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Presidents: Mr. Wamalwa and Mr. Wojcik

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

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

*Original French:* Mr. BOTI (*Minister of Civil Service, Labour, Social Security and Occupational Integration, Central African Republic*) — First I would like, on behalf of the delegation accompanying me to this session and in a personal capacity, most warmly to congratulate Mr. Michael Christopher Wamalwa, Vice-President and Minister for National Reconstruction of Kenya on his brilliant election as President of this Conference.

My congratulations also go to the Officers of the Conference whose valuable assistance is vital for the complete success of our Conference.

I should also like to take this opportunity to convey the congratulations of the national transitional government of my country to Mr. Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO on his brilliant reappointment for a further five-year term of office which will start on 4 March 2004. His reappointment bears witness to his full support for the ideals of our Organization and also to the results of the dynamism he has imparted to this body since he was first elected.

Please allow me, on behalf of the President of the Central African Republic, Major General François Bozize and of Prime Minister and head of the transitional government, Professor Abel Goumba, to join the eminent speakers who have preceded me on this rostrum in conveying our greetings and thanks to the Swiss people and, above all, the population of the canton of Geneva for the excellent reception and traditional hospitality which, as always, they have extended to the various delegations to the Conference.

Since 15 March 2003, the date of a sudden burst of patriotism which ended a dictatorial regime, my country, the Central African Republic, has been run by a national transitional government.

Although in theory any seizure of power by force must be condemned, it must be noted that the situation in the Central African Republic cannot be interpreted in this way, since this popular change-over is of a quite different nature and the new government consists of a coalition between the vigorous elements of the nation and its army.

The aim of this coalition is to end what appeared to be the irremediable long-term destitution and extreme poverty with which the whole population of the

Central African Republic has been desperately struggling for more than ten years.

This transition is not putting a stop to the ongoing process of democratization, on the contrary, since it is accompanied by a deadline, January 2005, when elections must be held.

For that very reason, the workers' organizations of the Central African Republic, which are keen to make their contribution to national reconstruction in order to secure greater social justice, have decided to participate in the government and to set precise, measurable objectives which should be met by the end of the transitional period. These are: the reform of national labour legislation, including inter alia, the updating of the Labour Code, the review of legislation to see if it complies with ILO Recommendations or Conventions ratified by my country and combating the most intolerable forms of child labour; social protection, first and foremost the reorganization of the social security authority and the promotion of health and safety at work, with special emphasis going to the combating of HIV/AIDS at the workplace; the formulation of an explicit, consensual policy to promote employment; social dialogue with a view to active partnership in the world of work; bringing wages under control and curbing the number of civil servants so that the central government can meet its financial commitments.

The Report of the ILO's Director-General, *Working out of poverty*, is highly topical and a rich fund of ideas for our developing countries.

Once again, this Report gives the ILO a central role in the international system and strengthens its credibility. On behalf of the Government of my country, I therefore endorse the analysis set out in the Report for two main reasons: first, the ILO's action using a variety of approaches to stamp out poverty is likely to increase the visibility of the role and the socio-economic standing of labour ministers in the eyes of development partners, including the Bretton Woods institutions, which tend to deal solely with ministers responsible for finances and the economy; secondly, the question of productive, remunerative work for all categories of the working population will be given prominence in various strategies for combating poverty and will no longer be considered to be a cross-cutting issue without a specific solution.

Lastly, I wish to express the gratitude of my country's Government to the ILO's Regional Office for Africa, whose technical assistance is decisive when my department is faced with choosing between priority objectives.

The Central African Republic remains profoundly attached to the values of the ILO and it will continue

to support it, as it has done for over 40 years, in order to achieve lasting social peace in the world.

Mr. NG (*Minister for Manpower, Singapore*) — On behalf of the Singapore delegation, I would like to convey our heartiest congratulations to the President on his election to head the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. We would also like to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO on his re-election for a second term. This reflects the members' resounding confidence in and endorsement of his leadership.

The severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS virus outbreak, poses a serious threat both to the physical health of residents and to the economies of affected countries. As at the end of May, the SARS corona virus had affected more than 8,000 people worldwide and caused the deaths of more than 700 people. The ILO has estimated that countries directly affected by SARS, including China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, may lose more than 30 per cent of their travel and tourism employment. The rest of the world will face a 5 per cent loss in these sectors.

Singapore is happy to have been taken off the WHO list of areas of recent local transmission of SARS. However, we will continue to maintain the highest level of vigilance against SARS. I take this opportunity to share Singapore's experience and ongoing efforts in our battle against SARS. SARS has seriously affected tourist arrivals through Singapore. Domestic spending fell, resulting in sharp declines in retail, food, transport and other related businesses. To alleviate the SARS fallout on affected countries and industries, the Singapore Government has put in place a relief package worth 230 million Singapore dollars (S\$), which includes tax and fee rebates, levy reductions and enhanced training grants to reduce business costs.

The main battle against SARS is fought at the public health front. We have adopted a strategy of "detect, isolate and contain" so that SARS victims are quickly sent to designated hospitals for treatment. Persons in contact with the victims are traced and quarantined in their homes for ten days under home quarantine orders. Those quarantined, including foreign workers, are paid a daily allowance of up to S\$70 to make up for loss of income.

However, to contain SARS and its consequences a concerted national effort is required on multiple fronts. At work we have distributed detailed advice to employers and workers, including to foreign workers in their own languages, explaining measures to protect themselves against SARS, how to avoid infection and where to seek medical attention if they fall sick. At our borders we have installed thermal sensors to screen the temperatures of persons to limit the spread of SARS in and out of Singapore. Foreign workers from SARS-affected areas also undergo a ten day observation period and receive appropriate medical treatment, if found to be unwell.

Public-spirited Singaporeans have started a courage fund to provide financial support for victims of SARS. As at the end of May this year the fund has exceeded S\$10 million and is still growing. The three social partners in Singapore – the Singapore National Trades Union Congress, the Singapore Business Federation and the Ministry of Manpower – have issued a joint statement to support cost-reduction measures by

countries badly affected by the SARS outbreak in order to preserve jobs.

