

Seventeenth sitting

Monday, 17 June 2002, 3 p.m.

Presidents: Mr. Rampak, Mr. Arbesser-Rastburg

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

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

Mr. AUNG (*Employers' delegate, Myanmar*) — It is truly an honour for me to have this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election to such a high office. We are confident that, under his wise guidance and leadership, this session will be a fruitful one.

Our federation has been representing the employers of Myanmar for a long time. Our goals for the present, as well as for the future, are shared by the workers whom we regard as our social partners, not just as employees. Our relationship with them is amicable. This is, I must say, mainly due to fair labour practices that we follow as directed by the Ministry of Labour. Under these circumstances, political issues do not crop up and we are usually able to find practical solutions to the problems facing us through down-to-earth negotiations.

Myanmar's economy, especially the private sector, is improving with quite an impressive momentum. Since Myanmar experimented with, and established, industrial zones there has been an inflow of foreign investment, new job opportunities and new industries. The area of the industrial zones is expanding and new industries are still emerging. As a consequence, the membership of our federation has also increased.

We are fully aware that unless there is industrial peace, we cannot improve productivity and we are determined to achieve this goal. At the same time, we are venturing into new fields such as training programmes for human resource development.

Moreover, I would like to state that we are very careful concerning workers' legal rights and we work together with the representatives of the workers' welfare associations and cooperate with them whenever we have the opportunity. These workers' welfare associations are quite active and we work together with them not only for the welfare of the workers but also to solve certain management problems. As many workers are educated and intelligent, we have found that working together with them brings advantages for both sides.

Myanmar is a developing country and it has changed its economic system. We have transformed the system from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system. In doing so, we are endeav-

ouring to create a fair and favourable climate for the inflow of direct foreign investment, as well as much needed expertise. However, sanctions imposed by the ILO on Myanmar have somewhat affected our industrial growth. Though they are not that vital, sanctions are disruptive indeed. Please allow me to elaborate a little. When the sanctions were imposed, the foreign investors, especially in the garment industry, tried to relocate their capital elsewhere. The result was that many factories had to be closed down and many workers became jobless. This affected not only the labour market; there was also social disruption because the dependants of the workers had to bear the brunt of this negative effect. The entrepreneurs who were working with the foreign investors were also affected. We are, however, glad to learn that our Government's step-by-step approach is having positive results and we are looking forward to seeing the sanctions lifted soon.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that, in view of the positive developments that have occurred recently in Myanmar, it would be most fitting to reconsider the question of lifting the sanctions imposed on our country. One of the objectives of the ILO is to create employment and the present sanctions are working against this very objective of the Organization. As you all well know "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere".

Original Spanish: Mr. MENGUE OBAMA NFUBE (*Minister of State for Labour and Social Security, Equatorial Guinea*) — First of all, I wish to extend warm greetings from the people of Equatorial Guinea and its President, His Excellency, Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, to all the peoples of the world represented here. We congratulate the ILO on its initiative to bring together different countries of the world in order to include them in the far-reaching, ambitious aims of this annual Conference.

Allow me, on my own behalf and on that of the tripartite delegation accompanying me, to join previous speakers in expressing my sincere congratulations on the unanimous election of the President of this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. Our congratulations also go to the Vice-Presidents.

We have attentively read the Report of the Director-General and have listened to the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body. I consider it my pleasant duty to express our satisfaction with the quality of the reports and to give our seal of approval to the action taken during the first half of the biennium to achieve the four strategic objectives, which are in keeping with the jurisdiction and powers of this Organization.

Due to time constraints, I will simply stress certain aspects that we wish to emphasize as regards the aims of this particular meeting.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a State with universalist vocation and that is why we play a full part of the international community within the International Labour Organization, as is borne out by the fact that we have paid all our financial contributions and, above all, ratified all the core Conventions of this Organization.

We are promoting compliance with the obligations that stem from these international instruments and other constitutional obligations. Let me quote, by way of example, the advice that our Government has sought and is receiving from the International Labour Office, in order to adapt our legislation and labour practices to international requirements that result in decent work.

The Labour Law of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has just opened a new page establishing non-contributory social security as a policy of social protection. The Government now considers social security as a right of citizenship. That is why we have extended the coverage of the general social security system in Equatorial Guinea, which is totally funded by the State, to all disabled persons, irrespective of whether or not they are wage earners.

The secondary effects and aims that we wish to achieve with this measure are as follows: first of all, to integrate in the world of work people who have a high risk of social exclusion and marginalization; secondly, to encourage the hiring of disabled people, who can help enterprises reduce non-wage costs, and thirdly, to combat poverty, because these groups are often most affected.

The Government has also extended insurance coverage to civil servants and members of the military. Their coverage is already in effect.

We are coordinating macroeconomic policies to promote labour-intensive investment as a way of reducing unemployment to a minimum in our society and we are taking action to improve worker protection in the workplace, emphasizing above all safety and health at work so as to reduce occupational risks as much as possible.

We are also taking action to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in the workplace and to promote anti-discrimination measures for people who are HIV positive.

We have opted for the ILO path. We are resolved to press ahead in order to improve the world of work in Equatorial Guinea. It is, however, true that our path is not without difficulties. As you all know, we are a developing country. We have a serious lack of human resources with which to manage our development. That is why, making the most of our presence here, we reiterate our request to the ILO and its constituents to continue providing us with the aid and support that we need so that we do not miss the boat of development. We, for our part, will do our very best to learn and share the positive experiences that will allow us to achieve fulfilment of the individual, in all aspects.

I would like to conclude my modest speech in wishing success to this 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, and with the true hope that its conclusions will contribute to a world of ever greater solidarity and humanity.

Mr. AMARE (*Workers' delegate, Ethiopia*) — First of all, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the Conference. I would also like to express my heartfelt pleasure to get this opportunity to speak at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, on behalf of the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU), and on my own behalf.

It is crystal clear from our understanding of historical facts and our personal observations that development can be achieved through the spiritual and material efforts of workers.

It is not difficult to understand from the struggle and experience of workers that the fundamental question and the basis of their struggle has been the question of democracy since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Respect for workers' democratic and human rights means creating industrial peace that can enhance economic and social development.

However, workers' demands remain unfulfilled due to certain obstacles. This, of course, is an undeniable fact. One can imagine that the development stage of our world could have been far better than it is now had workers' issues been given proper and necessary responses on time.

Currently, the working class is facing various challenges due to globalization, indebtedness and the new economic order, causing poverty and job insecurity. Workers are losing their jobs. We do not see significant improvement in the creation of new jobs. In my country, most of the private and public enterprises are unable to compete with giant international companies.

The process of privatization and structural adjustment has adversely affected the lives of working people. It has increased unemployment and poverty.

Therefore, the ILO, in collaboration with the social partners, should support workers who have lost their jobs. They should be given training and credit facilities to create jobs. To this end, the CETU is ready to cooperate with the ILO.

Tripartite consultation would enable the workers to have a say in the political, economic and social aspects of their country. In this regard, a tripartite labour advisory board has already been formed in line with the labour proclamation. This forum was formed to strengthen the relationship of the social partners and to advise the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in labour relations matters. It is encouraging. The scope of this advisory board has now been transformed to policy formulation with regard to industrial peace and labour issues in general. Therefore, our Confederation is actively taking part in the board. We also believe that tripartite forums and social dialogue ensure industrial peace and social development. We call upon the ILO to support and encourage the process.

ILO Conventions should be ratified and implemented by governments. To this effect, our Confederation is demanding the Government to ratify more ILO Conventions. This year we have selected and submitted to the Government four ILO Conventions for ratification which we found very useful for us, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The confederation's contribution with regard to the ongoing process of amending the Labour Law is immense, and the dialogue on differences with the Employers' group and the Government has continued.

Nowadays, HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in the workplace. Ethiopian workers are highly affected by this epidemic. Therefore HIV/AIDS should be recognized at the workplace and be treated like any other disease. The Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions has prepared workplace HIV/AIDS policy guidelines and is working in collaboration with the ILO and other non-governmental organizations.

I would like to say that CETU has close contact with the ILO area office and the East African Multidisciplinary Advisory Team with the aim of realizing our objective. It is also my great belief that the ILO's support will continue to strengthen our activity.

In conclusion, the CETU wishes the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference success and the adoption of important resolutions.

Mr. EDSTRÖM (*Workers' delegate, Sweden*) — Let me express our appreciation of the major efforts made by the Director-General and the Office in the fight for the total elimination of child labour. In this respect I also would like to include those governments which recognize the problem and demonstrate a genuine political will to tackle it. The workers will be their primary ally in this struggle — not least because it is the workers' children that suffer from child labour, especially girls, often abused, and without any hope of getting a basic education.

The Director-General's Global Report shows that the situation in the world is more serious than could be expected. We have a common duty in relation to these working children. I hope I am right in my tentative conclusion on our debate on child labour last week, that we all recognize that the existence of child labour constitutes an obstacle to development, and that all efforts must be made to eradicate child labour.

Concerning the Appendix to the Director-General's report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, I would like to give the full support of the Swedish trade union movement to the proposals outlined in paragraph 13 on specific ILO action. I would stress the importance of immediately reassessing the needs of technical cooperation programmes, of the creation of a fund for employment and social protection, and of stimulating a social dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli constituents.

I hope that the Workers' group and the Employers' group will be able to agree on a statement on the Middle East. Such a joint statement would be an important expression of the non-acceptance by the social partners in the ILO of the horrifying situation facing the workers in the occupied Arab territories. In addition, it would be a clear request to the Director-General to use the financial surplus to this end, and to governments to give considerable contributions to such a fund so as to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian workers.

The ILO has taken upon itself the tremendous task of securing universal respect, in all ILO member States, for the fundamental human rights in working life, including freedom of association, upon which the ILO's basic principle of tripartism is based. But despite the ILO's long history of existence and despite major efforts through the years and most recently with the United Nations Social Summit, the ILO's ratification campaign and the adoption of the ILO Declaration in 1998, we in this Organization have still not been able to ensure that all Workers' delegates attending International Labour Conferences are

chosen solely by the workers themselves, or that they are able to represent a majority of the workers in their countries.

