workers. We share the concern expressed by the Director-General in his Report, *A future without child labour*, given that despite agreements for its elimination, instead of its reduction, it continues to grow. In Latin America it has reached disgraceful levels, especially with the growth in unemployment amongst the parents of these children. In Puerto Rico, a country that is not yet a member State of the ILO, there is specific legislation on child labour as well as on the promotion of cooperatives and the informal sector of the economy.

Together with CLAT, and in my capacity as leader of the workers in Puerto Rico, I wish to reiterate the request being made by the workers, employers and Government of my country to join the ILO. We are a free State associated with the United States, but we are a nation with its own Constitution and governmental body, and an extensive legal system which governs tripartite relations. Membership to the ILO would enable us to share the hopes of developing countries to build a socially fairer world that would subsequently be freer, more democratic and more peaceful.

Many of our governments talk to us of growth based on policies that reduce the concept of development to the simple and misleading category of growth. But this so-called growth does not involve development because as the profits of certain national entrepreneurs and transnational companies rise, unemployment, poverty, destitution and social marginalization are also on the rise. Our workers are becoming tired of speeches and promises on democracy and governance. Let us reiterate once again, with all our strength and with deep-seated conviction, that peace is not possible, no form of governance is viable, we will not be able to consolidate our fragile democracies and guarantee freedom unless social justice becomes a reality.

We share in and welcome the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Committee on Freedom of Association and the Committee of Experts. This gives particular grounds for satisfaction and at the same time provides a challenge that must be addressed without delay. We are fully aware of the enormous and imposing legacy that we have built together and added to, and yet we see on a daily basis new and growing aggressions, in particular on workers' rights to freedom of association and on the fundamental right to decent, dignified and just work which would facilitate the comprehensive development of individuals, who in turn would enrich the common good and would create better living and working conditions.

I would like to pay tribute here and with the deepest sorrow to the thousands of leaders who have been assassinated, especially in Colombia and Guatemala, which are countries that are exposed to the most dreadful and brutal conditions of generalized violence. We must also mention our commitment to, and solidarity with, the workers of Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Haiti, amongst other nations, in their struggle to defend their national heritage for a decent life and to develop social justice. These people are exposed to the voracious mercantile interests at both the national and international level. Humane work, which is a key factor in bringing culture into our societies, is increasingly under threat by aggressive attempts to reduce it to a mere commodity: a product that is ever more difficult to find in our supermarket, which is becoming more select and reserved for minorities in our societies on a daily basis. We cannot stop reiterating both our call for the legalization of our counterpart organization in Chile, CAT, and our support and ongoing solidarity with the Palestinian people and workers in their difficult and unavoidable struggle to build a nation which lives in peace, justice, democracy and freedom.

Mr. GURUNG (*Minister for Labour and Transport Management, Nepal*) — First, on behalf of the Nepalese delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to extend warm congratulations to the President on his well-deserved election to chair this important session of the Conference. We are fully confident that under his dynamic leadership and guidance the deliberations of this session will prove fruitful.

We are grateful to the ILO for honouring the then Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, by inviting him to be guest of honour of the session of the International Labour Conference which was held last year. But unfortunately he was unable to attend the Conference because of the unprecedented tragic incident that took place in our country.

Nepal, which is landlocked and one of the least developed countries of the world, has always pursued a proactive policy in addressing the challenges to development which arise from globalization. We have geared up our efforts to achieving sustainable development and growth. Nepal is equally committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. Our top priorities are to reduce poverty, unemployment, social marginalization, corruption and discrimination as well as to promote decent work and establish good governance by authorities accountable for the general welfare of the common people.

We have always abhorred organized crime and all forms of terrorism, armed conflict, illicit human and

arms trafficking, violence and unrest fomented by communalism, religion and political ideologies. We are sorry to state here that Nepal has been seriously affected by the recent upsurge in barbaric attacks from Maoist terrorists. His Majesty's Government has therefore declared a state of emergency in order to protect the lives and property of people, to maintain peace and security in the country and to wipe out terrorism. The Government has been compelled to divert major chunks of our national budget to security and to cut resources earmarked for the programmes of poverty alleviation, employment and income generation, and social development. The terrorists have been indiscriminately destroying development infrastructure. Increased terrorist activities have cost thousands of human lives and have an adverse impact on economic growth, trade, tourism and industrial activities.

My delegation would like to reiterate that His Majesty's Government of Nepal remains fully committed to the global cause of the ILO to eliminate the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency. Ratification of [Conventions Nos. 182](#) and [29](#) last year shows how much importance Nepal has attached to it. We fully support the ILO *Global Report on child labour*. We are committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2007 and all forms of child labour by 2010. We have prepared a master plan for addressing all aspects of the issues of child labour in an integrated and coherent manner.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the ILO for the assistance and technical input that it has provided to His Majesty's Government of Nepal during the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP)/Tenth Five-Year Plan Process to generate productive and decent employment in Nepal. This was prepared through a broad-based consultation of tripartite constituents and the development partners of Nepal.

We are pleased to be one of the three countries to implement a time-bound programme to eliminate the worst forms of child labour within five years. It is a comprehensive programme consisting of sectoral, area-based, as well as thematic approaches covering education, health, advocacy, social mobilization, income generation, skill training and economic development.

We highly appreciate the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General. These reports have described a wide spectrum of activities such as standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, poverty reduction and promotion of decent work, including the converging focus of the ILO's four strategic objectives. These reports also serve as a foundation for a universal social pillar that supports democracy, economic efficiency and social progress.

We would like to show our appreciation of the Director-General and his associates for preparing such comprehensive and inspiring reports.

My delegation strongly supports all the items of the agenda, such as promotion of cooperatives, notification of occupational accidents and diseases, the informal economy, and the withdrawal of 20 ILO Recommendations, as these are very pertinent issues today.

In view of the slowdown of economic development and the national crisis surfacing in Nepal owing to the worldwide economic recession and domestic problems, my delegation strongly urges international

agencies such as the ILO, World Bank, ADB and IMF and developed countries to assist us with increased resources and technical cooperation designed to cater to our special needs, accelerate the development process and overcome structural problems.

Before I conclude, my delegation sincerely hopes that a fruitful outcome will emerge from the deliberations of this session of the Conference. Finally, I wish the Conference success.

Original Vietnamese: Mr. DO (Workers' delegate, Viet Nam) — First of all, on behalf of the Vietnamese workers and trade unions, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to the President and the other officers of the Conference, and we wish the current session every success.

We welcome the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General. The Vietnamese General Confederation of Labour highly appreciates the efforts made and achievements gained by the ILO. Over the last year, the ILO has concentrated all its efforts on important and urgent questions which are of great interest to workers and trade unions throughout the world and in Viet Nam. These are the issues of gender equality, occupational health and safety, social security and fundamental principles at work, especially the issue of eliminating the worst forms of forced labour by children.

Being an organization of workers, for the workers, and recognized by the laws of Viet Nam, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour is trying its best to effectively exercise its role and functions in order to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of workers, thus contributing to the country's calls for peace, equality, democracy and social progress.

Over the past years, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour has actively contributed to the improvement of the labour legislation system in Viet Nam and to the safeguarding of trade union rights upheld by the world's workers and international organizations. The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour has actively participated in amending the Labour Code, elaborating on the social insurance law, speeding up work on drafting the unemployment law and creating the unemployment fund, working out the national programme on vocational training and other policies in the active labour market.

In fact, trade unions' rights and the right to collective bargaining have been consolidated and strengthened. About 80 per cent of state enterprises and more than 40 per cent of private ones have signed a collective agreement. Regulations on combating discrimination at work and eliminating forced labour have been promulgated and strictly implemented. The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour is active in building this system of social protection, especially the programme of poverty alleviation. Every year, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, together with the Government, organizes an occupational health and safety week, which is warmly supported by workers throughout the country.

In Viet Nam, women enjoy the same rights as men and are given priority in many fields. They enjoy favourable conditions to develop themselves. Of the 498 National Assembly deputies elected this 19 May, 136 are women, or 27.31 per cent, and 13 of them are from trade unions. The children of Viet Nam are increasingly taken care of by the whole of society, and are given the best possible conditions. Trade unions at

all levels have actively contributed to all the achievements mentioned.

As Viet Nam positively integrates into the world economy, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour intends to increase dialogues and cooperation with other trade unions involved in international economic cooperation at ASEAN, AFTA, APEC and ASEM. We are focusing on extending social welfare while strengthening economic cooperation. Viet Nam will continue to improve the national legislation system, bring the labour legislation closer to world labour standards, and raise people's awareness of the need to comply with the laws. Promoting jobs, lowering the unemployment rate, training and retraining, improving labour conditions and labour relations, bridging the gap between rich and poor, etc., are still urgent issues for Viet Nam. Other current priorities for the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour are building its organization, recruiting new members, defending the rights and interests of workers through collective agreements, increasing the skills of trade union officials, increasing the efficiency and extent of tripartism, and participating with the State in making policies relating to workers.

The technical assistance given to Vietnamese trade unions in recent years by the ILO, along with assistance rendered by friendly trade union organizations throughout the world, has been very effective. We would like to express our thanks for this assistance and cooperation.

The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour welcomes the opening of an ILO office in Hanoi in 2002. We believe that technical assistance from the ILO in the near future will help the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour to better fulfil its tasks and functions.

Original Portuguese: Mr. SILVA (Workers' delegate, Cape Verde) — First of all, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, and to wish him every success in conducting our deliberations.

Since 1994, I have been using this podium not only to deal with economic and social problems that affect the lives of our workers but also to expose breaches of trade union rights and freedoms in my country, including the seizing of trade union assets, the illegal use of civil requisitioning as a way of preventing strikes, the banning of demonstrations, the imprisonment of union leaders, and the imposition of a rotation in designating the workers' representative to the International Labour Conference.

With the legislative elections of 2001, and the shift of power, new expectations arose both with regard to respect for trade union rights and freedoms and with regard to social consultation and dialogue. Indeed, the new Government has repeatedly said that it wishes to govern by establishing a dialogue with civil society, and in particular with the social partners. Our trade union confederation will, however, remain vigilant as to this form of governance and, as in the past, will not hesitate to make use of this podium to criticize or expose any measure or attitude which may jeopardize the basic freedoms and rights of the workers of Cape Verde. Of course, it will certainly also continue to applaud and support the good policies.

It is from this standpoint that our trade union confederation is extremely gratified that the new execu-

tive has already censored the breaches mentioned above and has announced that a survey will shortly be conducted under the auspices of the ILO to determine trade union representation in the country, a survey that has been called for by the Credentials Committee of this Conference for a number of years now in view of the successive protests made by our confederation with regard to the appointing of the workers' representative.

We eagerly await the revision of the Labour Code, which has already been announced by the Government, to see whether the other recommendations made by the ILO with regard to the law governing strikes and civil requisitioning, minimum services, fixed-term contracts, and the law on demonstrations have been taken into consideration or not. It is worth pointing out that these recommendations were made following numerous complaints that we submitted to the ILO in the past, and therefore we will do everything to see to it that they are taken up.

The Report that has been submitted to this session by the Director-General calls upon us all to reflect deeply and seriously on some important points, namely fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection, decent work and the informal economy. It is on this last point that I would like to share a few comments with you.

In Cape Verde, a number of factors, such as the dynamics of development following independence, the droughts that afflict the country, the high level of migration and rapid urban concentration, above all in the capital, are responsible for the explosion of this sector.

In a country where poverty affects over 30 per cent of the population it is normal to allow that the informal economy is identified with poverty. We have to take into consideration the fact that the urban opportunities created in the process of development have meant that new income-generating activities have emerged and that, to a certain extent, the informal economy is also linked to the need and/or the possibility to improve income.

An analysis of the informal economy in Cape Verde has shown that it is strongly concentrated in the country's two main cities, in other words, Praia, the capital, and Mindelo, which together represent 80 per cent of the total of the sector. Another characteristic is that the sector is made up of very small units. According to studies that have been conducted, 94.8 per cent of these units have less than five employees and just 0.5 per cent have more than ten. It is striking that just 0.9 per cent of these units contribute to social security.

The lack of social protection, the fact that labour rights do not exist, the absence of representative organizations, namely trade unions, are other aspects that characterize the informal economy in Cape Verde. We hope that the informal economy will be able to go beyond the stage of mere subsistence and will embark upon the path to participation in the growth and development of the country. Lastly, we hope that those who work in this sector will be guaranteed decent work, that is, work with rights. In cooperation with the ILO our trade union confederation will do all it can to see to it that these objectives are achieved.

Mr. FARRUGIA (Employers' delegate, Malta) — On behalf of the Maltese delegation, I would like to congratulate the Director-General for his excellent Report that clearly explains the ILO vision.

This ILO Conference coincides with seminal developments in Maltese labour legislation. Our current legislation, consisting of the Conditions of Employment Regulations Act and the Industrial Relations Act, is being overhauled to bring us in line with ILO Conventions and EU directives.

Employers in Malta have been regular participants in the process of social dialogue with unions and governments, as they believe that the best way forward for all parties is through a convergence of ideas, that ideally should result in consensus. This is, of course, an ongoing challenge which forces all social partners to rise to the occasion in order to strike the best balance in the national interest.

The process that Malta is currently going through is consistent with the ILO's strategic objectives, as explained in the Director-General's Report. With respect to the first objective, that of promoting and realizing standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, employers have always strived to promote the principles of industrial democracy in the workplace.

Undoubtedly, an issue of strategic relevance for Malta is that of promoting full employment. For a country with practically no natural resources, wealth can only be generated through the utilization and upgrading of skills and the creation of productive employment. The creation of employment opportunities depends, amongst other factors, on the cultivation of an appropriate environment to provide incentives to employers — both Maltese and foreign — to invest.

One characteristic of the Maltese labour force which is of concern to employers is the relatively low female participation rate, which currently stands at 30 percent. This is low compared to many other European countries. There are various economic and socio-cultural reasons why this is the case. Maltese employers consider this to be an untapped resource offering considerable potential.