I would like to now address some ILO matters. I am pleased to inform this meeting that following Singapore's ratification of the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), a tripartite declaration was jointly issued with our social partners to affirm our commitment to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women embodied in the Convention. In addition, a code of responsible employment practices, issued by the employers' federation and trades unions in December last year, further reinforced the mutual desire to promote and observe responsible employment practices in the workplace, regardless of race, religion, age, gender, marital status, disability or factors not relevant to the job.

Singapore is encouraged to note that the ILO is maintaining a dialogue with the Myanmar Government on the elimination of forced labour in the country. Singapore is hopeful that this dialogue will pave the way for Myanmar to comply with the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), dealing with both forced labour and the promotion of decent work.

The ILO has in recent years placed emphasis on the initiative for member States to formulate a national plan for decent work. The basic notion of decent work is productive work in which the fundamental rights of the worker are protected, income is enhanced and sufficient social safeguards are provided. These principles are consistent with Singapore's philosophy of national manpower development and management. We support the ILO's initiative and we embrace the principles of decent work in our manpower policies.

The Singapore delegation looks forward to a fruitful discussion on the various issues on the agenda of the ILC. I am confident that this Session of the Conference, under the able leadership of the President, will be a highly rewarding one.

Ms. CHAO (*Secretary of Labor, United States*) — It is a pleasure to be here representing the United States at the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I, too, would like to offer my congratulations to the Vice-President of Kenya for his election as President of the Conference.

I would like to note that the Director-General's Report, *Working out of poverty*, addresses one of the most difficult challenges facing the world community today.

One line in the introduction of that Report captures that challenge succinctly. It reads, "People in poverty go through each day with the will to survive, but without the support and possibilities to move up the ladder of opportunity". It is our job as Ministers of Labour to help make that ladder accessible. This morning, I would like to share with you the approach the United States is taking to help child labourers and those whose lives are imperilled by HIV/AIDS to reach for and climb that ladder.

Since 1995, the United States Government has provided more than US\$313 million to fund international projects aimed at preventing and eliminating child labour in 51 countries. These projects are designed to remove children from hazardous work environments and exploitative conditions, so that we can provide educational opportunities for these children, conduct research and raise awareness about the issue of child labour.

I would like to refer to one form of child labour which deserves special attention, namely the heart-breaking plight of child soldiers. An estimated 300,000 children around the world are involved in armed conflicts. These children are brutalized and forced to serve as combatants, guards, spies and prostitutes. They are robbed of their innocence, placed in harm's way on a daily basis and deprived of any hope for a normal life. This is one form of exploitation that no member of the community of civilized nations can ever tolerate. And that is why, in May 2003, I convened an international conference in Washington D.C. that brought together over 500 representatives from nations and agencies throughout the world committed to ending this horror. We are pleased that the Director-General himself and other ILO officials joined us for this milestone of a conference.

At that conference, I announced a new \$13 million Labor Department global initiative to prevent and rehabilitate child soldiers. This includes \$7 million funded through the ILO, a \$3 million project to address the educational needs of former child soldiers in Uganda and a \$3 million educational initiative to help child soldiers in Afghanistan.

This is just one example of the United States Government's commitment to work with all nations to eliminate this practice and to save children from being forced to become child soldiers, and the terrible life that that entails. I am gratified that the ILO has dedicated tomorrow, 12 June 2003, as the second annual World Day Against Child Labour and that the plight of children trafficked into armed conflict will be a focus of observation. Although we cannot give child soldiers their childhood back, we must help them to rebuild their lives.

Another tragedy that is preventing vulnerable workers from accessing the ladder of opportunity is that of HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is one of the greatest social, labour and economic challenges of our time and has tragically taken the lives of more than 20 million people. This has tremendous implications for economic development and deprives many workers of the most productive years of their lives.

I am proud to say that the United States, under the leadership of President George W. Bush, has launched an unprecedented emergency relief effort to fight the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. President Bush has committed \$15 billion over the next five years to turn the tide against HIV in the most afflicted nations in the Caribbean and Africa. The goals of the initiatives are: to prevent 7 million new infections; treat 2 million HIV-infected people; and care for 10 million HIV-infected individuals and AIDS orphans. As part of this effort, the Labor Department is fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic with a variety of strategies to help employers and workers. The Department funds HIV/AIDS prevention education in the workplace. It also provides technical assistance to develop non-discrimination policies towards those workers afflicted with HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the \$15 billion that I have talked about already, the Department of Labor has already provided \$19.5 million for 17 HIV/AIDS projects in 16 countries. An additional \$10 million has been designated for this programme and we are pleased to be working in partnership with the ILO on expanding HIV/AIDS programmes. We expect to do more as the Department implements the President's Emergency AIDS Relief Plan. Both of the initiatives that I have

outlined today, i.e. eliminating the use of child soldiers in armed conflict and helping HIV/AIDS-afflicted workers, can make a real difference for the world's children and for the world's workers. I thank the member States working with us on these initiatives and encourage my colleagues at the ILO to join us in supporting these very worthy goals.

*Original French: Ms. DE VITS (Workers' delegate, Belgium)* — The international financial institutions' income will lead to growth, growth will lead to jobs, jobs will lead to poverty reduction. We all know this incantation but it does not work.

Poverty is still with us. This reality is a failure on the part of the human community. It is an insult to the dignity of millions of people and those people are living not in a global village but in hell.

And yet, there is no shortage of political commitment. Why do we see today that they have remained dead letter? What is going wrong?

The International Labour Organization is probably in one of the best positions to tackle this issue. It has an essential tool to overcome the problem of development and poverty; that tool is decent work.

The Director-General and the President of the Conference attach an importance to this which demonstrates their understanding and I thank them for this. The word "decent" is clearly of the greatest significance. Work needs to be adequately paid and of quality.

It is no use increasing work if this simply increases the number of poor workers, a phenomenon well known in certain countries and yet there is often no hesitation in holding up these countries, even imposing them, as development models.

When we see these men and women in poverty simply because they can no longer work because of their age, their health or other factors, is it only our pity we have for them, is it only charity we have to offer? Surely not. Even if that kind of help is sometimes needed, it is not enough. Work must also provide access to a social security system worthy of the name and properly financed. This is the decent work that we want all workers to have.