The continued lack of respect for freedom of association in numerous countries is the major explanation here. But we also see examples of governmental — and sometimes employer — involvement and interference in the designation of Workers' delegates.

Obviously, the Workers' group as a whole suffers when not all of its members can be regarded as true worker representatives. But the ILO and its credibility also suffer. When the Director-General, or Ministers, or Employers' delegates address this Conference, they naturally expect that they are speaking to real, independent representatives of workers from member States.

I want to appeal to the Director-General to seriously consider what additional measures are needed to secure in future that all delegates attending our highest decision-making body can actually be regarded as representing the interests which they are supposed to be representing.

In his speech on 13 June, Mr. Owen Seymour Arthur, the Prime Minister of Barbados, said that the ILO should be given teeth that bite indiscriminately wherever labour standards are violated. I do indeed agree.

Mr. PALKOVICS (*Workers' delegate, Hungary*) — The representatives of Hungarian workers highly appreciate the items on the agenda of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. As the Reports and our personal experience show, the problems of decent work and the informal economy are especially topical and urgent. We have to discuss them thoroughly and seek solutions.

Hungarian workers' organizations share the ILO's aim to combat and eradicate poverty, to provide decent employment, to improve labour legislation and to increase workers' legal literacy. Enhancing social protection is also indispensable. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged groups and those who suffer discrimination in the labour market, such as women, school-leavers and migrant workers.

The Hungarian economy is considered internationally to have had the most success in withstanding the difficulties and coping with the challenges in the transition from communism.

However, this success has not been unambiguous for workers. For us workers, the past 12 years have brought about the problems of a fledgling market economy and globalization at the same time. Employers and governments shifted this double burden onto workers. We have had to cope with ever increasing pressure. As a result of this process, labour's share of production costs has been constantly decreasing while entrepreneurial profits and government revenues have partly stagnated and partly increased.

It was international legal assistance, international solidarity and our own efforts that prevented a disaster. But despite our efforts, we could not provide protection for everybody. At present, one-ninth of Hungary's workers can only find employment in the informal sector. The same proportion of workers — one-ninth — have been forced into early retirement. Twenty-five per cent of Hungarian workers earn no more than the minimum wage. These groups are the losers in the transition. For these people, the right to decent work is not guaranteed. Hungarian workers

did not expect political and economic changes to bring increased social aid; we did not expect to receive more and more social welfare. What we did hope for were decent employment opportunities. This is the reason we welcome the Report on decent work; this is the reason we highly regard the work the ILO has done so far and will continue to do in this area in the future. We are aware that this work requires painstaking efforts and that every national economy and every business organization is competing against each other. Competition might have a beneficial effect on employment. Nevertheless, we agree with the ILO Report which says that a country's informal economy impedes the efficient utilization of resources and a rise in productivity. Consequently, the national economy cannot maximize its potential, and this has a negative impact on economic growth.

Let me conclude by expressing our gratitude to the ILO for the assistance and support it has provided Hungarian workers for the past 12 years in the area of employment and freedom of association. I would especially like to extend thanks to the ILO Regional Office in Budapest for its close cooperation with Hungarian workers' organizations. On behalf of Hungarian workers, I assure you that we will support and actively participate in every initiative which aims to create new jobs and provide decent employment for the benefit of workers.

Original Arabic: Mr. MOHAMED (Workers' delegate, Bahrain) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Permit me, on behalf of the General Committee for Bahrain Workers, to convey to you the greetings of the workers of Bahrain, who look forward with expectation and hope to the fulfilment of the agenda of this Conference. I should also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for his outstanding efforts in the preparation of the comprehensive technical reports submitted to this Conference, reflecting the Organization's approach and its response to the requirements of the constituent elements of the Organization, in the context of a serious approach with regard to the fundamental principles and rights at work, specifically the elimination of child labour.

Permit me first of all to acquaint you with labour developments in our country, which is witnessing a security and political liberalization, and has adopted a serious approach towards the creation of a State built on the law and institutions and the firm establishment of the values of civil society. This is one of the main pillars of the reform led by His Majesty Shaikh Hamad Bin Issa Aal Khalifa, King of Bahrain, who has declared his support for the establishment of free and independent national trade unions.

In the light of these factors, the General Committee has undertaken a process of major change, necessary for the transition from an era of joint committees to one of free, independent and unified trade unions within the General Committee for Bahrain Workers.

As our country is in the process of democratization, we firmly believe that the basis for a State based on the law and institutions is the establishment of trade unions, as a firm guarantor of true democracy.

On this basis, the workers' organization endeavours to embody the international principles and norms of trade unionism, as a safety valve in the process of the workers' struggle in various countries.

One of the main themes of the 90th Session of the ILO Conference is the elimination of child labour. Child labour frequently takes the form of a hidden forced labour, with children in the Third World being exposed to various types of persecution, while they are used in some countries as combatants in civil wars and are exposed in yet others to gunfire and to the murder of their parents, as is the case in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Child labour is persecution; it is a crime which should be punishable by law, but it is also a reflection of poverty. Countries in which child labour is prevalent are countries whose societies suffer from poverty, where the average per capita income is US\$1 a day. Effective elimination of child labour requires development programmes to improve economic performance and achieve true, sustainable rates of development.

The international community must shoulder its responsibilities towards the poor countries in which the phenomenon of child labour is prevalent. Foreign debt consumes the greater part of the incomes of those countries, leaving their peoples hostage to the debts and their scheduling and rescheduling. This brings about a deterioration of the economic and social situation, increasing unemployment and a decline in the level of wages. Social stability is lost, to be replaced by chaos in which the law cannot perform its function in a context of social justice.

Today we face great challenges, challenges related to the concept and definitions of globalization, whose implementation has had negative effects in many regions, frequently leading in certain sectors to domination by the stronger countries of the world economy and world markets. We need a globalization that takes the social dimension into consideration and respects particularities, that would raise entire societies out of poverty and want.

We also need to review the agenda of privatization which is throwing thousands out of their jobs without offering any alternatives that give due consideration to their circumstances and to social justice.

We are gathered here today at a time when the occupied Palestinian territories are undergoing a most odious genocide. The world watched in astonishment the events in the Jenin refugee camp as the Israeli occupation forces bombarded homes over the heads of their occupants, and conducted house-to-house searches and sieges reminiscent of the days of the Nazis during the Second World War.

The Israeli occupation forces have committed war crimes in the occupied territories, and are still proceeding with a systematic destruction of the infrastructure and killing of Palestinian civilians, including women, children and infants.

The international community should take a courageous stand to put an end to the daily massacres committed by the Israeli army, by dispatching an international force to protect the population.

Thousands have been killed at the hands of the Israeli army; 60 per cent of the Palestinian workforce are out of work because of the blockades and the imposition of a policy of isolation reminiscent of that of the former racist apartheid regime in South Africa.

We condemn the crimes of the Israeli occupation army in the occupied Palestinian territories and call upon the international community to move immediately to save a people being killed in cold blood in an almost unprecedented genocidal war.

In conclusion, the General Committee for Bahrain Workers wishes this Conference all success in the fulfilment of its agenda.

Mr. ADYA (*Workers' delegate, Mongolia*) — I am very pleased to convey the warm greetings of the Mongolian workers to all delegates and to wish every success to the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. Let me also congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents on their elections. The Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions (CMTU) considers that the comprehensive Report of the Director-General submitted to this session of the Conference clearly outlined the implementation of the ILO programme for 2000-01 and reflected the future challenges facing the world of work.

The Mongolian trade unions fully support, and are actively involved in, the process of implementing ILO policies and programmes which respond to current issues associated with globalization. Here particularly, I have to emphasize the ILO's four strategic objectives: to promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; to create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income; to enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all; and to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

The process of democracy and reform launched in Mongolia in 1990 covered all political, economic and social spheres of the country, including labour issues. However, the low level of wages, and pension and other benefits, due to the negative impact of slow economic development, the huge foreign debt, the high poverty rate, unfair productivity and income distribution, the large informal sector economy, and the strict conditional monetary policy of the international financial institutions create obstacles in the labour sphere.

In spite of such obstacles and difficulties, the tripartite constituents of Mongolia have carried out the following activities in order to implement the ILO strategic objectives.

The workers, employers and Government of Mongolia are cooperating and continuing their dialogue concerning the ratification of all core Conventions in order to apply the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Currently, Mongolia has ratified five ILO core Conventions and the ratification of the remaining core Conventions, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) will take place in the near future.

However, there is an inadequate obligation in respect of the implementation of the already ratified Conventions. The Government of Mongolia must fulfil its obligation to submit reports on Conventions to the ILO and to introduce newly adopted Conventions and other instruments adopted by the International Labour Conference to the country's legislative body. In addition there are inadequate policies and actions for the creation of jobs with better salaries in line with the requirements associated with decent work.

Poverty alleviation and employment promotion are vitally important issues to be tackled by the government, employers and trade unions together. Last year, a national tripartite employment conference was organized in Mongolia in cooperation with the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, during which

the concepts of a national programme on policy and an action programme on decent work were discussed. The Parliament of Mongolia adopted a law on employment promotion and formed, for the first time, a national tripartite body for employment. The national programme on employment was adopted in May of this year, which reflected a trade union proposal. In addition, all the social partners together developed ways of implementing the medium-term national programme on occupational safety and health.

The CMTU fully supports the discussions concerning the promotion and development of the informal economy. According to a recent survey in our country, informal sector workers account for 10.2 per cent of the entire labour force and 11.9 per cent of overall economic production. The informal sector is estimated to grow significantly in the coming years. The CMTU pays the utmost attention to the provision of all basic human rights in the informal sector, including the right to organize.