Another ILO strategic objective is to enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all. Malta is in the process of introducing occupational health and safety legislation and employers in the private sector have been actively involved in setting up an occupational health and safety authority, as well as making occupational health and safety a priority in their enterprises.

The results of a recent comparative survey conducted by the European Foundation demonstrate that Malta compares well with many EU countries on issues related to occupational health and safety standards and in many areas actually is ahead of other EU applicant countries.

Maltese employers also encourage the strengthening of tripartism and social dialogue. Economic progress can best be achieved if the social partners act in unison to identify the opportunities facing our country and to seek the best solutions to minimize the negative impact of the threats that arise. We are all aware of the dynamic social and economic environment which is part and parcel of globalization and as a small nation recognize the necessity of pooling our efforts to maximize our wealth-generating potential.

Malta is passing through an exciting phase in its history. It stands at a crossroads and the decisions to be taken in the coming year will shape its history in future decades. Employers have realized the need to restructure, both on a micro and macro level. Individual companies are upgrading their operating systems and

human resources to compete more effectively in global markets. Domestic companies that enjoyed protectionist measures are bracing themselves for the impact and challenges of free trade following the removal of trade barriers. This is of particular relevance to our small and medium-sized enterprises which comprise more than 85 per cent of Maltese companies.

On a macro level, the Government is creating a legislative framework to provide the economic, legal and social infrastructure which is itself a crucial element in the restructuring process.

Maltese employers contend that the application of standards related to EU directives and ILO Conventions should be effected in a manner that will firstly improve the labour force's flexibility; secondly, provide for stable industrial relations; and thirdly, safeguard the country's competitiveness. These are three requisites for the sustainable improvement in working conditions through the generation of wealth.

The restructuring process should also involve work habits and patterns to provide for increased flexibility amongst our labour force. This has to be reinforced by training and promoting the acquisition of multiple skills.

Stable industrial relations are essential for fostering healthy relations with the other social partners and to minimize disruptions arising from industrial action. Employers are calling for the development of an efficient machinery for conflict resolution and guarantees that essential services, such as utilities and transport, will be uninterrupted in the event of industrial action.

Ultimately, our country's economic survival depends on our competitiveness, especially in light of increasing competition from all parts of the globe. Employers thus feel the need to caution the Government against introducing measures that may erode our competitive edge, since these may backfire and produce the opposite results of what was originally intended.

Original Portuguese: Mr. PINTO PEREIRA (Minister of Public Administration and Labour, Guinea-Bissau) — Allow me first of all to convey my congratulations to the President of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, on his election and for the wise and efficient manner with which he has conducted our discussions.

Allow me also to convey the congratulations of the Government of Guinea-Bissau to the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, for the courage, commitment and consistency with which he has acted and which has helped to give the ILO's activity an important moral dimension, thereby making it one of the major contributors within the United Nations system to issues such as child labour and the promotion of decent work and to ensuring that social justice is permanently maintained on the world agenda.

It was with great satisfaction that we noted during the special session devoted to an assessment of the Global Report under the Follow-Up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles, and Rights of Work, that the problem of child labour constitutes not only a serious breach of fundamental rights but also a serious threat to sustainable social and economic development.

The effective abolition of child labour requires cooperation and action on the part of all members of the

Organization and, in our opinion, depends on the promotion of employment.

We share the view that, apart from those clear situations involving the exploitation of child labour which require inflexible treatment, no parent wants a child to remain illiterate. When taking children out of school to put them on the labour market, parents do so because they have insufficient income to support their families. Hence, it is only by improving working conditions and income for the parents that we will truly be declaring war on child labour. Furthermore, it is by ensuring that parents have decent work, i.e. work with a minimum of guarantees including social protection, that they will be able to provide an adequate education for their children, eliminating child labour and thereby guaranteeing the human resources essential to the development of our countries, the responsible citizens of the future, capable of contributing to the consolidation of a truly participatory democracy.

As everybody knows, Guinea-Bissau has experienced difficult times in the last few years. A deadly civil war has racked our small country, destroying the fragile material base that was constructed with the support of our main international economic partners, in particular Portugal, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. Once the conflict was over, we were able to promote a reasonable level of understanding within the country, thanks to which, about a year after the end of the conflict, it was possible to organize free and fair elections in Guinea-Bissau.

However, although satisfactory results were obtained at the political level, the country was unable to re-establish its pre-war momentum in economic and social terms. The problems of the post-war phase have seriously hampered our efforts to find a way out of the crisis. These include in particular the demobilization of combatants and de-mining and the reform of the public administration, which in themselves may make development impossible.

The effective elimination of child labour and the reform of the public administration are the priority programmes of Guinea-Bissau at present. This is why we count on your support to ensure that the instruments for implementing the programmes for the reintegration of former combatants and public officials in working life, particularly in the areas of vocational training and microcredit, will be supported adequately in order to lessen the negative social impact associated with such reforms.

If we agree, and it appears that we do, that the best way of fighting poverty is to promote employment, then, we may say that solid support of Guinea-Bissau in this field can bring very positive results in the short-term. Let us take the example of cashew nut production. Guinea-Bissau produces about 90,000 tons of cashew nuts per year. If the country is capable of transforming just 10 per cent of this production into small processing units then, it could create between 4,000 and 5,000 new jobs, also benefiting countries in the subregion. As can be seen, the situation is bad, but there are grounds for hope. With self-belief we can all help to rebuild the country by eliminating yet another source of tension.

Therefore, we are paying close attention to the development of the Regional Action Plan, resulting from the recent Global Employment Forum, because we believe that special priority will be given to Guinea-Bissau as a country that has just emerged from a war.

Allow me to conclude by saying that, as we believe in the ability the ILO to make a contribution to our country, the Government did not hesitate to regulate its financial situation with the Organization, paying a significant part of its arrears that had been accumulating since 1991. We ask the Director-General to submit our request to this august assembly, that Guinea-Bissau may take its place again as a full Member of this Organization. For the reasons mentioned above, I would also announce that the National Assembly of Guinea-Bissau has just approved the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), thus completing the series of core ILO Conventions that our country has ratified.

Original Chinese: Mr. CHEN (Employers' delegate, China) — I would like to begin by expressing my warm congratulations to the President on his election. My congratulations also go to the Vice-Presidents. I am confident that under their guidance, this session of the our Conference will be a success.

We are pleased to note that the Director-General reviewed in his Report the ILO's extensive and successful work with regard to employment promotion, poverty alleviation and improving social protection so as to achieve its objective of decent work. Last year, the ILO successfully held the Global Employment Forum, laying down a foundation for the formulation of the Global Employment Agenda. It is our hope that the ILO will continue its unremitting efforts in employment promotion, poverty alleviation and expansion of social protection against the backdrop of economic globalization, with due consideration to its previous effective practices and successful experiences. In this process, the ILO should have full regard for the diversity among nations in terms of social systems and development paths and should value, in particular, the wishes and demands of the vast number of developing countries, so as to assist member States to resolve their practical problems more effectively.

Decent work and the informal economy — an important item at this Conference — is an issue of common concern to all countries in the world. Economic globalization contributes to further interdependence of countries in their economic development. However, due to differences among countries in their economic development, and no fundamental change in the unfair and inequitable international political and economic order in today's world, globalization has aggravated the imbalance between countries in development and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. It has also diversified employment patterns worldwide. As pointed out in the Director-General's Report, the informal economy, if protected by civil society, will play a positive part in creating jobs. We are confident that the discussion at this session of the Conference will effectively help generate consensus among all parties concerned and further clarify the responsibilities and functions of various parts of society, so that effective measures can be taken to enhance the activities in the informal economy.

The China Enterprise Confederation is of the view that stable and sound development of the business sector is an important prerequisite for the growth of the national economy, creation of employment opportunities and realization of decent work. With its all-

round advancement of reform and opening up and modernization drive, China enjoys sound economic growth and social progress, which is conducive to enterprise restructuring and development and offers favourable conditions for the solution of problems relating to employment and social security. Our confederation attaches great importance to continuously enhancing the quality of enterprises and the qualifications of entrepreneurs, and is making efforts to protect in real terms the legitimate rights and interests of business and workers, promote a sustainable healthy environment for enterprise and develop new channels and areas for employment.

This year marks the very first year of China's accession to the WTO. Our membership means that China will participate in international economic cooperation and competition on a larger scale and in greater depth. Development calls for cooperation. Chinese enterprises will participate in economic globalization in an active and responsible spirit and take an active part in the Global Compact initiated by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. Our "Go Global" strategy will help create more opportunities for trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation between Chinese enterprises and their foreign counterparts. The China Enterprise Confederation will, as always, work hard to enhance the competitiveness of Chinese enterprises on the international market, promote China's cooperation in all countries and further strengthen our exchanges and cooperation with the ILO and employers' organizations of other countries with a view to promoting world prosperity and development.

Original French: Mr. RONDEAU (*representative of the World Union of Professions*) — Today, we see in almost all developing countries and countries in transition, as well as in certain developed countries, we are witnessing a real explosion of activities in the informal economy. And it is in this informal economy that we find the largest number of working children who, of course, therefore escape the supervision of most official institutions.

Because of their diversity and the fact that they are in close contact with their clients and patients, professional people form a very dense network of communication with individuals of all ages and all walks of life in all countries. The remarkable, confidential dialogue that grows up between a professional and his or her client should permit a more accurate analysis of behaviour and social realities and in return professional can provide feedback supplemented by the ethics and moral values of their profession.

The time has come for professionals to rally, and to join forces with governments so as to ensure that our societies have a future without child labour.

Doctors and lawyers in particular should be made aware of this in order to alert the authorities to which they respond to the type of problems that exist. They might even be called upon, depending on the specific socio-economic circumstances of the country in question, to propose practical measures for restricting child labour.

In the course of their dialogue with children, their parents and their families, they will become a vital means of passing on the information and advice needed if the proposed measures are to be put in place.

Since they have a true public service mission, professionals affiliated to WUP are an important go-

between for governments determined to protect the rights of children. They can, for example, help to build an awareness that the effective abolition of child labour constitutes vital progress. They can help by identifying those who suffer from this kind of labour and whose personal development is stymied and by explaining how important education is for earning a decent living in later life, while at the same time refusing to turn a blind eye to dangerous or immoral work.

Of course governments and professionals must meet at gatherings like this in order to play a meaningful complementary role. I am sure that we will then be able to provide the Director-General with full assistance so as to make sure that every man and woman has access to decent work.

Ms. TIBAIJUKA (*representative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements*) — UN-HABITAT and the ILO have had a very strong and useful partnership for many years, and I am sure that this partnership will be further strengthened as we implement the Millennium Declaration goals. Specifically, target 19 of the Millennium Declaration goals aims at making significant improvements in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020, and also endorses the "cities without slums" initiative. This is another way of restating the Habitat Agenda, whose aims are the provision of adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. Indeed, in paragraph 39 of the Habitat Agenda, member States commit themselves to the "goal of improving living and working conditions on an equitable and sustainable basis, so that everyone will have adequate shelter that is healthy, safe, secure, accessible and affordable and that includes basic services, facilities and amenities, and will enjoy freedom from discrimination in housing and legal security of tenure". Consequently, the contribution of the ILO in developing the Habitat Agenda at the Istanbul summit was significant and is reflected in the large number of references to employment, labour and the ILO Conventions in that document.

Following the Istanbul Conference, UN-HABITAT and the ILO have been working together at various levels to implement the Habitat Agenda. For example, the collaborative work of the Sustainable Cities Programme of UN-HABITAT and the ASSIST and SEED programme of the ILO in the cities of Dar-es-Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, and Kampala, Uganda, have been significant in improving the living environment and providing employment opportunities for the urban poor. These experiences have been replicated in many other cities all over the world.

The twenty-first century will witness massive and rapid urbanization with 2 billion new residents in cities of the developing world in the next 25 years. Three billion people — nearly every other person on earth — already live in cities. Furthermore, the process of urbanization is irreversible. At the first session of the World Urban Forum held in Nairobi last month, it was concluded that the future of humanity lies in cities. Sustainable urbanization is therefore a key to sustainable development. This has to be kept in mind as we prepare ourselves for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and as we discuss the ILO report on decent work and the informal economy.

The process of urbanization, though stimulated by economic development, has led to sharp divisions between cities and among social groups. We see a massive increase in the urbanization of poverty as there are now 0.75 billion urban slum dwellers living on less than a dollar per day. The challenge is to provide sustainable livelihoods, safe and secure living environments, adequate shelter, basic services and a better quality of life for all urban residents. There is a close link, therefore, between poverty reduction, and decent work and slum upgrading.

From UN-HABITAT's perspective, we would like to emphasize that the ILO's current approach of meeting decent work deficits is essential for slum upgrading and for sustainable urbanization. Most urban slum dwellers are working in the urban economy, on both the formal and informal sides. It is because of the low earnings in the urban informal economy that the informal settlements we commonly call slums have developed in and around urban areas. The deficit in decent work is directly related to the deficit in decent shelter. As the work deficit improves, the ability of informal sector workers to obtain decent shelter will also improve.

In the ILO report on decent work and the informal economy, seven essential securities denied to those in the informal sector are listed. I would like to see security of tenure added to this list. The ILO report refers to security of property rights as an important policy for reducing deficits in decent work. The UN-HABITAT campaign on security of tenure also promotes this notion. Secure tenure becomes an asset for the poor and an instrument for mortgage-based securities.

Time is brief, but I would like to emphasize that there is a direct link between decent work and decent shelter, and that without employment it will be very difficult to deliver the Habitat Agenda, so our two agencies are committed to cooperation.

Mr. JENNINGS (*representative of the Union Network International*) — I speak on behalf of Union Network International (UNI), the Global Union Federation for the information age. First of all, I would like to commend the Director-General for his excellent Report. We welcome the Decent Work Agenda, the new visibility that the ILO has won in the key debates on globalization and the support for social dialogue and for workers' rights. My comments today refer to organizing corporate governance and social dialogue.