Integrating workers from the informal sector into the formal in line with the approach adopted at the Conference last year, is our first major challenge here and artificially moving informal workers to fit a definition of entrepreneurs, for us is far from being a magical solution.

The second challenge is to avoid adopting a minimalist approach. Let us build solidarities and not competition among poor people and among workers. There is no point in helping Peter out of poverty while we push Paul in; we must also be effective.

Let us recall the recent UNCTAD report. It is by improving the level of life generally in these countries and not via specific measures to the detriment of the most precarious sectors that the least developed countries will obtain the best results in their fight against extreme poverty.

To implement this decent work for all, the ILO, as we know, has a trump card: its standard-setting policy. We cannot weaken them. Our campaign for the ratification of the core Conventions must be successful. Standards do not slow down development, they are a condition for it. They are not a consequence, but a prerequisite. They make it possible for the dividends of debt reduction, or better market access, to be redis-

tributed to the advantage of those who at present have no access to wealth.

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization will, I am convinced, remember this.

As a Workers' delegate, I can say that trade unions are determined to promote decent work as a means of combating poverty. To fulfil our role, we expect the ILO to strengthen and not weaken our capacity to represent the poor. In certain countries represented here, we expect the murders of trade unionists to be stopped and the impunity to end. As a European Workers' representative, we expect that at the European Union level, the social security system will be strengthened. It is the proof that another kind of globalization, with greater solidarity, is possible. Trade and development cooperation must also be developed for a globalization which means development for all.

The government representatives will note that we have not forgotten their commitments made at the Social Development Summit and in the Millennium Declaration. Together with social partners and government bodies responsible for work and also for trade and finance, let us adopt an integrated approach, to ensure that our commitments are not just empty promises, let us make sure that decent work for all is more than the four little words in every speech.

*Original French:* Mr. BOISSON (*Employers' delegate, France*) — First of all, on behalf of the French Employers' delegation, I would like to congratulate President Wamalwa on the quality of the speech he delivered on Monday as we opened our discussion of the Director-General's Report.

I would also like to congratulate the Director-General on his brilliant re-election – his new five-year term of office is bodes very well indeed for the future of our institution – and on the work that he has presented to us, *Working out of poverty*.

Poverty has many facets; it is an intolerable injustice; it is an affront to personal dignity — a curse, as President Mbeki has just said; it acts as a break on, or even an obstacle to, economic and social development; and it has the potential of creating a social rift and fragmenting society.

Since it is clear that it is above all through work and job creation that we must combat poverty, who is better placed, who is more legitimate in this respect than the ILO? Nobody, because labour and employment are at the heart of our mandate.

Nonetheless, our legitimacy is not in our ability to make speeches but in our ability to act, to change the course of events. It is the virtue of tripartism which presupposes the close association of three words: tripartism, realism and responsibility. I think this is the meaning of the Director-General's remarks in the introduction to his Report when he writes "our experience on the ground is bringing that mandate to life throughout the world." Therefore, we fully approve the three guidelines he evoked on Monday, namely linking standards and technical cooperation, transferring budgets from headquarters to the regional offices, and taking into account the complexity of local situations.

As regards this crucial issue of links between work and poverty we should not address the question from an emotional aspect rather we should carry out serious studies and offer precise responses. We then have to measure the impact of these responses in the field and correct them accordingly.

I am convinced that globalization – in other words the development of trade at world level and technical progress – can and must provide solutions to combat poverty. But, on the one hand, I hear outright condemnations of a globalization that is unable to reduce unemployment.

On the other hand, I am sensitive to the more qualified discourse of President Wamalwa, who, while emphasizing the inequalities that can develop, indicates that globalization can bring opportunities and economic prosperity. Moreover, when listening to the President cite the example of his own country, Kenya, we understood that the type of government in power is a key factor in adapting globalization appropriately.

We should carry out an objective review of the conditions of globalization and the reasons why many countries can progress while others fail. I believe that this is a major input we expect from the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

National employers' organizations have a vital role to play to ensure the application of the ILO's programmes and objectives, particularly those relating to the development of the spirit of enterprise needed to create jobs and develop self-employment. Indeed, this is one of the responses to poverty and constitutes an important factor for integrating enterprises and workers into the formal economy.

In this respect, training, human resources development and skills acquisition are essential. Here, there is a joint responsibility borne by employers, governments and workers to ensure that education takes into account employment requirements. In France, we are currently conducting important negotiations on life-long training; we hope to conclude these negotiations before the summer.

As regards the integrated approach, which is of major importance to us, I would simply like to echo the words of our Vice-President, who said we cannot afford to fail.

Concerning the ongoing debate on occupational safety and health, French employers wish to see a genuine action plan which will redeploy all our resources with a view to increasing the safety of workers, wherever they may work.

I would like to conclude by stressing the exceptional opportunity that the ILO has to act at both ends of the spectrum: in the field, as close as it is possible to get to see what is really going on, by defining appropriate and adaptable policies which enable local players to directly tackle their problems and encourage them to assume their responsibilities; and at the very head of the Organization, by developing partnerships with the other international institutions, while respecting each of their mandates. The ILO can thus become a kind of catalyst for efficient multilateralism which could adapt to the changes that we are experiencing.

*(Mr. Wojcik takes the Chair.)*

Ms. EAGLE (*Minister for Disabled People, United Kingdom*) — May I congratulate the Director-General on his most thought-provoking Report. In the United Kingdom we welcome in particular the continued emphasis on employment, on decent work, as the best route out of poverty. Increasing the number of people in productive employment is crucial to meeting the two great challenges we face at the beginning of the twenty-first century: the challenge of the

demographic revolution and the challenge to eradicate poverty.

ILO data tell us that there were 180 million people unemployed at the end of last year, 20 million more than two years ago, and that a reversal of this trend is unlikely this year. In the United Kingdom we now have fewer than one million unemployed people and almost 75 per cent of our working age population in work, but we are not complacent. A major concern of the British Government is to find ways of helping as many people as possible back into work if they are able to work. That is the reality. We know that there is a huge number of economically inactive and unemployed people who do want to work in the United Kingdom, and we also face a demographic trend which makes it imperative to increase the proportion of people in productive work. That is why we have a commitment to full employment.