Cooperative development is significant for the promotion of employment and the income-generation capacity of the population, the development of economic democracy and the overall economic growth of the country. Therefore, our delegation calls on all delegates at this session to adopt the Recommendation concerning the promotion of cooperatives. The adoption of this Recommendation will create favourable conditions to develop the concept of decent work.

It has been a challenge for us to participate actively in the concept of and the ILO programme relating to decent work, and to revise relevant national legislation to bring it into line with ILO Conventions and Recommendations. In this regard, in order to use ILO resources effectively and fruitfully, the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions kindly requests the establishment of an ILO field office in Mongolia. I hope the ILO will consider this proposal and take steps to make it a reality.

Original Spanish: Ms. CANO MORENO (*Workers' delegate, Panama*) — The workers of Panama would like to take this opportunity, offered to us by this august assembly, the International Labour Organization, to make the following points at the 90th Session of the Labour Conference, joining the global sector of production:

The process of neo-liberal globalization imposed on the world's economies is increasing poverty and inequality amongst and within countries. According to present statistics, the richest segment of the world's population, representing 20 per cent has more than 80 per cent of the world's wealth, while the poorest segment, representing 20 per cent of the population does not even possess 2 per cent of the world's wealth. 1,300 million people, approximately one-fourth of the world's population, live in conditions of absolute poverty and more than 90 per cent of these people are in underdeveloped countries. Thus, there is an urgent need to renew our efforts to formulate and implement an international development strategy that promotes the rights and interests of all nations and peoples.

External debt, with its countless requirements, signifies an overwhelmingly heavy burden, which leads our countries to divert huge sums of money, sums that could be used for the development of our people. The opening up of markets and privatizations in our countries bring with them a pandemic of unemployment. In areas such as telecommunications, electricity,

ports, it is the workers who bear the brunt, and the workers who have to work in the informal sector. The workers and people in general of our countries shall safeguard the principles of solidarity and the principles of public companies, particularly the social security institution (“Caja de Seguro Social”) of Panama.

We object to its privatization, we object to the usurping of our pension fund; we shall continue to seek an alternative among Panamanians. We shall defend our biological diversity because we do not accept that in the name of development we sacrifice flora and fauna species and contaminate the area with gas emissions producing, inter alia, the greenhouse effect.

We express praise for the method of dialogue and negotiation of the National Council of Organized Workers (CONATO) as a mechanism to deal with the major national problems and labour conflicts. CONATO has contributed to the National Agreement for economic renewal in which political parties, the Government and employers have participated, and we continue at the negotiating table in order to achieve a fiscal reform, and solutions to the major problems with social security and with national education.

We call upon the national Government and employers to make sincere efforts to achieve sustainable development, giving priority to the fight against causes generating poverty, such as illiteracy, unemployment, the lack of appropriate health services, sanitation, drinking water and housing. Finally, CONATO calls for the observance of 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), as well as all Conventions ratified by our country, since Panama consistently violates the Conventions, pursues workers in the public and private sector, with the complicity of some authorities.

We call upon the State to ratify the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), that Panama has not yet ratified. We call your attention to, and show our disagreement with, the participation of workers in the Governing Body of the ILO. There should be equal representation of all sectors and structures of the world’s Trade Union Movement in the Governing Body. The ILO is not just for one international trade union organization; we call for equity and participation of all regional and national international organizations of the trade union movement in the various ILO bodies. With that we shall promote truly pluralist, democratic and tripartite action, as it should be in the ILO; this is the way to promote real international cooperation for development, justice and social progress.

Original Portuguese: Mr. ROMANO (*Workers’ delegate, Brazil*) — I consider it a great honour and privilege to be able to participate in this very important Conference, at which we have the opportunity to tackle the most significant issues of today’s world.

On behalf of both the men and women workers of Brazil, I should like to congratulate the President on his election. I should also like to pay my respects to the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, as well as to all the delegates representing their countries who are participating in this meeting.

In his Report the Director-General speaks of the very positive results obtained in meeting both the

needs of the workers and the labour and social challenges which exist throughout the world. Regarding these challenges, however, we do understand that much still remains to be done.

The fight against child labour has now become an international priority, and magnificent results have already been achieved. This work must now continue, with participatory management and positive results for the IPEC programmes.

The elimination of child labour is fundamental for us all. Millions of children are being denied their fundamental rights, such as learning to read and write, and countless others are suffering from physical, psychological or sexual abuse. For millions more, there is no such thing as healthcare, and very often these children die prematurely. Small children are being exploited as cheap and disposable labour, and are being discriminated against because they belong to a poor minority. They are the victims of a vicious circle, deprived of their childhood and unprepared to meet future challenges, and as adults they will be victims again, when they fall prey to unemployment.

In Brazil there are many programmes for protection against child labour involving the Government, trade unions and employers. These combined efforts are of enormous social relevance, since they are considerably reducing the exploitation of child labour.

These are the ILO’s strategic objectives, which were defined in Mr. Somavia’s Report in 1999 to the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference. The needs of the workers, the population as a whole and the environment must be the main concerns of all political, economic and trade union entities, with social dialogue the instrument for ensuring that social protection is applied to all.

The tripartite system and social dialogue are the means for extending social protection to everyone, giving more opportunities to women and men, as well as to disadvantaged young people, far increasing the number of cooperatives and small enterprises, for bridging the digital divide, and for ensuring the elimination of child labour.

In the fight against discrimination and forced labour, it is important to apply the rules of health and safety at work, and extend social coverage to everyone. The tripartite system is the essential tool for putting into practice social, labour-related and economic resolutions.

It is therefore urgent to set up a campaign for the ratification and application of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). This is something which *must* be done, because to ratify resolutions and not apply them is a true violation, which must be prevented.

There is great poverty in many countries owing to political, social and economic crises, and as always it is the ordinary people who are suffering the most. That is why it is more necessary than ever to eliminate the decent work deficit in the world. The ILO is the institution which can promote our combined work and determined efforts to build a better world.

Original Spanish: Mr. GONZÁLEZ GONZÁLEZ (*Workers’ delegate, Cuba*) — The world is going through a very difficult period, with increasing regional conflicts and growing threats to world peace, as well as widening levels of poverty, famine and social exclusion. Unemployment has now reached chronic levels and in regions such as Latin America, eight out

of every ten new jobs are created in the informal economy, where workers do not have the right to a decent wage, long-term employment, collective bargaining or social security.

In these conditions, it is very encouraging to see the objectives set out by the ILO to promote decent work, but this is not enough. Any efforts made in this area will be totally fruitless if we do not take into account the causes of such problems, which are directly linked to the ruthless application of neo-liberal policies sponsored by the major powers, their multinational companies and their ruling institutions, namely the IMF, the World Bank and WTO, inter alia.

As part of the United Nations system, the ILO should at least recognize and denounce the results of these policies, without forgetting the identity of those mainly responsible for this, and promote substantial changes in how this world order, which is leading humanity into a dead-end situation, operates. Let us be realistic. If we do not find a solution to the problems of the foreign debt which is asphyxiating our countries, if we do not lay the foundations for fair trade, if we have no actual and effective transfer of resources and technologies in order to develop the impoverished nations, if the powers that govern the world today and their international financial bodies do not stop pillaging our wealth with their neo-colonial policies of domination, then there will be no solution for the 250 million children who work in the world today, nor for the billion people who do not have a fixed job, nor indeed for the hundreds of millions of people who suffer from chronic hunger and absolute destitution.

Either we take stock and face these harsh realities and dedicate all our efforts to searching for true solutions, or we will simply be meeting up year in year out to carry on bewailing the fact that the problems we are dealing with today, far from being resolved, are becoming increasingly difficult to solve. At least the Workers' representatives should realize that this, and this alone, should be at the heart of our struggle.

Original Spanish: Mr. ECHAVARRÍA (Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, Colombia) — On behalf of the Employers of Colombia, we would like to congratulate the Officers of the Conference, and in particular the President on their election to lead our work.

We agree with the Director-General, who in his Report notes the importance of social dialogue as a tool to resolve conflicts throughout the world.

In Colombia, it is essential to strengthen this tool to overcome social intolerance through technical cooperation. That is why we believe that political negotiation is the best way to solve the internal armed conflict. Negotiation will enable us to make the political, economic and social changes so as to include all Colombians in a democratic and participatory society.

It is essential that the international community and United Nations' bodies should act as facilitators in re-establishing talks with the armed insurgents.

I would like to give particular attention to the cooperation programme the ILO is carrying out in Colombia. We welcome the fact that the Finance Committee of the Conference has approved funding to permit the programme to be conducted fully, in particular to offer protection to trade unionists and employers who are threatened or obliged to move because of the violence.

The National Association of Manufactures (ANDI) has carried out six workshop seminars in various cities of the country for employers and trade union legal advisers in order to disseminate the interpretation given by the ILO to [Conventions Nos. 87 and 98](#). We hope that in developing this programme we will be able to continue this exercise with the workers and the Government. We also wish to make progress in collective bargaining and the eradication of child labour.

With the support of the employers and workers of Sweden, we have held meetings with Colombian trade unions in order to hear about the experience of Sweden in dispute settlement and to identify stumbling blocks that prevent us from making progress in dialogue and consultation.

This interesting process has enabled us to construct a joint agenda in areas such as occupational accidents, training, productivity, competition, integration and its effects on employment and the informal economy.

We hope that we will be able to reach agreements in these areas at the same time that we discuss other, more complex matters that are a matter of urgency for our country. Regrettably, thousands of people are still being killed or kidnapped. They are, for one reason or another, victims of the widespread violence in our country. Among them are trade unionists, judges, journalists, priests and political leaders, who are the fundamental pillars of democracy.

We, too, are severely affected by this situation. We are committed to building a society in which we can live in harmony and peace.

Colombian democracy and its institutions, notwithstanding the violence, have shown maturity through the recent congressional and presidential elections. Amidst threats by armed factions, the majority of Colombians expressed their political preferences. It is interesting to note that the democratic left, led by a former trade union leader, has opened up the possibility of exercising political opposition to the new Government.