Since UNI's creation two years ago, we have taken the union message to employees in the information society, and sought to attract more women, young people and professionals into membership. Organizing campaigns have been launched in finance, commerce, media and entertainment, call centres, the graphical and the informal and communication technology sectors. It is regrettable that our unions' campaigns frequently meet hostile employer opposition.

We would like the ILO to step up its work to ensure that as unions we have an opportunity to organize, that we have access to all workplaces and that there should be no union-free zones in the case of export processing zones. The ILO should work to sweep away legal and corporate obstacles to organizing.

We just want to be able to get on with the organizing job. The ILO must follow up November's Global Employment Summit. The dotcom collapse and prob-

lems in telecoms have already cost 500,000 jobs. An ILO global social charter for ICT staff is required and this must include online rights for online workers. The ILO should organize a new summit with unions in the ICT sector and ICT employers to achieve this.

Globalization is not delivering social progress. The United Nations Millennium Summit goals are simply not being met. UNI-Africa has estimated that 45 million more African people will fall into the poverty trap in the next decade.

Unstable financial markets continue to wreak havoc. Our recent UNI-Apro Conference for jobs and justice showed that the lesions of the Asian financial crisis have not healed.

Argentina has been abandoned by the global financial community. A banking collapse has choked the economy; poverty and unemployment are rocketing. UNI-Americas objects to the IMF drawing out the negotiating process while the people suffer and failing to acknowledge its role in the collapse.

Privatization of financial services has failed, yet the IMF continues to insist that governments around the world follow this road to nowhere. The ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which we welcome, must show the Bretton Woods institutions the path to development that puts people first.

The WTO's GATS system puts the liberalization of services before everything else. We want people to have access to good public services. This includes universal postal services available at an affordable and uniform price. You do not bridge the digital divide by privatizing telecoms in developing countries. The aim of universal service supply is not an operational part of GATS. The liberalization and privatization of services are guarded by the WTO's powerful sanctions machinery. The fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha made no progress on labour standards, on internal or external democracy.

UNI along with all the other global unions will campaign for reform of the WTO and GATS.

The ILO needs to address corporate governance with the utmost urgency. Recent cases confirm how widespread unethical practices in corporations have become. Enron and Arthur Andersen are just the tip of a garbage pile whose toxic strength is a danger to all livelihoods, with Enron demonstrating a case of corporate greed over pensioners' need. The spreading toxic cloud impacts workers' livelihoods, workers' rights and labour relations. As this month's issue of *Fortune* concluded, we have "system failure".

Last week union leaders were arrested at Shaw's supermarket in the United States. Why? They were protesting at the company's attempt to tear up the collective agreement. Shaw's is owned by Sainsbury in the UK, where rights are recognized. Sainsbury should recognize workers' rights everywhere.

French retailer Pinault Printemps Redoute is engaged in an ugly union busting campaign in the United States, denying its disadvantaged minority workers their right to join a union. The world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, is aggressively opposed to all attempts by its 1 million US workers to join a union.

If companies cannot respect workers' rights then how can we trust them elsewhere. The ILO should work to improve business values such as honesty, accountability, transparency and respect for workers' rights and to ensure that workers have a seat at the table. It should also step up its efforts to make busi-

nesses comply with ILO Conventions. Investors should consider not placing their funds in non-compliant companies.

UNI will continue our push for global agreements with employers. We have made breakthroughs with Telefonica, OTE of Greece, Carrefour, Tesco and Metro. Global agreements contribute to improved corporate governance.

UNI believes that the ILO sectoral social dialogue has a key role to play in cleaning up the corporate yard. We would like permanent global structures for dialogue with employers in our sectors to meet annually, to follow up the various plenary sessions and to promote ILO Conventions. We have made progress in the commercial sector. We would like to see the same in finance and post and telecoms, whose recent meetings supported this initiative.

In conclusion, we would like the ILO to put the fight against racism and discrimination at the top of its agenda, to ensure decent work for migrant workers. The Director-General's Report supplies the vision and sets the course, but it is only through decent work that we can give a human face to globalization.

Mr. ITH (*Minister of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation, Cambodia*) — First of all, I would like to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents warmly on their election to preside over the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that this session of the Conference will be a fruitful and successful one under their experienced and capable leadership.

Faithful to the fundamental principles and rights enshrined in the ILO Constitution, Cambodia has continued to take further measures to realize the ILO's strategic objectives and implement the labour law. Last year, thanks to the ILO's technical assistance, we issued an important ministerial regulation on representativeness of professional organizations. Also with technical assistance from the ILO, another ministerial regulation on the determination of types of work which could be hazardous to children is being finalized. Early this year, with funding support from Japan and the United States, respectively, we started to implement these two important projects.

The first project aims at expanding employment opportunities for women, while the second deals with strengthening the labour dispute resolution system.

Both projects are executed by the ILO. These measures, together with the fully fledged implementation of the garment sector monitoring project and daily routine labour inspections, have contributed to the realization of the aforementioned fundamental principles and rights.

This is confirmed by the second synthesis report on working conditions in Cambodia's textile and apparel sector which, based on the findings of independent monitors, has shown no evidence of forced labour, discrimination and child labour.

In the field of occupational safety and health, our present labour law contains a chapter dealing with occupational accidents and diseases as well as commuting accidents. According to the labour law, and other implementing regulations, the employer is required to ensure safety and health at the workplace. In case of an occupational accident, the employer is required to notify the Department of Social Security or the provincial Department of Labour so that the accident is recorded and appropriate measures are taken. The

employer is also liable to provide medical treatment and to pay injury benefits to the victims according to the degree of disability, fixed by ministerial regulation. Another event worthy of mentioning on this occasion is that after long debate, the Labour Advisory Committee, which is the sole national tripartite body, recently agreed on another important ministerial regulation on thermal surroundings at the workplace.

In most developing countries like Cambodia, a large part of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector of the economy. Very often the informal sector contributes a considerable proportion of the country's GDP and employment. The informal sector is very important for poor, developing countries. However, informal sector employment is characterized by a large degree of self-employment, extremely low income and little or no protection under labour law. For that reason, we are in favour of including this issue for general discussion during this session of the Conference and hope that the discussion will come up with useful Recommendations for the benefit of informal sector workers.

Cambodia also fully supports the adoption of a Recommendation concerning the promotion of cooperatives and withdrawal of the 20 obsolete Recommendations.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my deep thanks to the ILO for its assistance, and wish the Conference splendid results.

Mr. ZARB (*Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Malta*) — I would like to congratulate the Director-General for his elaborate Report.

The General Workers Union has always sought to follow the policies adopted by the ILO, and this applies also to the concept of cooperatives. Ever since the Government of Malta embarked on a privatization process, in particular with the contracting out of public services, the General Workers Union has seen that cooperatives could be a tool to minimize as much as possible the impact of privatization.

In fact, some time back my union was instrumental in the setting up of two cooperatives within the public sector, and they are now successfully competing by tendering for the provision of services demanded. This has had a doubly positive effect: the jobs involved were safeguarded, and the cooperative members' earnings improved slightly.

I would like now to share with you some reflections on the current state of affairs of our industrial relations, since Parliament is at present discussing changes to our labour laws.

The General Workers Union considers that some of the changes to the Industrial Relations Act have limited the rights of trade unions. We have our own reasons to believe that. When the draft Bill was published some weeks ago, in contrast to the present Industrial Relations Act, it contained no mention at all of strikes of sympathy.

Of course, our reaction was immediate and appropriate and thus, the draft Bill was withdrawn and rewritten to include the right of secondary action. However, we have noticed that the schedule listing essential services was exaggeratedly broadened, to the extent that hundreds of workers would now be deprived of their right to strike. In addition, the Government ignored the definitions and recommendations that the ILO gives to what should be considered as essential services.

We are not at all surprised by the Government's behaviour, as it is today repeating its intention of August 1999 and once again is not heeding the advice of the ILO.

Hence, it is precisely in this sense that we feel convinced that the amendments weaken the General Workers Union, especially when we consider that the majority of workers involved in the provision of the services, now declared as essential, are members of the General Workers Union. Given the fact that the General Workers Union is by far the largest trade union in Malta, undermining it will mean undermining the whole trade union movement.

Besides, the proposed labour legislation will take the form of an enabling law, giving the Prime Minister and the Minister for Social Policy sole and full powers to delete or introduce new changes as they see fit, without consultation and agreement with the social partners, in particular the trade unions.

This brings me to state that the way things have been developing in Malta's industrial relations is not making the most of social dialogue. The General Workers Union has insisted very often on the establishment of a dynamic process of social dialogue leading to a fruitful and effective dialogue.

For our part, and in the spirit of moving towards a solution based on ILO Recommendations, we will always be prepared to enter into discussions with the Government to find a just settlement to the turbulence created in our industrial relations system. However, the Government must take the first step, and give us more of a chance to discuss a solution.

Moreover, the General Workers Union will keep on insisting on the establishment of a true social dialogue based on social justice, and certainly in the interest of all Maltese workers, we will not be part of any social dialogue mechanism that will not respect justice and trade unionism.

Original Portuguese: Mr. VIEIRA (Employers' delegate, Portugal) — Allow me first of all to convey to you the greetings of the Portuguese Employers' delegation. The Report of the Director-General which has been presented this year, by providing a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the goals targeted and the results achieved offers us an excellent overview of the work that has been done by the ILO; the method used should be maintained in the future. Efforts should also be continued to redirect and consolidate the technical and financial resources that are necessary to attain the strategic objectives defined and, in particular, those contained in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Worthy of special mention, and indicated in the Director-General's Report, is the fact that the number of ratifications of the eight core Conventions has exceeded all expectations, which shows, we believe, that there is almost universal consensus on the idea that economic and social development cannot be viewed separately. From this standpoint the discussion in this session on the most important and complex subjects of decent work and the informal economy could hardly be more timely.

Decent work has been the subject of much discussion, and of a broad programme of working, it being clear for Portuguese employers, as we said here last year, that to provide work "in conditions of freedom, equity, safety and respect for human dignity, is an inte-

gral part of economic and social development". However, this is a concept that has different connotations depending on the various cultural and economic contexts that exist in different regions. To think about these problems from the standpoint of the informal economy, whose true dimension and impact are far from being known, is a challenge for everybody — government, enterprises and workers. What is important is that first of all we decide what we mean by informal economy, something that is not always clear in the document that has been presented. As far as the Portuguese employers are concerned, it is important not to confuse the informal economy with a family economy, with craftsmen, or even enterprises that are formed for nothing other than self-employment. Basically, the informal economy is that which does not respect administrative requirements or certain regulations, particularly in the tax and social security fields.

There is no question that the informal economy has two negative effects: unfair competition between enterprises, and less protection at various levels for workers. Nevertheless, it is also true that sometimes, and under certain circumstances, it may provide an answer — albeit a temporary one — to problems such as the increase in unemployment or the emergence of new activities, in particular in sectors that are connected with new technologies, having a positive effect upstream and downstream of the economic chain, and being extremely important to the world economy. The solutions adopted, therefore, will have to be many and flexible, and will have to be based on the fact that the conditions in the so-called formal economy are not always suited to many of these enterprises because of their size — they are very small enterprises — and because of the forms of access to work, among other factors. Rather than more stringent inspection, or more serious punishment, conditions and instruments must be created which will enable these enterprises to gain from joining the formal sector, meaning that public policies are of fundamental importance in this sphere.

I would like to make a short comment on the other important topics that have been discussed in this session. The Portuguese Employers' delegation considers that appropriate action in respect of occupational safety and health will be reflected in the productivity of enterprises and the decrease in occupational accidents and diseases. This is why, an agreement was concluded last year between the Government and the representative structures of employers and workers. This agreement is of considerable importance as it provides for an Integrated Action Plan for Prevention. This Plan provides, inter alia, a general system of technical and financial support that will enable enterprises, particularly the smaller ones, to improve their conditions of health and safety. It also contains effective measures to investigate occupational diseases, at the same time as upgrading the statistical system for occupational accidents and diseases. The Portuguese employers feel that, in spite of the importance of this subject, the harmonization of the various systems for the recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases will not be an easy task.

Finally, I must point out that the envisaged withdrawal of 20 ILO Recommendations responds to a concern that the Portuguese employers have been expressing for various sessions now. It is imperative to

modernize and simplify the instruments that embody the ILO's standards-related activities, in order to attain the objectives proposed, and to find alternative formulas to the instruments that traditionally support the work of this Organization.

Original Arabic: Mr. HAMADEH (*Employers' delegate, Lebanon*) — On behalf of the Lebanese employers and the Association of Lebanese Industrialists in particular, I would like to address my deepest thanks to the International Labour Office for giving us the opportunity, through this Conference, to debate the questions of employment and the promotion of the fundamental principles and rights for decent work, in view of achieving equality and social and economic security and of achieving a future free of poverty and child labour, where everyone has work.

We have read the Report of the Director-General and would like to commend the efforts made to achieve its objectives. I have some observations on the four strategic objectives presented in the Report.

First of all, regarding the promotion and implementation of standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, we see that the Organization attaches a great deal of importance to standards. It is as if the ILO wanted to become an international labour inspectorate at a time when we are witnessing radical economic changes that could be detrimental to the developing countries. We feel that we need an Organization to help us survive on the international economic scene. Now, regarding child labour, and in light of paragraph 37, we would like to reiterate the need to undertake scientific research in order to better understand child labour. We must cooperate with the World Bank and the UNICEF, as mentioned in the Report. We must cooperate while safeguarding the sovereignty of each State.

Second, regarding the creation of better job opportunities for both women and men, we would like to thank the Turin Training Centre for the role it has played, and we stress here the references made, in paragraph 46, to the five objectives, which have been reduced to three: policy support, skills development and job creation.

We support the future policies defined by the World Employment Forum in November 2001, in particular the ten points that constitute the basis of successful employment strategies.

Third, regarding the extension of social protection coverage, we would like to praise the inter-agency cooperation highlighted by the Report in terms of the environmentally rational management of chemical products and their labelling. This is a scientific and practical achievement which responds to development needs and occupational safety requirements. We would like for such achievements to continue.