A recent United Nations report points to what it describes as the “population effect” on economic growth. Since 1970 developing countries with lower fertility and slower population growth have seen higher productivity, more savings and more productive investment. As a result they have registered faster economic growth.

Given a real choice poor people will have smaller families than their parents. This downturn in fertility at the micro level translates within a generation into potential economic growth at the macro level in the form of a large group of working age people supporting relatively fewer older and younger dependents. That creates a once and for all opportunity for growth.

A demographic window opens as the number of younger children decreases because of lower fertility, but it closes as the proportion of older people starts its rapid growth. This can be seen already in the experience of the “Asian Tigers” in the 1980s and the 1990s. While the proportion of their working age population started to increase as late as the mid-1970s, the pace of change was extremely rapid up to the 1990s.

Other regions are now entering this transition period. South Asia will reach its peak ratio of working age to dependent ages between 2015 and 2025. In Latin America and the Caribbean the relative increase in the working age population started at least five years earlier, but the proportional change has been less marked because of the wide disparities within countries and regions. The peak proportion in working ages will be reached in 2020 to 2030.

There is a similar mixed picture in North Africa, western Asia and central Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, only 11 countries are projected to reach their maximum working age proportion before 2050. But there is a new factor that has begun to operate. One of the most devastating consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is its disproportionate effect on the prime age population, raising the prospect of a missing generation in those countries. And as a result, for some countries the demographic window of opportunity might never open. So what is to be done?

Firstly, we must make work possible. The macro-economic framework is crucial, but we also need micro strategies for youth unemployment, for the long-term unemployed, for people with disabilities, for older workers to — ensure that everybody has the opportunity to work. Making work possible has to be the basis of a global employment strategy.

Secondly, we must make work pay. In the United Kingdom we have had to think through our social security policies to ensure that anyone who gets a job, part time or full time, will be better off than if they remained on social security benefits.

Thirdly, we must make work skilled. This is clearly crucial for all of us. To compete in the global economy people need access to education throughout their working lives.

Fourthly, we must make work safe. Everybody is entitled to a safe and healthy working environment.

And finally, as this year's Global Report makes clear, we have to make work fair. Are our labour market strategies fair to people from different ethnic minorities? To people with disabilities, to women, to people who are getting older? How do we achieve a truly inclusive labour market? Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. A job, work, is the best way out of poverty. We must redouble our efforts to achieve work for those who can work and security for those who cannot.

Lord BRETT (*Workers' delegate, United Kingdom*) — It gives me particular pleasure to appear at this rostrum with Mr. Wamalwa in the Chair. My congratulations to him and the Officers on their election to that important office.

As a United Kingdom Workers' delegate for the Trades Union Congress (TUC), I should like to congratulate the Director-General on this accomplished synthesis of the decent work strategy. We agree that the war against poverty and injustice is the only war worth fighting.

Yet, for all our work together in the ILO, globalization is not delivering social justice and respect for workers' rights. The TUC does not yell, “stop globalization, we want to get off”. Some aspects of globalization are irreversible. But its current form is not sustainable. We need global rules for a global economy. And so we welcome the Director-General's Report, *Working out of poverty*, because it makes explicit the links between workers' rights and empowerment, social dialogue and tripartism, democracy, good law and governance — nationally and internationally; public and occupational health, social security, education and training; poverty alleviation and sustainable and equitable development for the world.

What conclusion should we draw for future ILO action? It must continue a properly resourced campaign for universal ratification and implementation of the fundamental Conventions; and for coherence in the multilateral system. But if those standards deal with essential freedoms and equality, decent work also requires the key pillars of social and employment security; occupational safety and health; and active labour market policies which also provide for full employment.

Hence the importance of this year's session of the Conference. The Director-General's Report deals thoughtfully with the challenges that the informal economy presents to universal decent work. Markets cannot operate effectively without property rights and contract law. Nor can labour markets without establishing the rights and responsibilities of the parties in the employment relationship, essential to protection of working people and to secure employment. So the discussion on the scope of the employment relationship taking place at this Conference must succeed. And if we accept that a safe and healthy working

environment is also essential, then the general discussion based on an integrated approach must also succeed.

We should develop a new campaign for the ratification and implementation of those Conventions which go to the heart of full and secure employment and safety and health. We know that with adequate resources such campaigns can succeed. We also know that universal ratification and application of those Conventions would hasten our progress towards universal decent work.

The TUC supports broad social alliances to promote respect for international labour standards.

We do enter into strategic alliances with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), those which are genuinely committed to the implementation of labour standards, and accept the authority of the ILO. Civil dialogue, which includes other actors, is a valuable tool, but social dialogue and tripartism lie at the heart of sustainable protection, because they are based on the legitimacy of representation. So our work with companies and NGOs may indeed promote a culture of compliance with good law, and may also open up a space for social dialogue, but codes cannot replace the two guarantees of sustainable protection for working people and their families, namely the duty of governments to protect citizens through good law and the social dialogue necessary between employers and trade unions.

Democracy does not come from the good intentions of the elite, but from the involvement of the people and their rights to defend their own interests. Alternatives to democracy, including paternalism or so-called “enlightened dictatorship”, cannot offer real protection. Democracy, political and industrial, is the only way to transform positively and fundamentally the state of societies.

So trade unions have always had a part to play and have started from a human rights base. But we also know that social partnership is both a rights and a business case. It allows companies to flourish through long-term commitment to investment, quality, training, productivity and social dialogue. Yet companies which support it and want sustained improvements in rights and conditions in global supply chains are indeed undermined by the short-termism of those stock market analysts who cannot see beyond the next quarter's figures. I urge every enterprise that wishes to contribute to sustainable development, to join us in a public debate to challenge short-termism. Tell the stock markets, tell your stakeholders that you too demand a new measure of success – that the triple bottom line does matter.

Organizing is critical for workers to be able to protect their rights, for development and the fight against poverty. Together, with effective governance and strong trade unions can bring those excluded on the fringe of society into the mainstream. The best way for working people to advance themselves has been through forming unions. That provides the power to fuel democracy, dignity and prosperity.