Lastly, I would like to note that the employers are fully respectful of the opinions of trade unionists. But we reject as an unfounded generalization a statement against private employers which appears in the third paragraph of page 2 of the document drawn up by the National Trade Union School, and that is being circulated in this Conference. This document does not present any proof substantiating this very serious statement.

In conclusion, and with the aforementioned, we request the ILO to continue its programme of technical cooperation in Colombia. On the other hand, we believe that the Workers' request for establishment of a commission of inquiry would in no way contribute to solving the social, economic and political conflict in our country.

Original Spanish: Mr. MORALES (Workers' delegate, Guatemala) — I should like to join other speakers in congratulating the President on his election to the Chair of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I should like to refer to the Director-General's Report, which highlights the strategic objective of promoting and implementing the fundamental labour standards and principles and also mentions part of the report of the ILO direct contact mission which visited Guatemala in April 2001.

During this mission, serious violations of trade union rights were observed and the standstill in activities with regard to the various cases presented before the Freedom of Association Committee. These violations remain unpunished and include things such as acts of violence against trade unionists, anti-trade unionist dismissals, legal delays, differences between the law and general practices and the refusal of some enterprises to partake in collective bargaining. The greatly publicized labour reforms, which took place last year, were more a response to pressure exerted by the United States Department of Commerce which left Guatemala outside the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

The Report of the Director-General reflects, in part, the resistance to and non-application of 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). Proof of this is that new cases are being brought before the Committee on Freedom of Association. This is confirmation that the speeches and words of those who have taken on the responsibility of implementing and making others implement ILO standards are not enough or credible.

The Report also highlights the positive response of many governments to the universal campaign to subscribe to new Conventions. This is undoubtedly important, but it should also be highlighted that the trade union movement in Guatemala is extremely concerned by the non-application of Conventions. It is imperative that political determination and a political will exist to ensure that Conventions are applied and to avoid impunity in this area.

In our case, the application of swift and real justice is a myth. In our legal system cases last forever and this increases the situation of impunity. Subsequently, workers are losing faith in those responsible for making sure that justice is done.

The Director-General's Report also highlights activities relating to decent work. I reiterate that this is laudable, but at the same time, the economic model is conspiring against this objective. The events currently occurring in Guatemala in the employment sector are far from being decent; thousands and thousands of people are losing their jobs and trade union organizations are being destroyed.

I would like to finish my intervention by saying that the ILO should not only concern itself with establishing more standards, but it should also strengthen existing ones and provide workers, employers and governments with practical mechanisms to eliminate impunity in the field of labour.

Mr. SENEVIRATNE (*Workers' delegate, Sri Lanka*) — It is my privilege and honour to extend my sincere congratulations to the President and the Officers of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that under their able leadership the Conference will achieve success. I would also like to express my particular congratulations to the Director-General for his Report *ILO programme implementation 2000-01*, presented to the Conference this year. The Report adequately reflects the progress achieved in relation to the targets set under each of the ILO's four strategic objectives, namely, fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue. The new ILO vision of decent work is built around

these strategic objectives. As explained by the Director-General in the executive preface to his current Report, a new approach has been proposed to decent work and for strategic objectives based on tripartite consensus and his Report provides an assessment of work accomplished, the main achievements and constraints during the relevant period and the remedial action taken. The goal of the ILO today should be on how to promote opportunities for men and women to obtain decent work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity through the implementation of the four strategic objectives on the promotion of basic workers' rights — employment, social protection and social dialogue.

As Workers' representatives, we have to speak about globalization, the impacts of which challenge all of us as Members of the ILO. Recognition and respect for labour rights is a *sine qua non* for economic and social development in all countries. It is through this approach that the concept of decent work can be achieved. We totally agree that together with economic and financial globalization, there should be a globalization of labour rights guaranteed by the ILO. We also agree that the policies pursued by the ILO should be integrated into those of international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

We also believe that the World Trade Organization should incorporate respect and regard for fundamental principles, as defined by the ILO Conventions, into its trade agreements. Basic rights at work should be the foundation for the global economy and decent work is built on this.

We were pleased to read in the Report that there has been an unprecedented increase in the ratifications of fundamental ILO Conventions, particularly in the cases of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). Sri Lanka ratified Convention No. 138 in 2000 and Convention No. 182 in 2001. Of the eight fundamental ILO Conventions, Sri Lanka has already ratified seven of them and still has to ratify [Convention No. 105](#). Certain areas of Sri Lanka's national legislation are inconsistent with the provisions of this Convention and these areas have been deemed obsolete. Spurred on by the campaign launched by the Workers' group of the ILO's Governing Body for ratification of the aforementioned core Conventions, the workers' organizations in our country will make every effort to expedite the ratification of this remaining core Convention by the Sri Lankan Government.

Globalization gives rise to adverse effects which developing countries find difficult to remedy on their own. As pointed out in the Report submitted by the Director-General at the 88th Session in 2000, globalization is characterized by three major facts: the unification of markets, technological innovation and, last but not least, political reforms. We are currently experiencing a revolution in information, communications and technology. We need help and assistance. Training is required at all levels. Young workers need to be trained for the new realities of the economy and to develop their capability to be creative in an increasingly sophisticated workplace. Older workers will need retraining. The ILO will have to provide technical assistance to the developing countries in these fields.

I would like to conclude by commenting on Sri Lanka in its present context. Sri Lanka's economic

development has been greatly hampered by an expensive civil war within the country which has been going on for the last decade and more. Under the present Government, a cease-fire agreement has been signed by both parties, and efforts are being made to achieve a permanent peaceful settlement. We look forward to a permanent peaceful settlement under the supervision of Norway and with the blessings of the international community. We await the dawn of a new era with better prospects for national development.

Original Arabic: Mr. MATAR (*Employers' delegate, United Arab Emirates*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Firstly, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this important session of the Conference. The report of the Governing Body and the Report of the Director-General include a number of accomplishments carried out over the past year. We would like to congratulate the Governing Body and the entire Organization for the programmes that have been implemented during the past year and the first half of this year, and we hope to have more activities implemented in the Arab region in 2002 and 2003. We would like to see the social partners in the Arab countries receive an appropriate share of technical cooperation from the regular budget of the Organization, from the UNDP, and from the budgetary surplus.

Our federation has witnessed some very important developments over the past three years, at the regulatory level and at the levels of implementation and tripartite consultations with the competent authorities of the State and at the level of regional and international cooperation.

From the regulatory point of view, Federal Law No. 5, of 1976, was dropped, and Federal Law No. 22, of 2000, concerning the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and of Industry was promulgated under the aegis of the Head of State, His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

In accordance with the abovementioned law, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry is now the umbrella organization uniting all employers in the country, through the various chambers to which they belong. The federation now has a complete structure comprising a general assembly, a board of governors, an executive council and a general secretariat.

The overall economic policy of the United Arab Emirates is based on the principle of free trade, and the private sector plays an important part in the economy. We have offered support to this sector and assistance to overcome the obstacles in its path. We have organized a number of activities in cooperation with the competent authorities, the various federations, and the regional and international Arab organizations present in the Gulf, in particular commercial exhibitions and fairs, conferences, seminars and training courses.

Against the backdrop of these activities, we have also given due importance to the role of female employers in our country. As regards this issue, we have established a special committee for female employers because we believe that the women in our country, as well as in other countries, have a pioneering and extremely important role to play in all fields of economic activity, just as female workers have an essential role to play in the development of the country.

From the Appendix to the Director-General's report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, it is clear that current policies have had an extremely negative effect on the political, social and humanitarian situation in these territories. The Israeli violations and barbaric practices have been a fatal blow for the Palestinian economy and the labour sector and have led to an increase in unemployment, a decrease in wages, a decline in working conditions, a standstill in public and transport services and the destruction of hospitals, schools, mosques and churches, not to mention a heavy toll in human life and the fall of martyrs on a daily basis before the eyes of the entire world.

Faced with this situation, we would like to express our full support for the recommendations made in the Appendix to the Director-General's report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, and we would like to invite the Organization to push for the implementation of these recommendations and the establishment of a Fund for Palestinian workers to deal with unemployment and the negative effects of the economic blockade.

Original French: Mr. SAMB (*Workers' delegate, Senegal*) — On behalf of the Workers' delegation of Senegal and on my own behalf, I wish to congratulate the President of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference on his election to that office.

His acknowledged skills and experience of how our illustrious institution works are major assets which lead us to believe that he will guide the work of this current session successfully.

I also welcome the Report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and that of the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia.

The content of these two documents is clearly pertinent and shows that the ILO is making rapid headway.

Economic globalization and liberalization of trade, accompanied by the extraordinary development of information technologies have certainly called into question things that were taken for granted, changed labour relations, both nationally and internationally and exacerbated inequalities, social exclusion, and poverty.

But in this context the ILO is increasingly aware of challenges which include, among others, taking into account the social dimension of globalization, defending rights and freedoms, eradicating the worst forms of child labour, obtaining a decent job, and strengthening tripartism and social dialogue.

In our country, Senegal, workers and their organizations are increasingly committed to rising to these challenges.

It is in this spirit, that they are determinedly getting organized in order to face the threats hanging over the free, independent, democratic union movement and that they are overcoming trials and difficulties in order to keep the standard of activist unionism flying.

The workers of Senegal have also taken an active part in promoting tripartism and social dialogue.

Thanks to ILO support through PRODIAP, they have strengthened their skills in collective bargaining and dispute management.

They have also negotiated in a spirit of unity, a common platform which has allowed them, among other things, to obtain a significant increase in wages and the extension of the retirement age to 60 in the

public sector, and which will soon be applied, we hope, in the private sector.

Workers in Senegal are also interested in combating and eradicating the worst forms of child labour by taking part in information and awareness-raising campaigns.

Senegal, as you know, has ratified Convention No. 182, whose relevance it recognizes, because it is a country where children who receive Islamic education in Koranic schools, street children and children in difficult situations are exposed to all kinds of dangers and fall victim to all sorts of exploitation.