Paragraph 80 mentions that workers in small and medium-sized enterprises are the most vulnerable in terms of working conditions. Since they are a part of the informal economy, we could consider this situation to be transitional, resulting from the need to work in order to deal with poverty. That is why we have to provide all possible assistance in this sector.

Regarding the strengthening of tripartism and social dialogue, we appreciate the achievements in this field. Still, we would like to point to paragraph 109, which addresses the effects of globalization on employment in a time of open trade and investment and the evolution of production techniques for goods and

services. We would need more than one seminar or more than one meeting to discuss this, as globalization has more than one social dimension, on all categories of society. That is why we need a new vision in order to face this challenge.

Regarding the support given to employers' organizations, we think it is modest and insufficient. We suggest that assistance centres should be set up for employers in developing countries. In Lebanon, there is an urgent need for such centres. I hope that you will consider this request as an official request from Lebanese industrialists. We hope that you will help us in creating non-profit technical centres to help set up new enterprises.

Finally, in order to achieve the principle of equality and justice, we would like to ask you as representatives of the international conscience, to bear witness to what is happening in Palestine, in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Golan and in south Lebanon, but also in Iraq. We are talking about children's rights and the abolition of child labour, while children are being slain by a cruel aggressor in Palestine.

Ladies and gentlemen, clear your conscience and say out loud, "No to racism, no to aggression and no to occupation. Yes to a comprehensive and just peace."

Original Spanish: Mr. ABREU (*Workers' delegate, Dominican Republic*) — I would like to begin my statement before the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference by congratulating the President of the Conference upon his election, supported by all delegations, in the belief that this important event will contribute towards improving working conditions throughout the world, especially in the least developed countries.

In the Dominican Republic, as many as 18 work-related accidents take place per day. In 2001 we recorded one occupational accident for every 116 workers covered by the social security system. Despite the fact that within these figures 95 per cent of these accidents were suffered by men in the 20-39 age group, women are also subjected to working conditions which are hazardous to their physical and mental well-being, given that the risks they undertake at work are generated by substances which are part of the manufacturing process.

In this regard, there are many businesses set up in export processing zones where the necessary measures to guarantee a safe and healthy environment for workers are not taken.

The worst safety conditions are, however, to be found in construction, given the nature of contracts in this sector for a given job or service and, in the case of the Dominican Republic, where the majority of these workers are immigrants from neighbouring Haiti. With each new construction of an apartment building or office block, workers lose their lives because of risk that they must take in order to keep their jobs.

Work should not be an activity where lives are constantly at risk from work-related accidents, occupational diseases or contamination by toxic substances and elements.

We must not allow, in the name of job creation or cost reduction, the workplace or work itself to become a threat to people trying to earn a living.

It is of some concern to note that a great many of the jobs which are created in the Dominican Republic

are in sectors where health and safety are not respected. These are, for example, the informal economy, companies in the export processing zones, tourism, construction, dock work and others.

Measures are being implemented today to restructure working hours for greater flexibility. In the Dominican Republic this has led to the “four by four” system, which has the approval of the Dominican breweries and companies in the export processing zones and allows a working day of up to 12 hours. This violates the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), as well as articles 147 and 162 of our Labour Code. It represents a danger to the health and lives of workers because the long working days require physical effort and considerable concentration, in view of the tools and machines used in work, and the result can be occupational accidents and burn-out from overwork.

The working conditions of most women, especially those of child-bearing age who are pregnant or nursing, are such as to cause diseases which can put their lives and their babies’ lives at risk. Immediate examples include heavily pregnant women standing all day ironing in the high temperatures of a clothing factory, or assembling electrical components or even medical or pharmaceutical components where lead and other toxic substances are involved. The most recent example can be taken from 4 June 2002, when more than 50 workers were exposed to poisonous substances when BJ&B, the company where they were working in an export processing zone in Villa Altigracia, decided to repair the roof during working hours. Of these 50 workers, 25 became seriously ill, all of them women.

The ILO can cooperate in fostering safe jobs by promoting the setting up of health and safety committees in the workplace, at sectoral level and at national level, and by fostering evaluation and monitoring, via collective bargaining, to establish standards for working conditions, with due account taken of gender issues.

It is essential that we legislate as well as harmonize legal standards and practice with the provisions of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). This is geared to stopping or prohibiting immediately the employment of those under 18 where there is any risk to their lives or to their physical, mental or moral well-being.

Decent work, as defined by the ILO, is work where conditions in the workplace do not place workers at risk. To raise awareness of this we must eradicate risky situations at work and give employers’ and workers’ organizations the necessary knowledge to be able to participate actively in commissions on health and safety at work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the fact that although the trade union movement in the Dominican Republic is strengthening what has been a setting up of a single entity for all workers to facilitate social dialogue, we have difficulties with regard to collective bargaining and the right to organize because of opposition from the employers.

Dialogue between the social partners, as a mechanism to achieve agreements and tripartite and multisectoral consensus is an important instrument to achieve social peace. It has been the object of untiring efforts on the part of the ILO and the employers’ and workers’ organizations, based on the foundation of a new Labour Code.

Mr. SALIMIAN (*Workers’ delegate, Islamic Republic of Iran*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I am proud to represent the workers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and I wish to express my views and those of our workers’ organization.

First of all, I join the preceding speakers in congratulating the President on his election to preside over this session of the Conference. I wish him every success in this task and hope that the Conference will pave the way and set the necessary goals to achieve decent work for all. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General on his valuable Report, with a new pattern of reporting.

Tripartism is the backbone of the ILO and it is the one thing that distinguishes it from other United Nations agencies. We are of the opinion that the ILO must accelerate its efforts to institutionalize tripartism in the Member countries, especially in the Third World and developing countries.

According to the Report of the Director-General, there has been good progress towards universal ratification of the ILO’s eight core Conventions which are, in fact, an indispensable foundation for decent work, democracy and sustainable development. We believe that economic growth is not sustainable unless social justice accompanies it.

Globalization is a double-edged sword. The ILO has to play a more vital role in helping to improve the national policies to minimize the negative impacts of trade liberalization workers. Even WTO officials have admitted that all too often certain groups of workers are carrying the cost of adjustment of trade liberalization, and this problem must be addressed. We hope that the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which has focused on the question of trade liberalization and employment, will highlight the key issues.

Regarding the Director-General’s report in the situation in the occupied Arab territories, we believe that the events occurring on the Arab land of Palestine are a tragedy for which all humanity is responsible. Therefore, we demand an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories of Palestine. The refusal of the Israeli Government to accept a United Nations mission to investigate the Israeli massacre and genocide in the Jenin refugee camp has put at stake the credibility, sovereignty and impartiality of the United Nations as an international body safeguarding human rights.

In relation to the labour problems of our country, as I mentioned last year, contract labour and agency workers continue to exist; inflicting heavy blows and having a negative impact on the labour community of our country. If we go through the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran, one would note that the extensive growth of contract labour and agency workers has presently created the worst conditions for the workers in the labour relations history of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Besides that, there are thousands for workers, especially in the textile industry, who have not received their monthly wages for the past four to 18 months.

The planning and budgeting organization has reported that this year the number of employment will reach 3,213,000 persons, and that this figure will reach 5 million in two years’ time. In this connection, the activists of the labour community presented a bill to

Parliament in support of unemployed youth and intend to provide them with an unemployment benefit so that they can have the minimum to cover their basic needs. Unfortunately, the bill was not ratified by Parliament by a narrow margin of votes.

However, we have seen a new bill ratified by Parliament concerning exemption of carpet-weaving units from labour and social security laws. This legislation is in contradiction with Chapter 20 and section 9 of Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The bill was drafted by the Government and presented to Parliament for ratification. It is in open violation of international labour standards and contradicts the four strategic objectives of the ILO at the brink of the third millennium. Unfortunately, the pioneers of this bill not only did not have any consultation or lobbying with the labour community, but, in lieu of opposition from the workers' organizations, they emphasized and insisted on their own point of view.

Freedom of association is one of our, and our labour community's old pending demands. On a number of occasions, both inside and outside the country, we have demanded ratification of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). This has also been proposed by the second and third national labour conferences.

Irrespective of the fact that the workers of the oil industry through their general strike, played a vital role in the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran, unfortunately, it is for a number of years now that the workers of this industry have been deprived from having a national federation. Whenever they try to establish one, their legitimate right to have a national federation is not realized. We are of the opinion that the Government has to take more practical steps and, along with the employers, guarantee the implementation of section 178 of our Labour Law.

Our president has reiterated and insisted on the principle of tripartism on a number of occasions in different speeches. Similarly, the current Minister of Labour's main strategic objective is also tripartism, as highlighted in his introductory speech to Parliament. We have achieved some success in this connection. We have been more successful in bipartite negotiation, which has resulted in a 30-article collective bargaining agreement between employers' and workers' organizations, replacing the legislation of exemption of small workshops with five or fewer employees from labour and social security laws.

Finally, I would like to thank the ILO and ACTRAV for the services provided to the workers' organization in our country in the form of workshops and seminars. As we have declared in previous years we have enough capabilities to absorb this assistance and hope that the ILO will continue its technical cooperation in this regard.

Ms. MENKERIOS (*Minister of Labour and Human Welfare, Eritrea*) — Allow me to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the Conference. My congratulations also go to the Vice-Presidents. I am sure that with their able stewardship the Conference will successfully conclude the heavy tasks in front of it. I would also like to commend the Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office on submitting an excellent

Report to this session of the Conference. Together with the excellent Report of the Director-General on the ILO programme implementation for 2000-01, these reports will surely permit a thorough discussion and examination of the Organization, in the light of its strategic results-based programme budgeting. I am confident the Conference will assess the work accomplished and provide guidance on future priorities. The picture that emerged from this Report is that of a vibrant and relevant Organization, renewing its message and assessing its approach, functioning and delivery of services. The issues covered — from the abolition of child labour and forced labour to the social dimensions of globalization, employment and social policy questions debated at Davos, Porto Alegre and the Global Employment Forum in Geneva — demonstrate that the agenda of the Organization remains relevant, and the central or active role played by the ILO in all these activities bears witness to its resilience.

We are pleased to note that the growing acceptance of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and the development of strategic planning and budgeting to address the agenda has interestingly resulted in the development of national plans of action for decent work. It is with great interest that we will be following the development of the new approach involving decent work country programmes, which will hopefully build on the experience acquired using the country objectives approach. We share the view that the ILO has a pivotal role to play in developing the contours of a comprehensive new global employment framework that will take account of the concerns and interests of the major actors.

The question of employment, both in the formal and informal sectors, is a very important one. We hope policy approaches will permit the ILO to develop national decent work programmes to address the deficit in this area, and will permit sustainable development. We also hope the contribution to the development effort of cooperatives will be enhanced by our decisions at this session.

The ILO is playing a laudable role in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the development of its tripartite code of practice to combat the crisis at the workplace. It is with satisfaction that we learned that this code is now not only an ILO instrument of action, but that it has also become an action tool of the United Nations system, following its presentation to the United Nations AIDS Conference and the meeting of heads of agencies.

We welcome the success attained in ratifications of the core Conventions as a result of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. As a new Member of the ILO, my country ratified the seven core Conventions as its first ratifications. It has also submitted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), to the competent authority. We are attempting to address the question of child labour with our own resources, to ensure a future without child labour. A new labour proclamation, reflecting the requirements of ratified Conventions, has been adopted in the last year.

I wish to express my country's desire to receive all the assistance that the ILO can give in fully implementing these ratified instruments in my country. With respect to the ILO's standards-related activities, we welcome the Governing Body's review of this question. We look forward to the needed stocktaking

in this basic and vital function of the ILO. We share the Director-General's view that the integrated approach to standards has a tremendous potential to update and consolidate standards in a given area. We hope that this exercise will render international labour standards coherent, relevant, more user-friendly, accessible, and more practical to use for fledgling countries embarking on the development of their labour and social legislation. Our preparatory work in the area of occupational safety and health will benefit as a result of our discussions on the standards in this area at next year's session of the Conference.

We welcome the ILO's timely and pertinent reaction to the events of 11 September and to the difficulties certain sectors of economic activity were facing.

The peace process undertaken by my country is expected to permit demobilization and to resume the addressing of the development needs of the people. There is a great deal to be done in helping all those adversely affected by the conflict in the last few years. The Support for Policy and Programme Development (SPPD) that has been elaborated should be implemented by the allocation of the needed resources. We have to address the need for employment creation, meet the needs of vulnerable workers, such as the handicapped, those in the informal sector, women and the young. We intend to do so by promoting tripartism in a climate of harmony, with a view to attaining social justice, dignity and independent capacity.

Original Arabic: Mr. JRAD (Workers' delegate, Tunisia) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Allow me first of all to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO on the very promising results that have been accomplished in order to give a concrete expression to the strategic goals aimed at providing decent work, as reflected in the Report on the biennium 2000-01.

The efforts undertaken by the Organization to strengthen union rights and tripartite dialogue are very important for the achievement of harmony between economic growth and social progress. However, we should emphasize the obstacles to development that still exist in many countries, particularly in the African continent, which faces serious problems, much as the debt burden, widespread unemployment, and a lack of decent work.

The ILO should redouble its efforts and focus its attention on development issues in this continent, by providing more technical and advisory services and by encouraging employers' and workers' associations to negotiate freely. The Organization should also continue its efforts to strengthen tripartism and firmly establish trade union rights in Arab countries, by intensifying its cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization, to uphold the values of freedom of democracy in that region.

Today we see a widening gap between the world in which we live and hope for a better life. This disparity manifests itself in the decline of social protection and the deterioration of conditions, a growing number of workers in the informal sector, an absence of guarantees against job losses, and problems in tripartite dialogue in many countries. With the acceleration of globalization, many countries have tried to hasten their economic growth at any price, leading to an alarming neglect of social policy, reflected in higher unemployment rates, precarious forms labour and child labour. Those countries have been obliged

to lower labour standards, decrease salaries and tighten public spending.