Organizing the unorganized — in the formal and informal sectors — remains the key challenge in every country. The Report gives some of the many examples of good practice. It also explains the capacity constraints — particularly when unions of poorly paid formal economy workers try to reach out to their unorganized informal economy colleagues. Rather than pour funding mainly into NGOs which, even if

well-intentioned, cannot represent workers, development ministries wishing to support those organizing efforts should support workers' organizations because they can represent workers.

Governments cannot protect all their citizens under law if their tax base is insufficient and they cannot ensure effective public services, including, importantly, labour inspectorates. If multinational enterprises really support the rule of law, they should pay their taxes rather than avoid them. They should encourage the formalization of employment to bring supplier companies and their workers into the tax base and under the protection of law. Do not be fooled by those who would turn informal economy workers into hostages – who say their livelihoods will be destroyed if people are protected under law. The historical experience of all developed countries is that improving the situation of workers, through organization, collective bargaining and legal protection, results in more and better jobs – and better societies.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. ABASCAL (*Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico*) — President Vicente Fox's Government is firmly committed to enhancing the level and quality of life of all Mexicans. The Ministry under my responsibility has an important part to play in this endeavour, because as Juan Somavia, who unquestionably earned his re-election as head of this Organization, has said: “Poverty is not just a problem of the poor. It is a challenge for all defenders of social justice and all seekers of sustainable growth.”

The path leading to the achievement of such worthy objectives is work – which is both a right and a duty of all humans, and whose economic, social, ethical, intellectual and spiritual value is such that without it the harmonious development of persons and society, and thus the eradication of poverty, is impossible.

The main condition under which work can fulfil its function is that both societies and governments recognize that persons are at the core of development, not as yet another resource, but rather as the authors and beneficiaries of work. The same way that it has become clear that work is not a property of the State, we should forever banish from this world the notion that work is a merchandise.

That is why all persons have the right to work without any discrimination: young people, women, older persons, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and the poor, should have a chance to join the labour force under fair and equitable conditions.

If the world values the dignity of human beings, and thus the fact that persons are at the core of the economy and of any workplace; if the world values work as a means for personal fulfilment and for persons to access the fruits of development; if the world values workplaces as human productive communities, then public policies may be revised in order to recognize that work is the most valuable asset that persons and families can have, and full employment will be the target. Then, the transcendental value of work towards building social justice and the common good will prevail. And only then will employers take on their social responsibility.

These are the basic premises of Mexican labour policy. Labour Ministries' contribution to promote employment, decent work, and thus to overcome poverty is crucial.

First, they have the opportunity to promote this humanistic vision regarding persons, work and the workplace, so that public policies might serve to advance it, so that employers might adopt it and so that workers become fully aware of it. Thus all three will recognize the rights and duties that such vision entails.

The most important instrument to this end is social dialogue. International experience has shown that mechanisms for dialogue should be inclusive, decentralized and institutional. They will be the privileged spaces where democracy will be strengthened through the responsible participation of factors of production, government and the various social actors.

Secondly, labour ministries can promote public policies to foster productive investment and therefore employment. In Mexico, we are determined to improve the mechanisms for social dialogue in order to obtain the necessary agreements to continue to strengthen the rule of law; to improve labour culture, labour laws and labour institutions; to promote the development of our energy sector; to modernize our fiscal system. This set of policies favours employment and, consequently, the eradication of poverty.

Thirdly, labour ministries must promote cooperation among workers and employers through mediation and conciliation towards labour peace. Also, they should provide efficient employment services.

Finally, labour ministries must contribute to the employability and entrepreneurship of all persons. Both are the keys to the reduction of poverty and the generation of welfare through improved productivity, competitiveness and investment. But we must not forget that the other side of the coin, is the fair distribution of income within each society and among countries.

As Mexicans we know that it is imperative for us to promote employment and to improve the incomes of all persons. Workers, employers and government renewed this commitment last 1 May. We celebrate the fact that the ILO has underlined the challenges facing decent work for the world to reflect upon, so that global efforts to stress employment in the fight against poverty may benefit persons and families. If we manage to transform our discussions into concrete actions, then through our work we will be doing our part towards the globalization of solidarity.

Mr. TATEISI (*Employers' delegate, Japan*) — This year's Report of the Director-General sends out a strong message on the urgent need to address the global issue of working out of poverty. Breaking out of poverty has a meaning that goes beyond mere economic self-sufficiency; it gives people dignity and empowers them for active involvement in society. For the people in question and society as a whole, there is immense loss when many are unable to exercise their latent talents simply because of their impoverished state. It is beyond doubt that work is a prerequisite if people are to achieve economic autonomy, feel the joy that comes from realizing their potential, and get a sense of truly belonging to society.

Certainly, the most important factor in the eradication of poverty is the creation of national wealth. A country's wealth is the aggregate result of all sorts of economic activities. As such, energetic business development by corporate enterprises, whether big or small, is instrumental to it. By their nature, companies produce wealth and distribute it among the elements

cooperating in that activity in such forms as wages, taxes and dividends. In addition, they use surplus wealth to fund investment and build up their business in other ways in the hope of producing more wealth in the future. This corporate mechanism thus acts to ensure the continued creation of wealth based on the generation of profit. Its application is absolutely essential for raising the level of national wealth.

Although liable to become the brunt of criticism, multinational firms must be recognized as entities that create wealth and employment around the world, and thereby help to mitigate poverty. By transferring technology and assisting support industries, they are also contributing to the growth of indigenous enterprises. It is essential to make the most of such multinational energies, and governments should create business climates conducive to the activities of enterprises.

Through their business activities, companies provide their employees with employment, their customers with better goods and services, their shareholders with dividends, and their governments with taxes. In this sense, they already have a public-minded dimension built into their business, but this is not enough. In so far as they are subsystems of society, they cannot advance without the sound development of the society of which they are a part. They now have an immense role and influence, and this is precisely why corporate social responsibility is currently coming under such close scrutiny. Today's companies are being called upon to create social, as well as economic, values with a keen insight into social wants and needs.