The time is also right to talk about the efforts to organize workers in the informal sector, thanks to the support of the ILO-DANIDA project.

The implementation of this project has allowed us to quantify the size of this sector, which today, is providing most jobs for the working population. But the salient features of these jobs are their precariousness and absence of protection or safety for those in them.

That is why we realize that work must continue, even if the first stage of the project has now been concluded. The support of the STEP programme might certainly help trade-union organizations to consolidate their achievements and move forward.

I wanted to run through the various forms of action carried out by the workers and their union organizations among other things, how much closer the ILO, our institution, moved to these constituents over the last three years. That is something which, quite rightly, the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General have emphasized in their Reports.

We are, however, convinced that we still have a long way to go. Decent work, social security, industrial hygiene, and combating HIV/AIDS are still priorities for all African countries.

In this context, the ILO must continue to strengthen its support to these constituents to allow them to achieve noteworthy progress in these areas, which are of great economic and social import.

We are absolutely convinced that our call will be heard, that our institution will continue, as in the past, to play an important role, as it always did, in promoting peace, freedom, social justice and democracy.

(Mr. Arbesser-Rastburg takes the Chair.)

Mr. LEATHER (*representative of the Public Services International*) —Reading through the Director General's Report, one becomes very aware of the number of commitments there are on the ILO agenda — for example, the commitment to the fundamental principles and rights at work, the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, enhanced social protection for all, greater employment opportunities for men and women, and the implementation of the code of practice on HIV/AIDS.

This is just one UN agency. They all have their commitments. Then there are the special summits on environmental protection, eradication of poverty, food for all. We could solve all of our global problems just on the basis of the ever-increasing number of commitments. This is all well and good, but who is going to deliver? Whose job is it to make these commitments a reality where it matters, in people's everyday lives?

This is the role of the public sector. Only the public sector has the scope and capacity to deliver essential public goods and services to all, whatever their in-

come or status. So when we commit ourselves to education for all, the eradication of TB or malaria, halving global poverty by 2015, or full employment, we have to decide how we are going to do this.

We have to make a clear choice. The experience of our member organizations around the world is that they are having the resources they require to run an effective public service cut from under them. Numbers of staff are being cut, whether it's in the ministry of economic planning or a rural hospital.

Investment is reduced in equipment, buildings and training. The means to deliver the commitments are being systematically eroded. It is then that the criticism starts and the public sector gets blamed for inefficiency.

Instead of blaming them, we have to get behind them, give them the support and confidence they require because if we do not, we will be carried down in a vicious spiral of blame and shame. This spiral has been started by those who promote a market solution for everything and tell us that the only way forward is to privatize the public sector.

We have witnessed the impact of that solution in many parts of the world, in health services, energy supplies, water services and railways, and it just has not worked. Where the profit motive has been uppermost, services have only been delivered to those who can afford them.

This is why Public Services International is launching a worldwide campaign for quality public services. The objectives of the campaign are to ensure that public services are adequately funded so that well-trained and properly resourced workers can deliver quality services to those who need them; to develop the ability of public services to meet social objectives, especially poverty eradication and people's empowerment; to ensure that public services meet objectives, including high standards of ethical behaviour, which enable national and global economies to operate effectively and equitably; and to ensure that public service workers have full rights and decent working conditions.

The issue of workers' rights in the public sector is crucial. How can we expect workers to undertake such critical responsibilities while denying them their basic rights?

In the Republic of Korea, where much of the world's attention is focused at the moment, there is another Korean team worth mentioning. They are not in the TV spotlight, but they are a team of public sector trade unionists who have been arrested for trying to form a government employees union.

They are representative of many public service workers who have had their basic rights denied in, for example, Japan, Turkey, Belarus, Kenya and Colombia.

In the case of Colombia, where being shot for union activity is not unusual, we have called for a commission of inquiry to investigate all cases of rights violations.

Our quality public service campaign will have gender equality as a central feature. It will include identifying examples of how public services can help give women independence and support in their dual roles and showing the kinds of conditions under which many women work in public services.

This will link with existing campaigns to get governments to ratify the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), and the Equal Remuneration

Convention, 1951 (No. 100), where we are asking for national indicators on gender differences in pay.

On 29 April this year, on Workers Memorial Day, the ILO recognized all those emergency service workers who have lost their lives or been injured in carrying out their duties.

Special mention was made of those who died on 11 September 2001. The PSI speaker on that day recognized the commitment of emergency service workers all over the world, but at the same time asked for them to be given their basic rights.

Far too many firefighters, police and ambulance workers are expected to put their lives at daily risk without having the right to negotiate for their own health and safety. This issue must be urgently addressed.

We ask all those who are interested in being part of this campaign in support of public services to contact Public Services International.

Two years ago when speaking from this platform, we congratulated the Director-General for signing the first collective agreement with the ILO staff union. This was a shining example for the other UN agencies.

Unfortunately, the commitment to collective bargaining in the ILO has not been realized in practice. There are far too many ILO staff on precarious short-term contracts who have no employment security and no access to basic employment and benefits.

International civil servants are still among those public servants not enjoying basic rights. They are often expected to undertake difficult, sometimes life-threatening tasks, but with no recourse to the basic rights that are enshrined in the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia.

Mr. TESHOME (*Employers' delegate, Ethiopia*) — It is indeed a great pleasure and honour for me to be accorded the opportunity to address this august Conference.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate the President on behalf of the Ethiopian Employers' Federation, and on my own behalf, on his well-deserved and unanimous election to preside over this session of this historic Conference. I am fully confident that with his able guidance, our deliberations will reach a successful conclusion.

This Conference would be a landmark in the history of the ILO in that it would enable us to assess the ILO's achievements and meet the challenges of the future. The Ethiopian Employers' Federation reiterates its support and commitment to the ILO's principles and attaches paramount importance to its role as a centre of excellence and reference in the area of democracy and human rights. We appreciate the Director-General's Report and his tenacious effort to bring together different important issues implemented in a short period of time, which indicates progress along different programmes.

As you may be aware, the Ethiopian Employers' Federation, since its re-establishment in 1997, is committed to a radical reform programme, with the objective of promoting a free market economy. The objective reality of the Federation has been transformed in the past five years so radically that we are progressing forward in line with the spirit of tripartism.

In this connection, different notable measures have been taken by the Federation. In regard to relationships with our social partners, our Federation participated in the drafting process of the labour law,

which helps for the establishment of a strong and effective labour administration system, and we would like to acknowledge the ongoing process of amending the labour law and the Government's effort in this regard.

As the HIV/AIDS epidemic is now a global crisis, and constitutes one of the most formidable challenges to development and social progress, the epidemic is eroding decades of development gains, undermining economic growth, threatening security and destabilizing societies. In sub-Saharan Africa, where the epidemic had already had a devastating impact, the crisis has created a state of alert in the subregion.

The Ethiopian Employers' Federation is an important constituency of the ILO in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS intervention programme and initiatives in the world of work have recently started to be implemented through the Federation, with the cooperation of the Ethiopian Government and the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions. The Ethiopian Employers' Federation is aware of the problem and has been actively participating in the prevention activity by organizing several awareness-raising and prevention workshops on HIV/AIDS. In an attempt to harmonize national workplace standards in dealing with HIV/AIDS, tripartite workshops have been held by the Federation to develop national policy guidelines with the ILO's code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. Some of these activities have been carried out with the assistance of the ILO global programme on HIV/AIDS.

Turning to remaining agenda items, particularly the issue of fundamental principles and rights at work, creating greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and actions on HIV/AIDS are all timely and pertinent to the work of this session of the Conference. My Federation believes that the adoption of such international instruments to address the problems of our working population in view of the dynamic, global, economic and social changes should be our prime concern.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you today that our experience has taught us the difficulty of establishing and realizing the standards and fundamental principles and rights at work. The Ethiopian Employers' Federation is determined to pursue the ideals of tripartism and social dialogue with vigour and determination. In this regard, we attach paramount importance to the ILO's technical assistance and its active partnership policy.

Original Spanish: Mr. INSUA CHANG (*Minister for Labour and Human Resources, Ecuador*) — The report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Report of the Director-General reveal an interesting change in the ILO, as they propose the possibility of applying standards through effective technical and economic cooperation funded both by the ILO budget and by help from friends who believe in the struggle for social justice. This will modernize standards and make the spirit of the Conventions that have been ratified still more democratic.

Ecuador has received support from the ILO, in particular through human resources training and through the IPEC project. The coverage of the existing projects has been extended, thus opening the way for more assistance. All sectors in the country have cooperated in drawing up a time-bound programme with a view to immediately eradicating hazardous

child labour, thus assisting in the implementation of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Decent work is in itself the inherent right of all workers. We thus must give any effort made to ensure decent work in practice its due. Yet there is no appropriate general application of this policy when trade eclipses the importance of the productive force, which in this case is the worker.

In this context, unfair trade is an obstacle to appropriate remuneration, and thus to a dignified income commensurate with individuals' needs. Tariff and para-tariff measures, market access restrictions and limitations, and especially the subsidies given by some governments to their own industries generate a gruesome process of trade impoverishment and unfair competition, a process that is especially strong in trade of raw materials, agricultural products and products with no added value.

The chain of trade, from the time the product is produced, leaves the producer and is traded on the market, leads to a noticeable increase in price. This takes place without the producer being compensated for the product's real cost. Of the final consumer price, the producer receives not more than 10 per cent of the total. Thus, the worker cannot have any expectation of a fair share of the wealth generated. The worker is thus completely restricted from having access to decent work with proper remuneration.

The ILO should seek to strengthen a fair trade policy with its Members and friends in connection with its advocacy of decent work and the core standards. Workers and States cannot be productive and there cannot be social justice any other way.

The use of ILO budgetary resources, the subject of the study, should in future be an effective means to ensure the supremacy, pre-eminence and leadership of the ILO and its standards. It should update and optimize its terms of reference, Conventions and standards, making it possible for this international organization to be the benchmark *par excellence* in human rights standards and labour relations throughout the world.