To take up these development challenges requires continuing efforts to encourage tripartite participation and develop the institutions of civil society, with the aim of reinforcing the ability of governments and social partners to achieve tripartite harmony in keeping with international labour standards, but although the credibility of such a dialogue depends on the degree of independence of the parties and respect for trade union rights. Collective bargaining is more necessary than ever to organize labour relations and absorb the damage resulting from a shift to a market economy.

In Tunisia, starting with this approach, we have managed to limit the social cost of economic reform on the basis of a balance between the interests of workers and the pressure to which businesses are exposed. This has made it possible for us to regularly raise purchasing power, expand our social protection coverage and develop labour legislation.

Despite difficult circumstances and an adverse environment, the trade union organization in Tunisia is currently involved in a major cycle of negotiations with the Government with a view to increasing salaries and guaranteeing better protection to workers' representatives. This is based on our conviction that decent work can only be the result of dialogue between government and the social partners.

While the struggle against terrorism may be the most important priority on the international agenda in the eyes of some, it would be more appropriate to act at all levels to eliminate the reasons for tension and violence, to combat poverty and marginalization, establish balanced partnership relations between all countries and promote the values of dialogue and tolerance, instead of stirring up hatred and confrontation.

Social justice and a balanced economic development and equilibrium in international relations are necessary for promoting a culture of peace which requires settlement of regional conflicts, foremost among which is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in a just and balanced manner in accordance with international legality.

The international confounding of terrorism, which is morally and internationally unacceptable and legitimate opposition to an occupier could lead to a one-sided view of international affairs, particularly the present crisis in the Palestinian territories.

The economic and social hardship being undergone by the Palestinian people and workers as a result of the continuing Israeli occupation and the recent invasion by Israeli forces has reached tragic proportions.

While we are satisfied with the contents of the report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied territories, we would nevertheless like to reiterate that these goals cannot be achieved as long as the Israeli occupation continues. The international community should therefore strive to put an end to this occupation as quickly as possible and to enshrine the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, first and foremost a right to independence.

Mr. EASTMOND (*Minister of Labour, Barbados*) — On behalf of the Government of Barbados, I extend sincere greetings to the Chairperson of the Governing Body and congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents of this session of the Conference on

their election to high office, and wish them continued success.

At the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference in 1999, the Director-General presented his first Report, *Decent work*, in which he outlined four broad strategic objectives for a refocused ILO, namely, respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, greater employment opportunities for women and men, social protection, and social dialogue.

Today, we reflect on the implementation of the ILO's 2000-01 programme, which was designed to achieve these objectives. I reaffirm my Government's support for the four objectives and am pleased to note the extent to which the targets are being achieved, and in some instances exceeded. Indeed, the Government of Barbados has ratified all of the core Conventions and is working with the social partners to ensure full implementation through legislative changes, customs and practice.

Barbados has embraced tripartism at the highest level. Thanks to Mr. Tayo Fasoyin, Senior Social Dialogue Specialist in the ILO's InFocus Programme, the Barbados Social Partnership is now held up as a model. The President and the Director-General will be pleased that the recommendations resulting from the ILO's national consultation on social dialogue, which took place in Barbados in April 2001 to review Mr. Fasoyin's work, have been taken on board and are reflected in the current social partnership Protocol. This Protocol (the fourth formal agreement among the social partners in Barbados) was officially signed on 1 May 2002. This agreement is a tribute to all parties, labour unions, employers and governments which are doing their utmost in the interests of social solidarity. I want to say that, in a tripartite arrangement, employers, who are often forgotten, play a significant role, along with the other two partners involved in the partnership.

In keeping with the Decent Work Agenda, the social partners of Barbados have agreed that during this period of social agreements the labour market shall not be required to change the benefits and conditions which it currently enjoys, unless such changes would lead to an immediate general improvement, or would help to create a long-term improvement in the conditions of those employed, and created jobs for the unemployed.

Among the major objectives of Protocol IV in Barbados is the reduction of social disparities through the type of protection that is inherent to an acknowledgment of decent work that is freely chosen, and the provision of increased opportunities to access employment.

It is generally accepted that in most economies the majority of jobs are created in small- and medium-sized enterprises. Based on its philosophy that the development of a thriving small business sector is critical to the creation of a just and equitable society, the Government of Barbados has committed itself to the economic empowerment and enfranchisement of small business as a critical dimension of its strategy to create full employment, eradicate poverty and redress the imbalances in the informal sector.

To this end, the Government has enacted a Small Business Development Act and established a fully operationalized Small Business and New Enterprise Centre, among other initiatives.

The Government of Barbados is also pleased to note that among the future activities of the ILO, as

identified by the Director-General in his Report, is the improvement of working conditions in small enterprises and, of course, in the informal sector.

My delegation welcomes the opportunity to take part in this year's discussion and eagerly looks forward to its outcome.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding work done by Mr. Willi Momm and his staff at the ILO Caribbean Office, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Their consistency and commitment to following-up the action of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda have led to the successful implementation of projects developed to effect the necessary changes at the regional level.

I would like to say that this work has been truly outstanding. I would also like to thank all those who supported Barbados' election as a deputy Government member, and may God wish you well.

(Mr. Arbesser-Rastburg takes the Chair.)

Mr. FUCHS (*Government delegate, Czech Republic*) — First of all, let me congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their election and wish them all the best in guiding this Conference to a successful conclusion.

Secondly, I would like to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, for the excellent work done by himself and his Office in preparing the Reports for this Conference, particularly the Report on of the ILO programme implementation for the past two years.

This Report bears witness to the fundamental change in policy planning and implementation at the ILO. Let me express the Czech Government's sincere appreciation of this change.

Whatever reservations or observations we may have in respect of this Report, we can but congratulate the Office, and the Director-General, on the significant progress they have made in introducing the first stage of a strategic and result-based budgeting concept into the programme implementation, showing clear results on the combined use of regular and extra-budgetary resources.

We should bear in mind that there is no precedent and that this was the first time the Office submitted such a Report. We should therefore be highly appreciative of this new approach to the work of the Organization and the Office.

I do not want to repeat what has been said by many speakers here or during the Governing Body meeting in March. I would just like to associate with those who recommended several improvements to the Director-General for his next report. In particular, the introduction of strategic evaluation alongside strategic budgeting and planning, and the establishment of indicators to enable the impact of various ILO activities to be identified much more clearly and the progress achieved to be measured much more accurately. We believe that the Director-General will reflect these suggestions in the programme and budget proposals for the biennium 2004-05.

The next programme and budget proposal, as well as future implementation reports, should include strategic policy objectives for the ILO to build up an alliance and close cooperation with other international bodies in monitoring decent work around the world.

The Czech Republic strongly supports the role of the ILO in promoting and monitoring global obser-

vance of, and respect for, fundamental principles and workers' rights enshrined in the ILO's Constitution, the Declaration of Philadelphia and the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Other international organizations are increasingly relying on the ILO and its mechanisms which shows that the ILO, even now at the beginning of the third millennium, has not lost anything from its original mission. The annual Global Report under the Follow-Up to the Declaration, which encourages the ILO member States to promote fundamental principles and rights, is an excellent opportunity to promote these rights and principles globally. This year's Global Report, *A future without child labour*, is a very good example of this effort. We congratulate the Office and the Director-General for providing an excellent overview of the situation, concrete cases of progress and information on existing and continuing problems in many countries around the globe.

The Czech Republic is one of those countries in Central and Eastern Europe where child labour was ideologically unacceptable during the era of the centrally planned economy. Nevertheless, the phenomenon has appeared, even if not to a huge extent or in its worst forms, since the transition to market economy.

Our country has ratified [Convention No. 182](#) and is preparing to ratify [Convention No. 138](#), and is currently drafting a new law on the prohibition of child labour, to be introduced later this year, or at the beginning of 2003.

At the same time, we have started to formulate a national action plan to eliminate remaining and unacceptable forms of child labour. The ILO Report quite correctly states that government institutions in our countries, including my own, have little or no experience of how to deal with this phenomenon and therefore we highly appreciate ILO assistance in this process.

In order to see a more visible regional influence of the ILO in the future, and to ensure that their needs are more fully met, it is necessary to prepare the next ILO programme and budget in close cooperation and consultation with constituents at country level.

Yesterday's informal meeting of labour ministers from countries preparing for EU accession repeatedly confirmed that the ILO has played an important role in this preparatory process and that there is still room for further assistance. In particular, policy-making and institution-building in fields such as employment, occupational safety and health, labour inspection, industrial relations, the promotion of social dialogue and the capacities of social partners is an area where the ILO is expected to play an important role in the coming months and years in our country. The Czech Government is grateful to the ILO, its European Regional Office and the Budapest multidisciplinary expert team for their cooperation during the preparation of the recently adopted Civil Service Act and amendments to the Labour Code.

A lot has been done in recent years but we still have a great deal of work ahead of us, and I wish the Director-General, the staff of the International Labour Organization Office and all of the member States every success in their efforts.

Original Spanish: Mr. NIETO MENÉNDEZ (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, El Salvador) — It is an honour for my country, El Salvador, and for

the delegation that I lead to address such an exclusive audience, at this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, which is tackling some momentous topics, geared the purpose being to strengthen the cooperation and social dialogue which fosters harmonious labour relations, as we face the challenges of a new socio-economic context created by the process of globalization.

I am absolutely certain that the topics that are being discussed at the Conference, such as the promotion of cooperatives, the reporting and notification of occupational accidents and diseases, as well as topics related to the informal economy, will lead to agreements prompted by the principles of social justice and solidarity and which will make a decisive contribution to the economic and social development of our nations.

We believe that the results obtained by member States and that are reflected in the Report on the implementation of the ILO programme for the year 2001 are very useful, in as far as they allow us to judge how much headway has been made towards achieving the goals set.

In my country we have begun a process of strengthening the organizational and operational structure of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. This has the support of the Technical Department of the President's Office and of the ILO's MATAC programme. One of the main goals of this project is to strengthen the system of inspection and to promote proactive labour policies that together will help to meet the needs and expectations of all the users of our institution.

The strengthening of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the body that guides labour policy in my country, is consolidating the foundations that guarantee the full development of the general system of labour administration our country, as required by the ILO Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), which has been ratified by El Salvador.

It should be emphasized that a Supreme Labour Council is operative in my country. It is a tripartite body, established at the request of the ILO, with the aims of institutionalizing dialogue and promoting economic and social cooperation between public authorities and workers' and employers' organization that are legally recognized and represented. This consultative body is entitled to formulate recommendations on the elaboration of legal standards and as well as to promote the application of international labour standards. More importantly, it is obligatory to refer any initiative coming from the Government, workers or employers, that could modify an existing labour standard to this board. In other words, any labour reform Bill has to stem from an explicit recommendation of the Supreme Labour Council and not from a mere initiative of one of its sectors, which means that this complies with the text and the spirit of the ILO Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), which refers to tripartite consultations to promote the application of national and international standards and which was ratified by my country at the suggestion of the Council.

The Government of El Salvador has a firm intention to strengthen this important institution, i.e. the Supreme Labour Council. There is reason to hope that the operation of this body and its final integration into the system will effectively contribute to establish-

ing a harmonious atmosphere between the social partners and will allow us to avoid any conflicts that could weaken it.

My country has ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), of the ILO, and we almost immediately ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), thus upholding our commitment to work for the present and the future of our children. This resolve has led to El Salvador, together with Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, being chosen as the first three countries in the world to receive the support of the Department of Labor of the United States, so that with the technical assistance of IPEC, a time-bound programme aimed at the progressive eradication of the worst forms of child labour can be devised and put into operation.

These achievements match the commitment accepted by the Government of my country and President Flores ever since they took office and as a clear demonstration along the same path.

We reiterate our intention to continue moving forward and implementing this new labour culture designed to generate development and which should guarantee social justice.

Mrs. SUMANI (*Minister of Labour and Vocational Training, Malawi*) — On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Malawi, I bring greetings from Malawi, the warm heart of Africa. The President of the Republic of Malawi, His Excellency Dr. Bakili Muluzi, the Government and the people of Malawi, wish the President and distinguished delegates a most productive and successful International Labour Conference 2002.

We in Malawi are always grateful for the great work being done by the International Labour Office in our country. The Government of Malawi has declared poverty alleviation to be the centrepiece of national development. This is because poverty in Malawi is widespread, deep and severe. We have a population of about 10 million. It is estimated that approximately 6.3 million people in Malawi are poor and live below the poverty line.

The majority of people in Malawi have limited access to land, there is low education, poor health, limited off-farm employment opportunities and a lack of access to credit. Life expectancy at birth has dropped from 43 years in 1996 to 39 in 2000.

While the Government and the people of Malawi are doing everything possible to reduce their own poverty, shown by the aforementioned indicators, we are also very grateful to see that the International Labour Office is always by our side with technical and financial cooperation to assist us.

At the moment, we have the ILO/IPEC office in Malawi. It opened on 1 March 2002. This is very encouraging as the fight against child labour in Malawi has reached new maximum levels.

The tobacco growers have formed their own association to eliminate child labour on tobacco farms. At the same time, tobacco exporters have formed their own child labour services unit, which will collaborate with the Association for the Elimination of Child Labour in Malawi in the fight against child labour.

The child labour survey is progressing very well. The pilot survey was successfully conducted in December 2001, and now we are in the process of conducting the main survey. This has all been possible due to the ILO's technical and financial support. We

are also very pleased to note that the ILO will shortly be assisting Malawi on two other programmes as well, one of them the strengthening of labour administration and the other the fight against HIV/AIDS in the transport industry.

However, we still need more assistance in terms of training of labour inspectors in Malawi, especially with regard to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Malawi has ratified all the eight core Conventions, but implementation of the provisions of these Conventions still remains the greatest challenge. Can the ILO do something about the implementation of these Conventions in Malawi?

Mrs. MUTALE NALUMANGO (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Zambia*) — Allow me, on behalf of the Zambian delegation and indeed on my own behalf, to congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of this session of the Conference.