Discussions of the poverty problem have to consider another key concern, namely, equity. Quite possibly, people care less about how poor they are themselves in absolute terms and more about how poor they are relative to others. They can put up with being poor when all around them are, too. But when they see big gaps and are not given the opportunity to close them, they feel more miserable. On this point, I think it might be instructive to take a retrospective look at the growth of the Japanese economy after the war. When the country embarked on steep economic growth, income gaps were small, and, in time a large middle class took shape. The level of consumption by this middle class rose along with its income. This established a pattern for solid growth driven mainly by private consumption. The relatively equal income levels were a major element behind the break away from poverty.

Needless to say, government must take a variety of measures to assure equity and fairness in the distribution of wealth. However, equity also demands the growth of a shared perspective among the people based on social dialogue. In this sense, the tripartite principle of the ILO holds great significance, and should be promoted in every aspect.

Before finishing here, I would like to say a few words about the issue of the basic labour rights of civil servants in Japan, which is now being taken up by the ILO in connection with the reform of our civil service system. I think it is vital for us to build a shared awareness in the entire populace through full discussions, from all angles, on the right set of conditions for civil servants working for the welfare society.

Mr. PATER (*Government delegate, Poland*) — On behalf of the Government of Poland, I offer my warmest congratulations to the President and his colleagues on their election. We are confident that under

their leadership, this session of the Conference will achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves.

It is also my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia on his re-election as Director-General of the International Labour Office. We wish him every success in discharging the difficult duties of his high office.

Economic globalization offers fresh opportunities for faster growth, but only opportunities, no certainties. It is up to governments and international organizations to create the conditions for sustainable development, without leaving anyone behind in the trap of marginalization. That is why the social consequences of globalization have, over the past few years, been at the forefront of our considerations.

Poverty deprives humans of their dignity. It may also lead to social exclusion. If it is passed on from one generation to another, it poses particular dangers to the individual and to society at large. Poverty endangers social development. By forcing people outside of society, it may pit them against it. Poverty excludes people from the market and wastes their potential contribution to the common good. Poverty may breed social conflict and support for populist ideologies.

All these aspects have been very accurately dealt with in the Director-General's Report to the present session.

The topic of the Report is of particular concern to all members of the International Labour Organization, regardless of their level of social and economic development. The European Union has made the fight against poverty and social exclusion one of its key priorities under its Lisbon Strategy. This is based on the belief that economic growth and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing. A society with more social cohesion and less exclusion betokens a more successful economy.

Combating poverty is one of the top priorities of the Polish Government. Unemployment is the most common cause of poverty in Poland. Disability, low educational attainment, homelessness, and social pathologies also increase the likelihood of falling into poverty.

We are currently preparing, in close cooperation with social partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a comprehensive national strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion. We are convinced, in our particular case, that employment — even if it is poorly paid — is the key to restoring people's dignity and reintegrating them into society and, in the long run, to overcoming poverty. Therefore, in 2002, we introduced changes to our labour laws with a view to reducing both the cost of labour and the administrative burden on employment. The second stage of this legislative reform is still in progress.

Our purpose is not to defend every single existing job but to facilitate, as much as possible, the creation of new ones. Our drive toward a more flexible labour market does not mean giving up the protection of workers' rights. New regulations have been introduced precisely to ensure that those rights should not be violated. By supporting employability, we empower our workers to enjoy their right to work in a manner suited to the twenty-first century.

The transition from welfare to work is also at the heart of Poland's forthcoming reform of social security. The new system will encourage gainful employment, as it is designed to bring unemployed or excluded persons into the labour market.

The welfare society, to which we aspire cannot exist without a civil society served by social partners and an NGO sector. The Government of Poland is determined to support that sector. The recently-adopted Act on public-interest and voluntary service, which lays sound foundations for the financial stability of those organizations and for the voluntary involvement in their activities, can be seen as an important step in that direction.

Mr. SMITH (*Government delegate, Jamaica*) — Let me extend to the President, on behalf of my country, warmest congratulations on his election to preside over the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. Congratulations also go to the Vice-Presidents. The Jamaican delegation expresses its appreciation to the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for his Report, *Working out of poverty*, and as well to the Chairperson of the Governing Body for his report which highlights the activities of the Governing Body during the period 2002-03.

We are grateful to the Director-General for highlighting to the 91st Session the fundamental problem of poverty. The Director-General's Report does not say it, but Jamaica will say that given resources, technology and productive capacity, the persistence of poverty, including extreme poverty, must now be viewed as a matter of global choice.

The data speak volumes. Almost 3 billion people across the globe live in poverty. More than half of the population of the developing and transition economies live in poverty. In my own region, Latin America and the Caribbean, the total number of persons living in poverty actually increased over the decade of the 1990s — coincidentally, a time of significant growth in many leading industrial economies.

The Director-General's Report on global imbalances and on the pervasiveness of poverty is thus one that finds resonance in our region. It speaks to a reality that we live, and it does so in an insightful voice which calls cogently for remedial action at the community, national and global levels. Importantly, it identifies as well the key part that this institution, the ILO, must play by virtue of its mandate, and that the tripartite partners must assume, by virtue of their social and economic roles.

Jamaica considers that by accurately identifying job creation as the frontline in the fight against poverty and by positing job creation as an objective in itself, rather than as a consequence of other factors, such as macroeconomic stability and even economic growth, the ILO has established not only a priority which we fully support, but also an effective guide to action by member States and by the international community.

We agree that "Full, productive and freely chosen employment is the primary means of reducing and eventually eliminating extreme poverty". What are some of the indispensable elements for producing decent jobs? That is jobs in the quantity and of a quality that the people of developing countries are demanding, and that the economies of developing countries must be able to provide. Among key elements, and I know the ILO is active, but must now intensify support to Members in these areas, are training and skills development, micro-and small enterprise strengthening, investing in jobs and in community, social security, addressing hazards at work, the elimination of child labour, and the fight against discrimination,

including discrimination that is gender and health related, especially on the basis of HIV status.