To conclude, I might say that it is not a coincidence that in the past two years there has been a surge in ratification of the core Conventions and also a strong affirmation of the Organization's priorities. The possibility of using the ILO's technical and economic cooperation to implement standards, make ratification more than a mere act carried out for a select group of doctrinaires. The spirit of these standards is reflected in visible, effective action, thus giving the ILO the chance to be seen and known within its member States.

Original French: Mr. ROS (*Workers' delegate, Cambodia*) — First, on behalf of Cambodian workers and as President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions, I would like to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents on their election to preside over the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference.

On such a solemn occasion, please allow me to acquaint the Conference with some important achievements that our Federation can point to that are relevant to Cambodian workers.

Our Federation has continued to participate actively in the drafting of the texts for the application of the Labour Code, in particular those concerning free-

dom of association, collective bargaining, health and occupational safety and child labour. Recently, our Federation, as a member of the Consultative Labour Commission, formulated useful proposals that culminated in the adoption by the Commission of a new ministerial decree on temperature in the workplace. In order to apply the Labour Code and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), we participated in successive discussions of an important draft ministerial decree concerning hazardous work that is prohibited for children.

In practice, we have regularly gone into factories, enterprises, establishments and rubber plantations to ensure the correct application of the Labour Code and the ratified Conventions. Thanks to our efforts and to close cooperation with member trade unions, we have been able to resolve most of the violations of the legislative and regulatory discussions on payment of salaries, working hours, overtime, health and safety at work and child labour. We have taken the initiative to improve working conditions, increase salaries and prevent accidents at work. As regards accident at work, we did our best so that the employers should pay medical costs and benefits according to the rules in force.

With globalization and the market economy, worker education is one of the priorities for the Federation and it should be a long-term one. Thanks to the assistance of the ILO, the Government of Denmark and our own instructors trained by the ILO, were able to organize successive courses to disseminate the Labour Code and instruct trade union officials and workers in its application so that they know their rights and obligations and their roles as trade union representatives. Thanks to our efforts and to the confidence of our workers, our Federation has continued to develop quantitatively and qualitatively. At present our Federation can be considered the largest in Cambodia, uniting 61 trade unions at the enterprise level and having more than 30,000 members throughout the country.

Since the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work this year focuses on child labour, I would like, by way of conclusion, to reaffirm that our Federation is determined to collaborate closely with the Government and with other social partners so that the worst forms of labour of children may be eliminated as soon as possible from Cambodia.

Original Spanish: Mr. IBARRA SERRANO (*Workers' delegate, Ecuador*) — I would like to thank the Director-General for his excellent work in transforming the ILO into a tangible body in the struggle to make tripartism a fundamental pillar in the building of a just, human and supportive world.

In his reports, the Director-General has touched on several topics, all of which are important. However, due to time constraints I will simply refer to those relating to compliance with ILO standards. In my country, the successive governments, including the current one, have repeatedly and systematically violated national and international labour standards which stem from ILO Conventions and Recommendations, violations which are carried out so regularly that employers feel strengthened and indeed encouraged to infringe workers' rights.

In its report, the Committee of Experts notes its repeated calls for the Government of Ecuador to take

the necessary action in order to bring national labour standards into line with those of the ILO, particularly as regards free collective bargaining, the right to organize, etc. Contrary to this, however, the Government's actions continue to be aimed at labour deregulation, reducing workers' rights and undermining trade unionism. We denounce in this forum that while the ILO is doing all it can to promote decent work, in Ecuador we are seeing increasing precarious work and lower salaries.

From this very rostrum, at the 89th Session the current Minister of Labour quite openly denounced the abuses of outsourced or subcontracted work, such work being a way of undermining workers' rights in Ecuador, rights such as stability, freedom of association, social security, etc. This is a disguised form of exploiting the labour force. However, in contrast to what the Minister of Labour has said, it is these selfsame government institutions and their associate enterprises which, on the pretext of modernizing and whittling down the size of the public-sector workforce are each year making thousands of workers redundant and replacing them with subcontracted workers via companies created by actual government officials.

On the subject of wages, Government of Ecuador in complicity with the employers, agreed this year on what I would call fraudulent wage increases for private-sector workers, while for state employees the Government imposed, via the National Wage Council, fictitious increases, once again cheating workers of their legitimate aspirations. This is how the Government is violating the principles of free collective bargaining, which has now become a mere formula, given that one of its main components, the wage pact, is fixed unilaterally by government decision. In this sphere, the only thing that is true is that the wealth of Ecuador is still concentrated in the hand of a few businessmen and corrupt rulers and the only copious wage increases we see are those decreed in favour of those occupying top government jobs.

Our Government affirms that it has started a widespread campaign for the elimination of child labour, for which it has received the support of the ILO, and this is worthy of praise. However, it is a contradiction to undertake such action when on the other hand it is leaving the parents unemployed. The Government, through the Ministry of Labour, allows state institutions to lay off workers, supported by administrative resolutions issued by the labour inspectorates which are true legal aberrations and which constitute an outrage against the human rights of state workers. This situation, plus the grave economic crisis afflicting our country, has generated what I would call a true haemorrhage of people leaving Ecuador to go to neighbouring countries in search of some type of subsistence. I would urge these countries to make their immigration rules a little more flexible so that our compatriots can carry out their work in the framework of the law.

I would also like to take this opportunity to denounce the serious pressure that the Government and employers of Ecuador are bringing to bear on our National Congress, to introduce reforms to the new Social Security Act in order to do away with the principles of solidarity and universality, thereby opening up the way for total privatization.

Finally, on behalf of the Ecuadorian workers, I would very much like to express our solidarity with

the Palestinian workers as they battle to achieve a free and sovereign State which will allow them to develop fully in peace.

Original Arabic: Mr. GHANDOUR (*Workers' delegate, Sudan*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! On behalf of the Sudanese Workers Trade Union Federation and on my behalf, I should like to congratulate the President and the Vice-President on their election to preside over the 90th Session of the ILO Conference. We are confident that with your vast experience you will lead the deliberations of this meeting to a successful conclusion.

We should like to express our appreciation of the Report of the Director-General on implementation of the programme of the ILO during the period 2000-01. We also appreciate the efforts of the Director-General, the Board of Governors and all the staff of the Office who collaborated on its preparation. Nevertheless, much remains to be done, particularly in the domains of employment and the fight against poverty, especially in many of the countries of the south. We also commend the Report's reference to promotion of the tripartism of the social dialogue in many countries.

Our experience with the tripartite dialogue in Sudan has been an example which could be followed by others, particularly the experience of the Higher Council on Wages, established in 1991, which includes the Government, employers and workers, and is unprecedented in our country. Agreement was reached this year on a 10 per cent increase in all wages, reflecting a real increase, while inflation was at its lowest in the last 20 years. The tripartite dialogue has achieved improvements in health insurance and social protection.

The agenda of this year's session has been well chosen. Strengthening the cooperatives is a priority with regard to price stabilization and combating poverty. However we must state that free trade has been a mortal blow to the cooperatives. Therefore the organization must study means to reinforce the cooperatives and make them more efficient, to enable them to achieve their goals. The ILO must also take into consideration the present concerns of the international trade union movement, in its defence of workers rights in the face of the huge negative effects of the present prevailing form of globalization which daily brings about increased unemployment and poverty.

The other important topic on the agenda is the informal sector, also a fortunate choice as a vital and important issue. In some countries of the Third World, the informal sector represents over 90 per cent of the jobs and contributes over 20 per cent of the national economy of many developing countries. It therefore needs the care and attention of the ILO, especially as regards technical cooperation, capacity development and social protection.

The question of work-related accidents and occupational diseases is no less important than the preceding ones, and we hope that discussing it will help improve conditions for workers throughout the world.

Last July, elections were held in the trade union movement in Sudan. Proposals were put forward to introduce amendments to the labour and public service laws, to bring them into line with the new economic realities. Agreement was reached with the social partners on the creation of the tripartite committee to study the proposed amendments. We hope to receive

the assistance of the ILO in this connection, which we have missed for the past 13 years as a result of the erroneous political standards applied in the provision of such assistance. We feel that there has been an improvement but we nevertheless hope for standards that are more equitable.

Events in the occupied Palestinian territories, the massacres, demolition of homes, destruction of the infrastructure, siege and starvation should shame humankind. History will record that at the beginning of this century the world remained silent in the face of the barbaric actions of the Israeli occupation, the repression of a defenceless people aspiring to establish their independent state on their land, which is a legitimate desire. However, double international standards and attempts to equate the butcher and the victim make the situation impossible, and in some cases even encourage the butcher.

Although we remain firmly convinced that the optimum choice is peace, this cannot be achieved unless Israel is obliged to renounce its occupation of the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the occupied Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shabaa Farms and a sovereign Palestinian state is established with Al-Quds as its capital. Only then can there be any talk of peace. The support, infrastructure and so on referred to in the Report will not change reality and will not lead to peace, and are nothing but empty words so long as the massacres and destruction continue.

We must also reiterate the importance of lifting the blockade of Iraq which has brought about the death of thousands of women and children and older people, and we also stress the importance of lifting the blockade of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Sudan.

In conclusion, I wish this Conference all success in its work.

Mr. KHAN (*Workers' delegate, Bangladesh*) — I congratulate the President and three Vice-Presidents on their election at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. We in the Workers' group firmly feel that the Director-General's call, in his Report, deserves serious consideration at all levels of national and international policy formulation mechanisms. The deliberations on the issues raised in the Report should not rest with the Conference but should be followed up through social dialogue. Today, the world is in the process of globalization. We are told that globalization has a purpose — to improve the quality of life of the working people and create employment opportunities. It is time to take stock as to whether these objectives are being met. In the least developed countries (LDCs), workers are being displaced in almost all sectors, and it has not been possible to create new employment opportunities in the formal sector. As a result, unemployment has increased and the quality of employment in both the informal and formal sectors has deteriorated. The ILO's efforts at ensuring decent work and the observance of fundamental principles and rights at work remain unfulfilled in most parts of the world. Women and children have been hit worst in the process. The international community is called upon to ensure that there is more equitable distribution of the benefits of globalization. Unless the LDCs get a fair share of investment and better terms of trade, they will be further marginalized. Poverty and the denial of basic rights will give rise to various problems which will spill over to developed parts of the world.