From the outset, I wish to commend the Director-General for his illuminating Report, which has highlighted in detail the spectrum and activities of the ILO during the year under review.

My Government has taken note with interest and appreciation of the practical efforts that the ILO is making towards achieving the strategic objectives outlined in the Director-General's Report.

I recall that the InFocus programme of the ILO recently organized a tripartite seminar for social partners in Zambia at the end of February 2002 on the theme "strengthening social dialogue in Zambia". I must confess that the seminar, which was fully supported by the ILO, proved to be very beneficial indeed both to the participants and to the country as a whole. This is a commendable contribution for which the Zambian Government is indebted to the ILO.

Zambia is a firm believer in the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work, which is one of the strategic objectives outlined in the Director-General's Report. Against this background, my Government has ratified all the ILO core Conventions dealing with human rights, and this development has set the impetus for the review of labour laws in my country. Zambia remains resolved and determined to fight social injustice, particularly for the vulnerable groups in society.

With the support of the ILO Area Office in Lusaka, the fight for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour has been intensified and positive results are beginning to show, although a lot more still remains to be done. The same can be said of the measures that the Government and civil society are painstakingly putting in place to deal with the scourge of HIV/AIDS, which continues to devastate the country.

In addition, my Government has formulated a national gender policy, which will be used as an effective instrument to address gender imbalance and create equal opportunities for women and men in the world of work. An appropriate structure under cabinet office in the Office of the President has been put in place to oversee and coordinate activities related to gender issues.

Speaking in my capacity as Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Employment Labour Sector Committee of Ministers and Social Partners, allow me to thank the ILO most sincerely for the work it is doing with us in the SADC

region, in particular in the areas of international labour standards, fundamental principles and rights at work, employment creation, social protection and social dialogue.

Notwithstanding these achievements, I wish to solicit the ILO's further support in the informal economy activities in the SADC region, capacity-building and gender programmes in individual member countries.

There is, therefore, a need to strengthen the ILO Area Offices in Lusaka and Pretoria, including the ILO Multidisciplinary Advisory Team for Southern Africa in Harare.

On behalf of all my colleagues in the SADC region, I wish to assure the Director-General of our continued cooperation and support in executing his work programmes and functions as Chief Executive of the ILO.

Original Arabic: Mr. IBRAHIM (*Workers' representative, Palestine*) — We have noted with interest the Director-General's Report concerning the elimination of child labour and the Appendix to the Report.

We agree with the Director-General that it is necessary to introduce a programme designed effectively to eliminate child labour in all countries particularly in Latin American, in Arab countries and in Palestine. We regret that the Report did not come up with a solution to the situation of children in Palestine who find themselves on the labour market, reluctantly and certainly against the wishes of their parents and the Palestinian Authority. The Appendix ignores the fact that 500 Palestinian children have been killed by the Israeli occupying army. Mrs. Robinson mentioned the fact that 900 children are subject to torture and do not have access to education, because they are rotting in prison and she appealed for their release. It is surprising that the Appendix to the Director-General's Report uses inaccurate terms such as "inhabitants" rather than "citizens" and "occupied Arab territories", in breach of resolutions adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1974 and 1980 which use the term "Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, of United Nations resolutions on the Palestinian problem, namely resolutions 181 and 194 and of Security Council resolutions which expressly state that the Palestinian people have the right to establish an independent Palestinian State, the capital of which is Al-Quds, the right to return and the right to compensation for the damage they suffered owing to their flight from their homes.

Paragraph 43 of the Appendix to the Director-General's Report says that the conflict claimed the lives of 1,619 persons, both Israelis and Palestinians. This lack of precision impedes the work of the mission that went to Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories and stymies the recommendations of the Director-General on the situation of Arab workers in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories. It is essential that these Recommendations be applied, but it is also essential to set up a fund to support Palestinian workers so as to enable them to cope with the Israeli embargo.

The truth is that attacks waged by land and by air, using tanks and armoured vehicles have been mounted by the Israelis against the Palestinians, causing some 2,500 Palestinians to be martyred and 37,000 to be wounded. The Israeli Government has arrested

more than 10,000 Palestinian citizens, 5,000 of whom have been subjected to torture in Israeli prisons.

Israeli bulldozers and armoured vehicles have destroyed thousands of homes in Jenin and Rafah and have destroyed fields, crops and infrastructure. The Israeli occupation forces have carried out massacres in Jenin, Nablus, Rafah and Ramallah. The attack on the Church of the Nativity and the statue of the Virgin Mary, the destruction of the president's headquarters in Ramallah, acts of ethnic cleansing and the constant threats hanging over the Palestinian people are indeed terrorist acts, carried out in full view of the international community and with the support of the American administration.

We cannot move from one village to another or from one town to another in Palestine because the whole country is sealed off. We have no access to the outside world. Some 50 newborn children have died at Israeli road blocks. Unemployment has risen to 75 per cent. On page 23 of the Report of the Director-General, we read that the people of Israel have a desire for real peace. If that were the case then the Israeli army would have withdrawn unconditionally from all of the occupied territories and would thus have put an end to this bloody conflict.

It is true that we need support, but before that, we need to see an end to this Israeli occupation. We need security, stability and peace, guaranteeing the right of return and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital. All the settlements set up in our Palestinian land must be dismantled. The Shebaa farms in south Lebanon and the Golan must be liberated.

May I thank all our friends, those who earnestly desire peace and who support human rights, who give their support to our cause. We appeal for this unjust embargo imposed on us to be lifted, and we call for the lifting of the embargo against Iraq.

Original Arabic: Mr. ISSA (*Worker' delegate, Syrian Arab Republic*) — It is a pleasure for me to greet the President on my own behalf and on behalf of the General Association of Workers' Trade Unions, and to congratulate him on the preparation of the agenda for this session of the Conference, which includes important issues connected with the world of work and with issues resulting from globalization. Globalization is the cause of the deterioration of working conditions for tens of thousands of workers all over the world, including workers in the developed world. Consequently, it is not surprising that this system has given rise to regular international protests such as we have seen in Seattle, Davos, Bangkok, Genoa and in other countries of the world. The developing countries in the world have suffered the most from the repercussions of this system; they have seen a deterioration in their situation and poverty and unemployment have increased. We have also seen an increase in attacks on the social and economic achievements of millions of people, particularly in the fields of social protection, health and education. This confirms the inherent aspects of globalization that seek to turn the planet into a silent paralysed world that unresistingly accepts everything that is dictated to it by the powers of globalization even if this conflicts with peoples' interests.

I would add that blockades, unfair economic sanctions and the suffering of peoples, in particular of the workers as a result of the harmful effects of these

measures, such as in Iraq, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Cuba, also come under this heading.

You are aware of the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East, which is being caused by Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people and the citizens of other occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan and those territories in southern Lebanon. The world was aghast at the massacres perpetrated by Israel in Jenin, Nablus and at the Church of the Nativity, which saw the birth of the prophet of peace and love, as well as in the other towns and villages that were savagely bombarded by tanks and aircraft that killed hundreds of children and innocent people. In addition, houses and factories were destroyed. This calls for condemnation by the Conference of the Israeli occupying forces that are perpetrating a flagrant violation of human rights and crimes against peace and humanity.

The Appendix to the Director-General's Report, which refers to the Declaration of Philadelphia annexed to the ILO's Constitution, echoes the Declaration's statement that "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere". The Report demonstrates that the Israeli occupation is the main cause of poverty and the deterioration of the situation of employers and workers in the occupied Arab territories. Footnote No. 2 on page 19 of the Appendix to the Report, referring to the situation of the occupying forces in the Syrian Golan Heights, demonstrates how intransigent Israel is being in refusing to accept the Security Council's resolutions, in particular 497, and the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly which stipulate that the Knesset's decision to annex the Golan Heights does not have any legal validity.

My country is going through an economic and social revival in all spheres of life, with the focus on cultural and security issues and improving daily life in general. President Bashar al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic has passed a number of decrees and laws on wages and salaries in order to improve the income levels of the working class, extend social protection, promote equality between men and women with regard to wages and salaries, create jobs and combat unemployment. In addition, the amendment to Decree No. 84 of 1968 concerning freedom of association has harmonized Syrian law with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). We are resolved to support the efforts of our President geared to modernizing our country and achieving progress in the fields of human rights, justice and the distribution of wealth. We also want to stimulate the public, private and mixed sectors in order to encourage investment and economic plurality.

Original Spanish: Mr. DE ARBELOA (Employers' delegate, Venezuela) — I would like to congratulate the President and the other Officers on their election. I am certain that they will ensure the success of this Conference. I would offer special congratulations to the Employer Vice-President, for whom this is the coronation of a truly honourable career in the ILO. My sincere congratulations, and all the best for the future.

On behalf of the most representative Venezuelan employers' organization, the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Manufacturers' Asso-

ciations (FEDECAMARAS), it is with great concern that I address you at a time when my country's democracy is going through a major crisis, with unpredictable results. High officials in the national Government are even contemplating the possibility of a civil war.

Of course, the discussion of the Director-General's Report should be a time to express optimism and satisfaction about achievements in Venezuela, with the implementation of the activities planned by the ILO for the biennium.

I must say that I regret that the situation in my country does not permit me to be so optimistic. There is no doubt that in the past 40 years, Venezuela has played a major role in promoting, sustaining and ensuring a return to democracy and freedom in many of the Latin American countries.

If Venezuela followed the course of its own, always perfectible democracy, our message would be more positive. However, the Venezuelan Government, much to our regret and despite our reiterated efforts to ensure that it does not go astray from a truly democratic course, is continuing to deviate from it. As never before in recent years, the country now faces constant tension provoked by the Government, and intimidation and psychological pressure which create increasing economic, social and political insecurity. This is also very dangerously, undermining the basis of our democracy, moving it towards increased autocracy. Unfortunately, in a very skilful and clever fashion our Government has persisted in destroying the major Venezuelan institutions which have been the keystone of our democratic strength, moving us towards ideologies which are at odds with democracy and freedom, towards an asphyxiating statism which the great majority of Venezuelans are not prepared to accept, as it has been rejected by virtually all the Members of the ILO.

Our legal security is being seriously jeopardized, and our Government persists in ignoring the core Conventions of the ILO, which have been ratified by Venezuela, such as those relating to freedom of association, tripartite consultations and the right to work. With such conditions and a lack of respect for meritocracy which has afflicted our oil industry and now the armed forces, there is no incentive for security, investment or indeed, productive employment.

On the contrary, we see the spread of uncertainty, bankruptcy and closures, and multinationals are simply moving to neighbouring countries where there is greater legal certainty. What is perhaps worse is that the situation is very much a breeding ground for explosive backlashes. Instead of persuading the Government to rectify its policies, such backlashes apparently incite it to be still more radical.

For instance, actions carried out by the growing and courageous Venezuelan opposition led last 11 April to partial strikes, and ultimately to national protests. Some 1 million people held a peaceful, civil demonstration in Caracas, with the support of most of the people in the country, which could be seen throughout the world.

The main aim was to ensure an immediate change in the negative and destructive policies adopted by the Government during its three years in power. The outcry seemed at first to be successful, in so far as the President of the Republic told his closest advisors and the country in general that he would be prepared to

correct those aspects of his policies that were most challenged.

However what we have seen in recent days indicates that there was no sincerity in those promises. On the contrary, the Government wants to antagonize the majority still more. It has come to the point where even the ex-President of our federation, Dr. Pedro Carmona Esanga (whom many of you know) was detained and is now in exile. He has been unjustifiably accused of usurping the National Magistracy, at a time when one of the highest public figures in the Government had announced, at the end of the events I just mentioned, that the President of the Republic had stepped down. That person is now the Minister of Defence. Understandably, the announcement created a power vacuum and a socially explosive atmosphere. And in these circumstances, on the basis of article 350 of the National Constitution, Dr. Carmona was called and accepted the transitional presidency, given his national standing and his untarnished image as an honest and trustworthy man. He committed himself to calling a pluralistic, democratic election as soon as possible, and he himself declined to be a candidate. This arrest, of course, has prompted the employers of Venezuela unanimously to call upon the national government for him to be immediately released. I would ask this prestigious international forum to do the same.

The Director-General has done much to try to assist in solving the crisis in Venezuela. Some days ago, a direct contacts mission, set up by decision of the Committee on the Application of Standards of the ILO, was received in our country. I certainly hope that the report it issues will actually generate the kind of positive action that all of Venezuela expects. Perhaps the recommendations issued, together with the persistent actions of representative bodies of Venezuelan society, such as the Venezuelan Workers' Confederation, the church, prestigious NGOs, FEDECAMARAS and the mass media, will prompt our Government to transparently and sincerely change its course so that it can once again occupy its prestigious place in the ILO, with full development in a democracy with genuine and real freedoms.

Venezuelan employers are committed to rescuing our country, and are committed to the principles of the ILO.

Original Arabic: Mr. BEKHIT (Employers' adviser, Egypt) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! The Federation of Egyptian Industries, representing employers in the Arab Republic of Egypt extends its congratulations to the President on his election and wishes him every success in his duties, so that this Conference can attain the objectives that we aspire to in these times marked by the challenges of technology, the conflicts of globalization and the manifestations of the GATT.

Allow me to most warmly thank the Director-General and his team for their tireless efforts and to express our support for his Report. In this connection, the Federation of Egyptian Industries would like to comment on some important points.

With regard to the standard-setting activities of the Organization and the basic principles and rights, Egypt, thanks to its three social partners, ensures the application of these fundamental values and principles as regards labour issues.

With regard to the rights of the child, Egyptian legislation has always been a pioneer in this area. Indeed,

Egypt had its own declaration on the rights of the child, which addresses all that concerns the social, health and educational aspects, so that children may enjoy their right to live in dignity.

With regard to standard-setting activities, further efforts are required so as to have acceptable levels of implementation compatible with the spirit of the Conventions and Recommendations.