The Caribbean region is comprised of small States that are highly integrated into the global economy through trade, investment and the movement of peoples. This does not mean, however, that the region is effectively integrated. We therefore take careful note of and support the statement that, "Purely national strategies for sustainable pro-poor and pro-jobs growth are unlikely to succeed in a world in which economies are becoming increasingly integrated". This recognizes the fact of our interdependence.

The regional experience has made us very aware of how important the international frameworks for investment, trade and finance are to our economic prospects. These must be of a nature that will buttress our national endeavours. We now urge other global institutions to join the ILO in placing the requisite importance on job creation. Important initiatives such as the Youth Employment Network and the tripartite Global Employment Agenda, conjoined with improved market access in the areas of export interest, strengthened partnership with foreign investors and the amelioration of the burden of excessive debt, can all contribute to more effective integration into the global economy by our small countries. Let me state here that by effective integration we mean integration that contributes to sustainable development and to the eradication of poverty.

Poverty is the inhuman face of globalization. It robs people of their dignity and denies them the material needs of sustenance. *Working out of poverty* renews hope that this is a face that can be transformed by intervention at the community, national and global levels. At the global level, we will continue to collaborate with the ILO and other multilateral institutions, as we do at the national level with our social partners, in a redoubled effort to ensure the creation of more decent work, without which the fight against poverty cannot be won.

*Original Hungarian: Mr. BORSIK (Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Hungary)* — First of all, I would like to congratulate the President on the occasion of his election to this important post. I am deeply convinced that his experience and wise contribution to the success of this Conference will be advantageous to all of us.

It is a great a pleasure for me that, as a member of the Hungarian delegation and as a workers' delegate, I can participate in the International Labour Conference and can inform you of the problems, notes and opinions of Hungarian employees.

It is also a privilege for me to express the thanks of Hungarian employees and their organizations for the assistance that the ILO and its subregional office in Budapest has provided to us and to other countries in the region.

Since the second-half of 2002, the most important industrial relations forum in Hungary, the National Council for Reconciliation of Interests, has been reinstalled. The disturbed operation of tripartite negotiations between 1998 and 2002 was reported annually in the country report issued by the European Union. Today, however, despite certain difficulties, reconciliation of interests works on a national level and several important agreements have been concluded.

There are several challenges facing Hungarian employees. Our accession to the European Union on

1 May 2004 will have an influence on employment in our country. Other problems and tensions should also be taken into account.

In the Fourth Report of the Working Party of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office on the Programme and Structure of the ILO (1967), a statement in paragraph 58 sets out one of our most important common duties. Consequently, an important task of the ILO is to point out the value of human freedom and dignity.

This freedom and dignity can be assured in practical life only by proper legal protection, through the consistent behaviour of the Government and employers' and workers' representatives.

I would like to draw the attention of the participants of this Conference to two phenomena.

First, the working possibilities of employees are reduced by informal work, which accounts for a significant portion of our economy. I am convinced that we have to take serious and steadfast measures in order to reduce or stop this phenomenon. In addition to being one of the important tasks facing the Government, different behaviour is expected from employers.

Second, we consider that the protective function of our Hungarian Labour Code should be strengthened. Unfortunately, a legal definition of workers' protection is not enough. This legislation must be put into practice in its entirety in everyday life. I am sorry to say that problems are frequently experienced. Therefore, we consider that an important task of our Government is to ensure compliance with the law, even through sanctions.

Workers' representatives cannot wait for an automatic solution to these problems. Positive changes can be expected only through cooperation with employers' organizations and the Government.

Therefore, the guidelines of this Conference are very important for labour relations, because they are helpful for completing and achieving our common tasks.

*Original Spanish: Mr. ALVAREZ GAIANI (Employers' delegate, Argentina)* — I would first of all like to congratulate the President and the Director-General on a Report which deals with an issue which is central for governments, workers and employers, because it is one of the priority needs of most of the countries represented here today.

In particular, I would like to state that Argentina is clearly one of the countries for which the choice of topic is particularly relevant. Nobody can be unaware that Latin America over the last few years has suffered a grave crisis, first in Mexico, then in Brazil and, more recently, in my own country. All these crises have had a grave impact, not only at local level, but also in international public opinion. In our case, the crisis led us to an unprecedented devaluation and prevented us from meeting our international financial commitments owing to the sharp fall in levels of production, and even of consumption. This is why Argentina plummeted to unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty. Our unemployment rates rose above 20 per cent. Underemployment and informal sector work rose to more than 50 per cent of the population and inevitably led to increased marginalization and poverty. The world wondered how a country such as Argentina, with all its natural and human resources, could find itself in this situation.

We ourselves were perplexed by the complex process which began with a long and deep recession that caused our GDP per capita to tumble in a slump equalled only by the Great Depression of the last century.

But this time, having faced up to the initial onslaught of the social and economic crisis, the Government, workers and employers decided to confront the crisis by seeking solutions which would enable us to restore our country once again to its place in the world, gradually recover our productivity, and give due attention to the situation of those sectors which were most damaged. It was not an easy task but we took this on over the last year and a half with determination, and all sectors of our society assumed this difficult task.

The Director-General's Report refers to work as the key to reaching our goal of the progressive and lasting elimination of poverty, and to the rightful role of the private sector as a driving force in job creation, investment and business creation through the market and using sustainable business models.

I must say, with conviction, that we share this view. Argentinean employers are convinced that the only virtuous circle is that of production and employment within a framework of sustainable policies for sustainable growth. We have stated on many occasions, and reiterate here, our deep conviction that globalization offers new possibilities and new challenges, as long as it is approached from the point of view of appropriate strategies, and provided that we do not forget that the goal of globalization is to raise investment, and to improve technology, training, and real employment for our communities.

We have said that, in the crisis, we had to call on social protection mechanisms in order to alleviate suffering and marginalization. Nevertheless, we are aware that, as the Director-General's Report points out, we cannot eliminate poverty if the economy does not promote investment and the development of business opportunities, as well as the creation of jobs and sustainable livelihoods.

This means that we must establish ground rules, including at the international trade level, giving market access to our products. In many sectors in which we are currently competitive internationally, we suffer from tariff barriers and related obstacles which stifle free trade. We know that removing these barriers to trade will have an immediate impact in terms of enterprise creation, improvements in production volume and the creation of new and better jobs.