Even in this situation, the approach of the Bretton Woods system remains "business as usual". In the name of economic efficiency and global competitiveness, it is encouraging policies which are ignoring the causes of the poor and directly those workers who have always supported the cause of economic efficiency.

Workers are being displaced for the sake of leaner governments and market economies by reducing the size of the public sector. There are many factors which contribute to economic efficiency. Targeting only public-sector employment does not provide the answer to economic efficiency, nor has it been proved to be rewarding in any way. To be honest, globalization has so far benefited only a few and caused misery for the rest.

The ILO is the only institution in the United Nations system which involves the social partners in policies and programmes. I urge the ILO Governing Body and Director-General to take the lead in providing a more humane approach to global development issues and enterprise-level matters so as to address the current crisis of confidence over world trade and employment prevailing among the working class as well as broad segments of the population.

I particularly urge the ILO to expand its technical cooperation programmes for skill development and its efforts to ensure decent work. This should include programmes to help improve productivity and efficiency at the enterprise level. Otherwise, the danger exists that more enterprises will be closed down in the face of world competition, throwing more people out of work. This should also include the programmes to help develop the ability of social partners to participate in social dialogue more effectively so that they can contribute to the process of formulating national policies and participate with a sense of belongingness in implementing them.

Before I conclude, I would like to stress the need to expand the ILO's efforts at eliminating the worst forms of child labour. I hope that the time-bound programme being initiated by the ILO will produce results. But until we are able to arrest child labour by reducing poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, we will not be able to succeed in our efforts. Thanks to the food for education programme and stipends for girl students initiated by the Government of Bangladesh under Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, thousands of poor parents have been able to withdraw their children from work and send them to school. So far, this has proved to be the most effective approach to combat child labour. The ILO and other international bodies working for the elimination of child labour may consider supporting the programmes.

Allow me to conclude by affirming our solidarity with the just struggle by our Palestinian brothers and sisters in the occupied Arab territories.

Original Spanish: Mr. GOICHEA (*Workers' delegate, Uruguay*) — We would like to begin by saying that our statement will focus on the national situation of our country but is also connected with what is happening in today's world as a whole.

Uruguay is undergoing one of the most serious economic crises in its history, without any prospect of short-term improvement, and it is affecting more and more sectors of society. More than 250,000 Uruguayans are unemployed, 600,000 have employment prob-

lems (homeworkers, self-employed people, those working in the informal sector, etc.) and most of them are women and young people.

In the last 12 years, more than 100,000 jobs were lost in industry, and the jobs that were created at lower salaries are more precarious and non-unionized, in areas such as security services, cleaning, work in supermarkets and chain stores, and dock work.

Not only industrial workers are affected. Thousands of shops have closed in recent years, hundreds of national industries have disappeared, thousands of agricultural producers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises and family-owned companies have gone out of business. Public and private health schemes have suffered, State social security services are being dismantled, education has fewer resources and teachers' salaries are abysmally low.

Last year public expenditure was cut by US\$200 million, including US\$56 million on housing alone. With houses being built under a cooperative scheme and with complete return of investment to the State, 30,000 jobs were lost in construction and related industries.

In April there was a fiscal adjustment involving more taxes and further reduction in expenditure, meaning that the people would have to pay the US\$230 million demanded of the Government by the World Bank as condition for offering a loan covering the deficit. In March 2000, the President of Uruguay, Mr. Jorge Batlle, imposed fresh taxes, even though he had re-affirmed in his electoral campaign that this would not be the case, saying that the people of Uruguay could not bear a single tax more. Despite weeping publicly on television, his speech was held against a background of power cuts and popular protest.

Last year we had four work stoppages with strong support, not just from the workers protesting and peacefully resisting the harsh economic policy that has been implemented. This year, on 24 January, an important, well-supported march went ahead. On 16 April there was a huge mobilization of industry, retired persons and students. On 12 June we had a 24-hour work stoppage, convened by the trade union movement and other people's organizations. The central platform was against the present economic policy of the Government and in favour of decent work and salaries. There is no doubt that the Government has been in confrontation with most of the organizations of our country. In the mobilization of 16 April, claims were made for a platform for all representative social and political organizations. The Government replied by offering a public Internet forum so that people could express their concerns. I shall refrain from comment.

We are a dependent Third World country, heavily indebted owing to the actions of successive governments. Our main resources are our agriculture and our people. Agriculture is disappearing and our people, especially the young and highly qualified, are leaving in droves, becoming our country's greatest export.

The first world subsidizes and protects its industry by imposing import quotas. In Uruguay we have no protection: we have a free market which is completely deregulated and a systematically open border.

The international policy of our Government is both aimless and hopeless. It is undermining MERCOSUR and breaking off relations with Cuba so as not to offend the United States. Cuba is being condemned for

human rights violations, but in Uruguay we still do not know the whereabouts of hundreds of Uruguayans who disappeared during the last civil military dictatorship.

We welcome and firmly support the promotion of the ILO core Conventions as well as the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998, but there is no doubt that it is the responsibility of all sectors in every country to give effect to these instruments containing the fundamental labour standards.

Today we have more and more unemployment, less job security, more imposed flexibility, more marginalization and inequity, all of which violate lasting peace and human dignity. Now more than ever, we need to step up our efforts, strengthen our will and assume responsibility for the fact that globalization, among its negative effects, promotes greater exploitation of labour. In particular, the exploitation of child labour grows more and more horrific. There is also heavy discrimination against women, including on racial and religious grounds, and even trade unions are blighted with this.

In conclusion, the Uruguayan trade union movement will continue to make demands and raise its voice for the construction of a country where social justice reigns, for a more humane and peaceful world, and for development in harmony with the environment.

We would like to express our appreciation to the representatives of governments and employers for listening. We send our greetings to the workers of the trade union movement worldwide.

Original French: Mr. JURCA (Workers' delegate, Romania) — Allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Romanian workers to convey my sincerest congratulations to the President of this session of the Conference and to the Vice-Presidents for the unanimous confidence that has been placed in them and for the competent and rigorous manner with which they have conducted our discussions.

As a representative of the workers of one of the founding countries of the International Labour Organization, I note that the struggle to attain the strategic objectives of the Organization, as defined by the Director-General's Report, is on track. I can only congratulate the Director-General and his team for the excellent Report that has been submitted to the Conference.

Against this backdrop it is an honour for me to pay tribute to a former Minister of Foreign Affairs from Romania and one of the founding members of the League of Nations and I am talking of Nicolae Titulescu.

The implementation of the four strategic objectives that are mentioned in the field of labour relations, employment of contracts and social dialogue, constitutes, for the trade unions of Romania and the workers they represent, long-term priority action. Since they have benefited from the expert advice of ILO teams from Geneva, Budapest and Bucharest, representative confederations in Romania have been, and are still the main players in the tripartite process of redrafting the legislative framework that affects the social sphere: This is all the more true since Romania has declared that integration into NATO and the European Union are priorities and these priorities, among other conditions, presupposes a considerable

effort at harmonization with community legislation. Nevertheless, we draw attention to the numerous situations in which the Government still treats the role and position of the social partners as insignificant.

Our country has ratified 52 ILO Conventions, of which 46 are in force, and others are in the process of obtaining parliamentary approval. However, the number of ratifications is less important when the effort to promote and ensure the implementation of standards laid down in the Conventions is sometimes sluggish or non-existent. In this connection, I would like to mention something which concerns us greatly, that is to say the increasing number of cases of harassment of trade union militants because of their trade union activities, particularly in the privatized sector, which frequently results in their dismissal. We did not remain inactive when faced with this. The ILO was informed, and so were the international confederations. Lawsuits at national and international level have been supported by the trade unions and by federal and confederation bodies. In this respect, we are worried by the considerable amount of time that elapses between the issuing of a court decision and the implementation of the wage earner's rights.

On the other hand, the population is facing the consequences of the agreements signed by the Romanian Government with international financial organizations which in economic and social terms have taken the form of a fall in domestic output, increased taxation, endemic corruption, a rising number of dismissals and unprecedented social marginalization. Every year has been marked by massive dismissals. This year is no exception. In the following months about 14,000 wage earners will be made redundant. The lack of alternative jobs explains why there is no social consultation in such situations. Compensatory payments are no solution to rising unemployment.

Nevertheless, one success has been recorded — the adoption of the new Labour Code in a tripartite framework. The Code, which has been devised along modern European lines, also owes its success to the technical assistance provided by the ILO, and I would like to take this opportunity once again to thank the ILO warmly for the excellent job it has done. It is hoped that the other draft laws connected with the Labour Code will be drafted by the autumn in the same climate of cooperation with the ILO.

All this has been made possible only by a relentless, stubborn struggle, taking the form of trade union protests, as well as bipartite and tripartite discussions. For six months, up until last week, there has been a struggle supported by two confederations in Romania. Throughout half of the month of May 2002 trade unionists were out in the streets protesting. Fortunately wisdom and the spirit of dialogue prevailed, so that the dispute has now been resolved. All workers and the entire population will benefit from these gains.

We hope that, in the future, the Government will be quicker to meet the legitimate claims of our workers.

We, the trade union confederations, will be vigilant and, if necessary, will put up a fight, and we assure you that we will not renege on mutual commitments.

Original Spanish: Ms. LEGUIZAMON (Workers' delegate, Paraguay) — Paraguay and its tragedy could perhaps be the heading of this report that I am submitting to you on behalf of all the workers of my country. Paraguay, an enclave in the heart of South

America, is rich in history, but I think even richer in the numerous tragedies that it has undergone throughout its existence.