The Federation of Egyptian Industries supports the Report of the Director-General, fully endorsing the goal of full employment while responding to and heeding the aspirations and choice of employers and the economic and the social imperatives so that we can bring about gender equality and benefit for all. In this connection, the Federation of Egyptian Industries, through cooperation with the Government and the trade unions, supports employment policies to improve access to qualifications and competences so as to attract investment and guarantee gender equality.

With regard to social protection, the Federation of Egyptian Industries believes absolutely that we must all make constant efforts in order to create a climate favourable to stability. In this regard, the Federation of Egyptian Industries fully respects the international labour standards of the International Labour Organization, ratified by the Egyptian Government. We also take measures to improve labour conditions, to ensure the rights of the most vulnerable and to expand social coverage.

With regard to social dialogue and the tripartite structure, the Federation of Egyptian Industries is in agreement with the report and calls for a strengthening of this dialogue, to enable all the social partners to take part in it on an equal footing.

These noble goals, which are designed to improve the world, are being destroyed by the actions of the Israeli war machine against a defenceless people.

The infrastructure of an entire people is being destroyed in addition to their subjection to a blockade. This is a people that is the victim of the unspeakable and abject policies of Israel, and all with the pretext of fighting terrorism.

The Israeli practices give the impression that there is no longer any hope for peace. What hope can there be for a future when the Palestinians can no longer work and their institutions have been destroyed? What tripartism and what social dialogue can we talk about? The Federation of Egyptian Industries condemns the Israeli practices, and calls on the international community to stand against these practices, and to put an end to state terrorism supported by a sophisticated war machine, in order to re-establish peace and stability in our region.

Mr. HERBERT (*Minister of Labour, Liberia*) — Please allow me, first of all, to extend heartfelt congratulations on behalf of my delegation and the Government and people of Liberia, to the President of this Conference on his election to steer the business and deliberations of this convocation.

I also offer my congratulations to all the Officers elected to guide the affairs of this meeting.

We have closely followed, with interest, the distinguished work of the Director-General, whose tenure in office has revolutionized the work of this august body, ushering it into the twenty-first century with unbridled confidence and determination.

Today, we can see that the ILO has been set on a path that has enabled it to efficiently tackle the seem-

ingly insurmountable socio-economic problems that threaten the Decent Work Agenda. We note with satisfaction the programme of implementation and are encouraged by the strides made in the realization of the strategic objectives set to achieve decent work. The issues of fundamental rights, social dialogue, social protection and employment creation are still the hub of the ILO and give more meaning to its purpose as they necessitated its creation almost a century ago.

Significant progress made thus far towards acceptance of the fundamental principles and rights at work and the increasing ratification by member States of the core Conventions, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), are commendable achievements. One could not but agree with the President of the Conference when he said, "Social justice and peace are inseparable". We would like to call on the International Labour Office to maintain this interest and spirit by providing the requisite technical expertise to member States so as to ensure the attainment of social justice and peace.

Staggering unemployment statistics, which suggest that more than a billion men and women are unemployed and underemployed, make poverty alleviation unattainable without the creation of the enabling framework that would engender the creation of sustainable jobs. It is within this context that we welcome the ILO's Global Employment Forum and its successful outcome. However, beyond the rhetoric of the forum, we would like to see words transformed and concretized into deeds. To this end, and to ensure maximum benefit to African and other developing countries, the development of the informal sector should take pole position in the ILO order of priorities in the promotion of employment. We call, therefore, for cooperation with the United Nations agencies, and particularly the Bretton Woods institutions, to ensure the success of employment policy strategies as a positive step in light of the excruciating debt burden faced by the developing nations and the uncertainty of globalization. Similarly, the Decent Work Agenda is untenable without employment security and the gamut of social protection.

With a globalized economy and glaring inadequacies, the threat of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the increase in occupational injuries, social protection — in its entirety and within the context of the ILO mandate and values — must remain one of the top priorities of this Organization.

We equally note with satisfaction the level of success during the year in review in the area of tripartism and social dialogue. As you are aware, the ILO was founded on the principles of tripartism and has drawn its strength and inspiration since then from this structure. In a world whose recent development has been fraught with political upheavals and socio-economic injustice, it would only take a strong tripartite cooperation by the social partners to deal with the many problems that militate against the objectives set by this Organization to enhance the Decent Work Agenda. It is in this context, and in fulfilment of these objectives, that the Liberian National Legislative in May of this year ratified the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), thereby manifesting the Liberian Government's commitment to fostering a strong tripartite culture.

Liberia has been encouraged by the level and quality of work by the International Labour Office, and

has taken advantage of the enormous expertise and technical support extended us within the ILO to jump-start and stabilize the labour administrative system in the country. We are happy to mention that through its assistance, and the support of the Area Office in Dakar and the Regional Office in Abidjan, the Ministry of Labour was able to acquire a modern computer network system that will enhance the labour administration system and provide the required optimum service to the ministry. We wish to inform you that the system has been dedicated and is yielding the desired results.

In a country that has experienced so much crisis, we hold the view that social justice is the key to national development and stability. In this regard, Liberia has placed a premium on the fundamental principles and rights at work. To date, we have ratified most of the core Conventions of the ILO and wish to inform the Conference that the Government of Liberia, on 21 March 2002, formally ratified and signed into law the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). By ratifying this important legislation, Liberia joins other member States of the ILO who have made the elimination of child labour a top priority. Liberia now needs the requisite technical support to apply the Convention and monitor its application. Realizing that the new policy direction aim of improving the labour administration system in Liberia rests on a firm foundation of the application of standards, the National Legislature has passed Acts ratifying the following Conventions: Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81); Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150); and the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160).

Finally, we would like to congratulate the Director-General for his vision and wisdom in advancing the objectives of the ILO beyond its precincts to influencing international action and policy in all fields of global development. We in Liberia will count on this Office in ensuring the conditions that will improve the labour administration system.

Original French: Mr. AKOUETE (representative of the Democratic Organization of African Workers' Trade Unions) — On behalf of the millions of workers who are members of the Democratic Organization of African Workers' Trade Unions (DOAWTU), the African regional member of the World Confederation of Labour, I would like to greet all participants at the Conference.

Our organization, which found a new energy ten years ago as democratization swept through Africa, has, first of all, based its activities on the theme of democracy. For us, a free society is a society in which the population as a whole benefits from its right to participate in the life of the nation. But how can democracy evolve without freedom of association, without the freedom to bargain collectively between partners, and without a healthy economic environment and above all, peace.

Since its constitutional assembly, our organization has striven constantly to establish, consolidate and develop the trade union movement in Africa through the struggle for freedom of association and the defence of the material and cultural rights of the African working class. It also made a contribution to establishing and building peace in Africa, for without a climate of peace no development is possible.

To these ends, the DOAWTU provides its members at local level with workers' education, training activities and advises trade unions on the great social challenges that impact on the working and living conditions of workers, such as globalization, foreign debt and AIDS, among others.

The DOAWTU helps organizations to enhance their financial autonomy, which is the best guarantee of free of conscience and action by trade unions, and undertakes activities to provide accessible health care to populations through its mutual health care programmes. It is also involved in promoting the ILO Conventions through campaigns for the ratification and application of the various Conventions. It has held promotional campaigns for the Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95), which led to the payment of part of the wage arrears to Central African workers. It has also begun a campaign against forced labour in Mauritania, as well as carrying out the promotional campaign that led to the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

We all know the work that is carried out by the ILO in Africa, but we would like to see this stepped up in the areas of AIDS and the application of Convention No. 95.

We would also like to see more Africans in high-level posts at the Geneva headquarters and in the technical departments in Africa.

A number of scourges, which are obstacles on the path to development, are centred on the African continent. There are civil wars, which for decades have divided, and continue to divide, countries, undermining the foundations of development, for it is evident that no development is possible in a country at war. These wars are often instigated by a mere handful of people bloated with power, who have decided to sacrifice the interests of an entire nation on the altar of their own personal, selfish interests.

The scourge of AIDS is ravaging Africa. Two-thirds of AIDS sufferers globally are to be found in sub-Saharan Africa. The causes of the spread of this pandemic in Africa include poverty and illiteracy, which expose Africans to behaviour that favours the spread of the disease.

It is poverty, again, that in Africa is at the root of child labour and trafficking in children who, from their earliest years, are sent forth into the adult world where they are exploited by a system whose key word is maximum profit.

Equally, while dictatorial regimes have disappeared from most continents, they still seem to be safely ensconced in Africa. Democracy has difficulties in making itself heard. Power is confiscated by cliques to the detriment of the people to whom it really belongs.

The DOAWTU has provided support in countries such as Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone. These regimes have ruthlessly flouted freedom of association and have thrown trade union members into prison for holding strikes or holding peaceful public protests. These States do not hesitate to open free-trade zones, which do nothing but exploit workers who are deprived of the right to associate. These are also obstacles to decent work. The transfer by multinational corporations of their activities to Africa creates unemployment in industrialized countries, while providing Africans with precarious work in dangerous, inhuman conditions.

We believe that today more than ever the entire trade union movement should present a united front against domination by economic power. Despite the efforts of the great financial powers to divide workers and trade unions, it is essential to remain vigilant and show solidarity. The common front must first of all be at the national level but also at the regional and international levels.

We wish to express our solidarity with the workers of Palestine and their families who have to endure living and working conditions that are frequently inhuman, and ask the Director-General to make every effort to ensure that the ILO participates actively in the social reconstruction of this part of the world.

Mr. WALLIMANN (*representative of the World Movement of Christian Workers*) — Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. On behalf of the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW) and the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW), I would like to share some of the observations we made at the Conference from the viewpoint of a workers' NGO with a Christian background. They are related to the situation of workers and work in the informal economy.

We would like to stress one point. It seems to us that it is very difficult for each part of the tripartite system to approach the problem within the informal economy. This leads us to two questions. First, could it be that the informal economy is such an important element in the economy of many countries and even in the worldwide economic system that it leads to neglecting the negative aspects, the dark sides of the informal economy? Secondly, could it be that the tripartite system of the ILO needs additional measures to meet the needs of informal workers?

We want to focus on the concept of decent work. One very important step towards decent work is the recognition of the millions of people working in the informal economy. Therefore, the informal economy is a key issue for the ILO in the future.

The IYCW and WMCW want to focus on three points. First, the process of recognition of informal work and workers launched by the ILO this year has to be continued over the next years to achieve decent work for all workers in the informal economy. Second, the discussion of decent work for the informal workers means strengthening the democratic system within the ILO and the International Labour Conferences. Structures have to be established so that informal workers are not only the object of tripartite discussion but much more active participants within that discussion. The ILO has to give them a voice. Third, we urge the governments and their leaders to find out, together with workers in the informal economy, the workers' needs, and to improve the situation of informal workers on the basis of these findings. This could be, for instance, providing licences to legalized informal work activities, giving access to social security or establishing minimum wages or protecting laws.

Knowing it is a big challenge to realize decent work all over the world for everybody, we offer our collaboration to the ILO. We consider ourselves as partners in the discussion of this Conference and we appreciate that the Director-General speaks about partnership relations in his annual Report, *ILO programme implementation 2000-01*. We know that NGOs play an important role especially concerning informal work. However, we see a lack of consideration of this coop-

eration between ILO and NGOs in the Report and would like to encourage the Director-General to make this cooperation and partnership more visible in his reports and to increase this partnership with the NGOs in terms of the ILO's budget as well.

Finally, we would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to share with you our concerns. We are willing to contribute to a world with decent work for all, especially for the workers in the informal economy.

Original Spanish: Mr. PAZ LAMIGUEIRO (*representative of the Trade Unions International of Workers of Energy, Metal, Chemical, Oil and Allied Industries*) — In all regions of the world we are seeing the emergence and strengthening of governments with right-wing tendencies. The far right, based on Nazi ideologies, is beginning to gain electoral support, even in countries which gave us democratic regimes. Some peoples, such as the Palestinians, are being pounded and the international community is once again showing that it has two different yardsticks. Never before have we seen such a confusion about the meaning of the term terrorism. Those who use this term do so hypocritically, moulding the concept at their convenience to mean one thing or another to the public, whose opinion, like so many things, depends on the interests of those in power. Little by little human beings are being faced with an escalation of violence and injustice.

The freedom of all people rests in the hands of a select few. We must take action.

In Spain, Mr. Aznar's Government is sticking to its ongoing labour reform, and legislation has just been unilaterally approved on unemployment protection and employment which constitutes a labour and social package which is against the working class, which is spearheading the idea that Europe should dismantle its social model, which is what neo-liberal ideology has always wanted to attain. This new cutback in rights is affecting those people who are in the most fragile situations. It is affecting unemployed workers by threatening to take away their unemployment benefit if they fail to accept jobs which may not reflect their capabilities, or enable them to sustain their families. It will also suppress the special assistance given to farm labourers in some regions and will make it more difficult, for returned emigrants, etc. Also, this action will affect employed people because it reduces their economic rights when they lose their jobs by suppressing the so-called "back pay awards", which they should receive, along with compensation, when the person has been unfairly dismissed. Also, the remuneration of fixed-term contracts will be amended. We could carry on listing the Government's action, which is a true reflection of its arrogance.

In the past, reforms were negotiated with at least one trade union, and experience has shown us that this approach did not benefit workers. For this reason, the working class and the trade unions have said that "enough is enough" with regard to negotiations to those who carried out such practices exclusively because the results were always retrograde. That is why on 20 June a general strike has been called in Spain with the aim of getting these plans withdrawn. With this kind of a background and with such government proposals, we cannot negotiate. We have to act, and now is the time for action. We have seen over time how we stand. Indeed, it was not up to the Galician

Inter-Union Confederation to rectify but to ratify its assessment of the situation and confirm that on 15 July 2001 there were good reasons to act as we had previously done during the call for a general strike in Galicia.

Let me say something now about other items relating to justice and freedom, particularly in areas such as electric energy, oil, gas, and the industrial sector as a whole. We have, in this self-same forum, expressed our rejection of the privatization processes in the electricity industry because of the social impact it will have, because of the private monopolies of markets governed by multinational companies and because of the effects of these events on the quality of services. We want the ownership of these strategic industries to be kept in the public sphere, and in any case away from the undue influence of international financial organizations. We are convinced that electricity has to be recognized as a public service. That way events such as the collapse of Enron can be avoided. The market and free competition in this sector do not solve the problems of the energy deficits, which is afflicting many people worldwide. It is time to act so that legislation in all countries contains elements such as the universal nature of public services, the ensured supply of services and the, application of the Kyoto agreements, without this serving as an alibi for various States to sneak things such as nuclear energy in the back door. In the international sphere, the right to energy should be recognized as a human right because if this falls below a given threshold in terms of quantity and quality, you cannot talk about democracies in any part of the world.

I did not come here just to justify what we are trying to achieve, but to tell you about what we are doing so that people know that a different kind of trade union and social action is possible. In Mexico and Ecuador, large multinational corporations already have a beady eye on this sector, but they will have to wait. The unions affiliated to UIS-TEMQPIA and ENLACE, together with other movements offering resistance, stopped the sales process and made it possible to respect the notion that the homeland is not for sale and must be defended. Since we do not want to turn ourselves into clerks who note down what is happening, we know that we have to act and the next stage is to modernize the electricity industries so that people are aware of this improvement to the quality of life and remain aware of what is going on around them.

In the European Union the movement towards a single electricity market has its problems. The problem is no other than that of trying to impose one homogenous model, thinking that this issue can be resolved simply by referring to "Europe", with the aim of enabling a few people to do more and more business. In discussions and in some institutions there is talk of consensus. Meanwhile, governments and legislation impose policies which never take into account the individual needs of other countries. We have cultures and projects that are different in Europe and for Europe.

We must wait to see whether the dysfunction recently witnessed in California, where the regulatory system is similar to the one certain people would like to see in Europe, makes it possible to analyse and define the concept of public service with the parameters mentioned earlier. We must actively advocate for participation by workers and citizens in the legislative process at the national and international levels.

According to information released early this year, the ILO itself has concluded that privatization and changes in corporate structures led to a drastic reduction of employment in the oil and gas industries in the past 25 years.

In conclusion, we would not want to miss the opportunity to say from this rostrum that in the name of freedom, justice, peace and democracy, no one can justify the extermination of Palestine, the refusal of the referendum in the Sahara, the coup d'état in Venezuela and the continuation of the economic blockade of Cuba.

We are certain that freedom in the world will only be possible with freedom for all countries, and we will continue to act based on that premise.

Mrs. BRIGHI (Workers' delegate, Italy) — One year after the last Conference, the international situation has dramatically changed. The world world is more insecure, employment is not increasing and the world of work is more and more precarious and exposed to continuous negative changes.

We are deeply concerned for the dramatic situation of the people of Palestine and for the terrorist attack, against the people of Israel. While we strongly condemn terrorist attacks, which cannot have any justification, we believe that the strongest response against them can come from the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli army from all occupied territories, its commitment to stop the settlement policy, the serious restart of the peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, with a consistent commitment from both parts, for peace and for the creation of two States for the two people.

We support the use of surplus funds also for timely programmes on critical areas such as Palestine and Afghanistan.

In this regard we consider of an outstanding importance the DG report on Palestine and a crucial contribution. We urge that the proposals contained in it, starting from the establishment of a consistent fund for a global technical assistance programme for social partners in Palestine and occupied territories can rapidly find an implementation.

Insecurity, instability, conflicts, precarisation of workers' rights the so-called informal economy are increasing not only in poor countries, but but also in industrialized ones, with particular impact on women life and minority groups.

ILO can have the lead, jointly with the international agencies and involving social partners, especially in the Poverty Reduction Strategies, for a coherent promotion of legal frameworks and programme, aiming to the definition and respect of legal provisions for adequate social security and labour protection for all workers, effective implementation of ILO standards, financial and technical support to promote decent jobs in the "formal economy".

With the growth of internationalization of production, of free-trade zones, of the use of subcontracting and of foreign direct investment, without any conditionalities against violation of workers and environmental rights, it is time for the ILO to play a role in defining international guidelines to implement, monitor and independently verify the instruments around corporate social responsibility, avoiding that other private

organizations — such as ISO — illegitimately (being not tripartite), handle this delicate process.

We consider tripartism, social dialogue, collective bargaining at various level of the economy, as key instruments to promote social justice, fair competition, economic and political stability.

For achieving these objectives, we need to strengthen such instruments, their effectiveness and their mainstreaming role in all ILO programmes. In this regard, there is the need to highlight and strengthen the specific role, as well as the resources of ACTRAV.

ILO and social partners involvement should take place also in other international institutions, including the WTO.

While governments have liberalized trade, finance and capital flows, migrant workers are denied to live and work safely and protected in the countries of migrations, benefiting of the same rights of local citizens.

The report of the Application of Standard Committee highlights the need still today, for giving special priority and the increase of activities to promote the implementation of all core labour standards and the Declaration.

We are deeply concerned for the human and workers rights violations among other countries, in China, Colombia and Burma. In this country still two years after the ILO resolution, the military junta, not only avoided complying with it, but continues to strongly repress human and trade union rights. We are deeply concerned for the junta behaviour and for its threats in the ILO special session, toward a legitimate representative of workers who took the floor on such occasion. Still now many European and American companies, contradicting the content and the spirit of the ILO resolution, continue to make business profit even indirectly from this wide violations.

Technical cooperation is a key instrument to promote ILO strategies, and its efficiency and delivery rate, but most importantly its link to regular programmes of the ILO should be carefully monitored.

Italy and social partners have been strongly contributing in this regard, both financially and politically. We recognize the importance of strengthening tripartism and social dialogue in technical cooperation projects. Among others, mention should be made of the Universitas project and social dialogue projects in the Balkan States.

While we appreciate the choice of time-bound programmes on child labour, ILO should improve the efficiency in the promotion of [Conventions Nos. 138 and 182](#). Both of them deserve the same attention. We are concerned for the low efficiency of IPEC programmes and for the weak effectiveness of the Child Labour Report. We think the four strategic ILO objectives are still not fully taken in consideration (both in the Report, and most importantly in the field). The interconnection between child labour programmes and those on workers' rights, social dialogue and decent work should also be continuously promoted. Moreover, there is a need to fully involve the social partners in programs implementation. We really need to make IPEC work more effectively and closely related to the ILO regular budget and activities, while defining indicators to monitor successes and failure of the work.

The same synergic approach should be stressed for the Turin Centre. The use of Surplus Funds should be related to clear objectives also for fostering the process

of integration with the four sectors and ILO policy orientations, extensive staff training, avoiding both in Turin and in Geneva the trend toward an increasing precarisation of employment relations.

We appreciate the ILO's efforts, through the creation of the World Commission, to increase its role in the international scenario. But this objective can be better achieved if working in close cooperation with social partner to beat this important challenge.

Mr. SZIRMAI (*Employers' delegate, Hungary*) — The year 2002 is one of outstanding importance for Hungarian society. In fact, in the spring of this year, parliamentary elections were held in my country.

However, it is a great pleasure for me to be able to tell you that Hungary now has a stable market economy, and the stake at any election is not the choice between a democratic and an anti-democratic regime. As a result of the elections, there has been a change of government, and the new leadership has declared itself to be unambiguously committed to the values of the free market economy and has placed on its agenda the development of the system of social dialogue. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of these declarations, and we trust that the next modification of the Labour Code will be discussed in Parliament only after tripartite negotiations. I have to tell you though that in countries of economies in transition, like mine, governments have a predilection for avoiding compulsory dialogue and tiresome negotiations, and instead allow significant modifications to laws to become independent motions of members of parliament. These motions, as we know, are not subject to previous consultation. Then, by supporting the independent motion, the parliamentary majority adopts the modification. We still have fears — I am afraid not ungrounded fears — of this method, even with the new Government in power.

However, social dialogue will certainly be needed in our country in the next four years. It is common knowledge that Hungary is an open economy that cannot shake off the effects of world economic tendencies, which, in the present case, means recession. A decreasing rate of growth, coupled with the growing demands of workers' groups, will lead to tensions in the budget. In a situation like this, employers have to make efforts to withhold the Government from applying blatantly simple solutions. That is, to keep the Government back from satisfying its financial needs with increased taxation, which would then hold back economic output, and to convince it to focus on increasing the competitiveness and efficiency of enterprises.

It is Hungary's historic duty in the period to come to create all the conditions necessary for joining the European Union and the successful completion of accession. This challenge involves a number of issues concerning the world of work as well.

These efforts are in harmony with the principles and values of the ILO and, in concrete terms, with the theme of this Conference. In fact, we can ask ourselves the question: does everybody in Hungary have a decent job, and are employment and unemployment statistics congruent? Or, is it not the case that the decreasing rate of unemployment does not automatically imply the widening of employment to the same extent? It is also a fact that certain strata of our society earn their living in the informal economy.

The position of employers is twofold in terms of this issue. On the one hand, the grey and black econ-

omies, especially non-registered employment, put honest entrepreneurs in a very difficult position, and at a competitive disadvantage, compared with those who save their social security and other expenses. These honest entrepreneurs are, therefore, clearly opposed to any form of informal economy. On the other hand, it is an undoubted fact that, for many entrepreneurs, staying legal would involve an unsustainable burden, partly because of the high level of taxation, partly because of other burdens ensuing from the legal conducting of their enterprise. The new Government that has just taken up office has promised the alleviation of these burdens, and we are confident that these efforts will be crowned by success. The new Government will certainly receive all possible support from the Hungarian employers' organizations.

I do not fear at all that we will not have sufficient work in the upcoming period as, in order to improve the competitiveness of the Hungarian economy, we have a lot to do, including, among other things, the development of professional training, the intensification of productivity, technological development, and the development of human resources.

Original French: Mr. LUANGVILAY (*Workers' delegate, Lao People's Democratic Republic*) — On behalf of the Trade Union Federation of Lao, it is my honour and pleasure to address this session of the International Labour Conference. I thank the ILO for inviting me to participate in this major annual event.

I am convinced that the conclusions of our current work will have beneficial effects on the social development of our country in general, and on our efforts to eliminate the inhumane exploitation of child labour.

Clearly, one of the important questions on the agenda of this present session is the development and amendment of the standards and principles of the ILO in respect of working conditions, in order to strengthen the Organization's activities and enhance the responsibilities of the social partners — governments, employers and workers — and improve labour relations and the social development process. The Conference is also striving to review the approach to resolving various problems, so as to make such approaches more uniform.

The fundamental objective of the ILO is to promote tripartism, which is the best means of fostering activities to defend the legitimate rights and interests of workers.

The Trade Union Federation of Laos has so far participated actively in the implementation of labour legislation in general, and specifically in activities to combat trafficking in women and children throughout the world. At the end of 2001, we held awareness and training sessions on the drawing up of collective agreements and on social security, with ILO assistance and support.

As regards international standards, the Trade Union Federation of Laos has disseminated and published the contents of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The Trade Union Federation of Laos is now focusing its efforts on developing the rural sector in order to improve family economies and encourage small-scale farming, in accordance with the local capacities and resources available.

Naturally, our Federation has continued to pursue its traditional activities of providing training and protecting the legitimate interests of workers.

Mr. RYBAR (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, Slovakia*) — It is a great honour for me to give a speech at this session of the International Labour Conference, attended by people from all over the world, a session that will discuss the promotion of cooperatives, how they fit into the globalization movement, and how they can be expected to develop in the coming year.

Our meeting is also important because of words said by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan himself during a meeting with the President of the International Alliance, Mr. Ivano Barberini this past April in Geneva: "Co-operatives have been able to help millions of people around the world improve their lives. They are an affective organizing mechanism."

This is a clear message to the cooperative movement, and let me emphasize that not only the United Nations recognizes cooperatives to be an important part of society capable of facilitating economic and social development. Its support of the cooperative movement is also evidenced by the recently adopted United Nations Guidelines on Cooperatives. They were, as the International Co-operative Alliance has said, key documents that brought a higher visibility to cooperatives and a clear message from the United Nations on the importance of cooperatives around the world.

We highly appreciate proposals by the International Co-operative Alliance aimed at more closely monitoring how cooperatives are meeting global challenges

We especially welcome the solidarity and constructive approach of the International Labour Organization's representatives and experts towards the cooperative movement, as well as the philosophy expressed in the document under discussion. What is most important in this document is the right and freedom of cooperatives to continue business in this entrepreneurial form as a structural part of a mixed market economy, the importance of cooperatives for the development of entrepreneurship and civil society, and for the modernization of economies around the world.

We have succeeded in incorporating the issue of cooperatives into the programme declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic. Concrete support from government ministers in the field of legislation, labour and social affairs, regional development and construction, agriculture, economy, finances, etc. promising for the development of the cooperative movement in our country.

The interest of state organs in the development of the cooperative movement can be seen by the support and interest of the President of the Slovak Republic. During discussions with the representatives of the cooperative movement, the main political parties also show interest in working out questions concerning the cooperative movement and are incorporating them into election platforms.

Now, with parliamentary elections to be held soon, we are sure that the attention political parties pay to cooperatives will not be only verbal.

Social dialogue, which has an important role in the transformation of the Slovak Republic, is the main tool of employees' and employers' participation in the transformation process and the main means of influencing economic and social policy. It is also the main tool with which to keep the social peace, as well as an important additional element of democracy over and above our parliamentary democracy.

It is gratifying that cooperative unions have played such a decisive role in establishing tripartism.

I can only express the hope that this document, [ILO Recommendation No. 127](#), will be approved during dialogue at this session, and that it will optimally define conditions for the cooperative movement in the framework of the Manchester Congress, and shape the attitude of the highest cooperative body, the International Cooperative Alliance. It is my hope that it will be accepted in all countries of the world as the recommendation of the International Labour Organization.

We have now completed the list of speakers for today. It was a great pleasure for me to hear so many interesting statements from the individual countries because this gives us a clearer and more complete view of the situation.

(The Conference adjourned at 6.40 p.m.)

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