Even today, when the world is basically back on track, Paraguay is simply stumbling along, unable to understand that the civilized development of any society can only happen when there are proper messages of coexistence, tolerance and respect for human rights from the highest spheres of power. That is not the case in Paraguay. There are numerous cases of abuse of the fundamental rights of all the workers in our country. It is *our* duty to denounce that, as union leaders, just as it is our duty to interpret properly the feelings of our members.

We denounce the absolute lack of will on the part of the Paraguayan Government to investigate, follow up on and settle the grave cases of trade union persecution perpetrated against organized workers in the private and public sectors, where such acquired rights as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are ignored.

We denounce the fact that labour problems and trade union issues are increasingly being taken to the courts. This is in no way to the benefit of the workers, given the fact that the trials are lengthy, costly and never-ending, and are very often handled by judges who are clearly ignorant of laws, treaties, Conventions and international agreements and act manifestly against the workers, and indeed against the conscience of those people who believe in the separation of powers. If judges were selected by competition, there would be no subjugation of the rights of any person in our society. This is a question of fundamental human rights, as we have just said.

We denounce the fact that reform processes in our country are totally debased. The privatization process which began with the implementation of Law No. 1615 of September 2000, which has since been revoked after a clash between farmers and trade unions, would have privatized companies such as EPERT, ANTELCO, CORPOSANA and the railways. In each case there were many instances of corruption. These privatizations were carried out without external audits, without consensus from the working sector and with numerous delays. The rail workers have no contracts of employment and have not received wages for three months. ANTELCO has also done away with contracts of employment for 1,500 workers, and no labour emergency programme has been set up, despite the fact that funds were budgeted for it. As a result there has been an increase in unemployment and underemployment.

Added to that, laws and decrees have been adopted under the guise of administrative rationalization which simply eliminate or cut back on the trade union rights of public employees, including pensioners.

Worst of all is the threat of privatization of our water, hydraulic and hydro-electric resources, social security and the little that remains of the national petroleum sector, under the pretext of globalization or modernization of these companies. The most powerful circles are simply robbing us of our sacred and strategic resources which are so important to our identity. We workers, as representatives of the people, denounce this. We are the ones that will eventually have to pay the price for the Government's ineffectiveness.

The organized workers of Paraguay cannot ignore the vital importance that the presence in our country

of a legal expert from the ILO has had, and continues to have. The legal adviser can see in situ the trials of our trade union leaders, who are now deprived of their freedom. Oddly enough, the people who are in fact responsible for the acts in question are not being brought to the trial of these trade unionists. We draw the attention of all our trade union brothers and sisters at this great Conference to the fact that the persecution of trade union activists is increasing. We are the last bastion before criminal globalization ends up imposing its sway worldwide and condemning our planet to frustrations without end so that His Majesty the market can prevail above all other noble concepts of humanity. This is how we, the Paraguayans, see the situation because apart from the economic difficulties our people are facing, the will to win, the hope that exists the length and breadth of our country, as well as our insistence on the process of social dialogue to be promoted by the workers and employers of our country with the support of the ILO, mean we still have the strength to fight for peace with social justice honourable democracy, and for the intensive development of our growing production capacity. We certainly hope that the progressive and responsible Paraguayan workers and employers will succeed in building a society of national freedom and development.

The Paraguayan State now has the floor, but not for lies, impunity, double and triple talk. History will judge us in the end.

Ms. LWIN (*Workers' delegate, Myanmar*) — It is an honour and a profound pleasure for me to have this opportunity to address the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference. As a Worker's delegate from the Union of Myanmar, first may I congratulate the President on his election to preside over this important gathering. We have complete confidence in you and hope that you will steer this Conference in the right direction to achieve its aims.

In the Union of Myanmar a number of industrial zones have emerged. Thanks to the encouragement and support of the Government, there has been a gradual increase in the various types of industries and establishments within these industrial zones, owned by Myanmar nationals and foreign entrepreneurs. This is one advantage of the market-oriented economic system which has been embraced by our Government. Consequently, the private sector of the economy has grown to such an extent that it can now provide enormous employment opportunities for jobseekers and I myself am one of the beneficiaries of those opportunities.

We are aware that certain allegations have been made concerning the violation of workers' rights in the workplace. I myself work in a privately owned government industry with a sizeable workforce and am fully cognizant of the situation at the workplace. As a Workers' delegate I wish to state categorically that these allegations are totally untrue.

I would like to point out to this Conference that workers in Myanmar are represented within their respective factories. They can take up their grievances through workers' welfare associations at factory level consisting of workers' representatives and management. Moreover, mechanisms also exist to guarantee the rights and privileges of workers granted under existing labour laws.

Workers in Myanmar benefit from fair labour practices. Management and workers strive together to

achieve industrial peace, beneficial for both sides. Seen from a broader perspective, labour-management relations are good and one of the driving forces behind the economic success of the nation.

The Government is attempting to create a peaceful, modern and developed nation. My delegation is pleased to inform that the targets for short-term economic plans have been reached, despite economic sanctions. This is primarily due to the concerted efforts of all those involved — workers, employers and the Government.

We were greatly dismayed to see that economic sanctions were imposed on Myanmar on political grounds. In fact the sanctions have caused more damage to the workers than to the Government. The closure of hundreds of factories due to these sanctions have caused thousands of lay-offs. The direct negative effect has fallen on us, the workers. Since early 2001 about 100 textile factories have been closed down and about 50,000 workers have lost their jobs. If we include the families of these jobless workers and their dependants, more than 250,000 have been deprived of their means of subsistence.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that these economic sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible so as to make way for faster, economic growth, the fruits of which will be enjoyed by the entire working population of Myanmar.

Mr. GIUSEPPI (*Workers' delegate, Trinidad and Tobago*) — Greetings from the National Trade Union Centre of Trinidad and Tobago to the President and all delegates of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference.

On behalf of the National Trade Union Centre of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish to congratulate the Director-General and his entire staff for the comprehensive Report and all other documents that were prepared and delivered to the esteemed delegates. I continue to be pleased with your high level of efficiency and professionalism. I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate all participants to the 90th Session for the keen interest that they have displayed in the deliberations of the work of this universally indispensable institution.

We wish to urge all of you to continue and take your responsibilities for ILO Conventions and standards with the serious approach that these matters deserve. We thank the ILO for the new impetus in the fight against child labour and the promotion of decent work.

We, the people of the West Indies, know full well the devastating effects of forced labour and slavery. The challenge, however, is to implement the full meaning of this major declaration of human rights. These issues are rapidly becoming more important in the face of a relentless effort by globalization to emasculate trade union rights. Globalization, as presented by some, seems to be described as some sort of entity that offers freedom and rights for the majority of the people of this global neighbourhood. Although one may have to concede that globalization is a sad reality, in no way can anyone conclude that this phenomenon has contributed to the overall well-being of the vast majority of working people throughout the world, particularly, the working people of developing societies, including the Caribbean.

Globalization is really a continuation of structural adjustment policies without a human face and without

guaranteed rights for workers. In fact, several employers in our region have raised serious concerns about the negative effects globalization is having on their businesses. The invasion by foreign capital has an adverse effect not only on the small and medium business sector but also on the environment and especially on industrial relations principles and practices with its usual spin-offs, lay-offs, contracting out, etc. The cases of Nestlé and Lever Trinidad International demonstrate this trend. The type of influence these transnationals can wield is sometimes frightening.

Let us look at the transnational company, Coca Cola, which took over a large local firm. During the transaction and up to the final day of this takeover, not one day of production was lost. Coca Cola acquired land, factory, equipment, labour and the right to produce this local firm's brand of soft drinks in addition to their own Coca Cola products. The result in terms of industrial relations fall-out was that Coca Cola got the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago to agree with their submission that they did not have to honour the existing collective agreement, that the union's status as a recognized bargaining agent was no longer valid, that the workers once again had to seek the right to recognition and collective bargaining and that Coca Cola could not be considered the successor company. To us, that represents a serious violation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 90). This is a direct attack on workers' fundamental rights and freedoms and a violation of sacred Conventions.

How can a financial transaction between two employers negate the social norms and contract provisions of working people? Such abuse of people's rights has increased the fears of the so-called benefits of globalization. The workers are asking, "Who benefits from these policies of globalization?" On another note, in terms of the politics of the Caribbean — and I must refer to my country — the labour movement needs to have a much greater say, especially in areas that affect the social conditions of the working majority. Some of the political systems that presently exist

in these nation States have become irrelevant and put our politicians in a state of limbo. The ILO must examine the process of political and social evolution which has taken place in these young nation States and encourage and assist the peoples' movement towards constitutional reform where such reform will produce more supporters of social justice, social dialogue and true participation. The social sectors must have a better say in the debates and discussions that affect their existence. Labour must continue to agitate for good governance and the full recognition of civil society.

This approach and policy will rid us of the backward and dangerous practices emanating from the ethnic, racial divide played upon by some politicians. The existing colonial political structures which were created in another place and time and were originally designed to separate our people are now incompatible with our modern civil societies. The rule of the minority can no longer be tolerated. People must live in a society where they have the right to participate in government and politicians achieve their stated goals of good governance.

In closing, I would like to thank the international community and all participants at this Conference and assure them that the National Trade Union Centre of Trinidad and Tobago will continue to unreservedly support the ideals and programmes of the ILO. Our organization has had an excellent working relationship with the Caribbean Office of the ILO, located in Port-of-Spain in my country. On 29 May 2002 we jointly staged a two-day seminar on pension plans. We recently discussed a very interesting proposal for the privatization of social security and were able to use our influence with the Minister to gain reassurances that he will not implement the IMF proposals on pension reforms.

In conclusion, I look forward to the adoption of more resolutions and new Conventions that will enhance the rights of workers all over the world, but, most importantly, I make a special plea for all of us not to be resolutionary, but revolutionary.

(The Conference adjourned at 5.45 p.m.)

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