I should emphasize that in the complex situation which characterizes the Argentinian crisis, there has been great effort to engage in social dialogue in order to end the dramatic situation and mitigate the social effects. In this context, the national Government and provincial governments, workers and employers were able to find ways of avoiding a deepening of social tensions and meet the needs of production and work. There was a willingness to engage in dialogue and make important concessions. We built bridges and agreed on solutions. This was not only a product of our own innate preference in Argentina, for constructive solutions, but also the result of efforts to implement locally the spirit and culture of this tripartite Organization.

Nothing is more difficult than to reaching agreement in the midst of a crisis, where businessmen no longer have businesses, the productive sector can

no longer produce and workers no longer have work or wages. Nevertheless, experience had taught us that, although difficult, it was also essential to demonstrate to society our determination to overcome the crisis. Furthermore, I believe that this collective approach helped us to lay the foundations for recovery so that we can set off on the path of economic growth, creating employment and putting an end to the social emergency.

This Conference should take note of the fact that Argentinian employers are willing to support the Government in its efforts for reconstruction. We want to produce, we want to create jobs and we want to become a force on the international stage once again. For this, we need to get back to economic growth. We have to reaffirm the fundamental role of the State, which includes education and skills training for the new world of work.

Argentina has already begun to show signs of reversing the downward trend that has lasted through several years of recession, company closures and lay offs. We would like once again to call upon the tripartite efforts of the new national Government so that together, with workers and employers, we can share, through social dialogue, the responsibility of renewed growth, because it is this growth, as the Director-General's Report makes clear, that is the true path to employment, elimination of poverty and sustainable development.

Mr. POTTER (*Employers' delegate, United States*) — On behalf of the United States employers I would like to offer the President and his Vice-Presidents our congratulations upon their election.

The United States employers are pleased to see this thoughtful analysis of the role that the ILO can play in poverty reduction. Poverty, together with the lack of economic growth and jobs, is one of the root causes of global terrorism. The Governing Body's recently completed Global Employment Agenda positions the ILO to make an effective contribution to employment creation and poverty reduction at the national and international levels. It builds on ILO strengths of skills development, entrepreneurship capacity building and SME growth, and protection of worker rights, including the abolition of child labour. The future stability of mankind depends, in part, on ILO success.

The Director-General is right when he says on page 7 that "The principal route out of poverty is work." Providing an international and domestic employment policy environment that creates jobs requires balancing the need for business to have sufficient flexibility and entrepreneurial skills to compete in global markets with the need of workers to have essential social protections and the ability to acquire necessary education and training to become and remain economically secure.

A key to job creation and a rising standard of living is productivity growth. One of the easiest ways to raise productivity growth in a developing country is to raise the overall education level of the population and by making sure that children go to school. The education of children is crucial. Otherwise a generation is lost.

Access and acquiring basic education is essential for everyone. As "The DREAM Program Inc." in Burlington, Vermont, in my own country shows, mentoring relationships by schools of higher education and businesses with children in housing projects

of the poor results in poor children aspiring to graduate from high school and go to college.

The achievement of workplace human rights is critical to long-term sustainable success. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) is an essential tool that the ILO has at its disposal to improve respect for worker rights. A more focused, targeted promotional follow-up to the Declaration that seeks concrete, measurable results is essential. As we complete the first round of the Global Reports at this session of the Conference, an assessment needs to be made of whether the ILO's promotional follow-up is helping ILO Members with pervasive policy failures to realize and achieve the principles concerning fundamental rights of the eight core Conventions. Poverty elimination without workplace human rights is unacceptable. Sustainable improvement of working conditions around the world depends on it.

It was surprising to read in Chapter 5 of the Director-General's Report, the suggestion that there could be a "race to the bottom" in environmental and labour standards despite the lack of systematic data on the issue. In the Director-General's Report to the Fifteenth American Regional Meeting in Lima last December, the Director-General quoted Frank Vargo, Vice-President for International Economic Affairs of the United States National Association of Manufacturers as saying, "firms do not look for investment opportunities in countries which are inclined to lower labour or environmental standards. This is not what attracts investment [...] Firms worldwide all gladly accept demanding legislation. It is not an obstacle to business." Implementing and enforcing labour standards goes hand in hand with creating and enabling investment environment, which contributes to poverty reduction. As both the ILO and OECD research have found, there is no race to the bottom.

Globalization is a powerful force for positive change. Although the percentages are still unacceptable, table 2.1 of the Director-General's Report shows the overall percentages of the world's population living on less than \$2 and \$1 a day declining in the last ten years of the last century. As the World Bank's 2001 report, *Globalization, growth and poverty: Building an inclusive world economy*, shows, inequality in most of the globalizing developing countries has declined since 1980. Although rapid economic growth in China has widened the gap between rural and urban areas, the report points out that if this increase in inequality in China has been the price of growth, it has paid off in terms of massive reduction in poverty. Globalization is the best tool that we have at our disposal to harness and create employment, empower people through information and technology access and, ultimately, reduce poverty.

This discussion of poverty alleviation in the global context will mean nothing, however, unless you have some other important economic and political elements: a stable, economic, legal, political and social environment; secure property rights; reliable enforcement of contracts; debt service reduction; commodity price structure; access to markets and capital markets; low taxes and public spending; open trades and a receptive economic environment, especially infrastructure for direct investment.

Finally, I would like to pay homage to my predecessor as United States Employers' delegate, Thomas B. Moorhead, who passed away suddenly this past April.

Tom came to the ILO in 1985, became the United States Employers' delegate in 1994 and was a Vice-President of the Conference in 2000. Although Tom, both as United States Employers' delegate to the ILO and later, as the top United States Department of Labor official to the ILO, often criticized the ILO, he did so because he wanted the ILO to do better. He loved this institution. He carried to his grave the ILO in his heart. He was a true believer in the ILO and its potential to making working peoples' lives better everywhere. Much of his work in the last two years, as a United States Government official, was directed at educating poor children and poverty elimination. In the words of the "Irishman's toast," Tom, "may the good Lord hold you in the palm of his hand".

*Original Spanish:* Ms. IGLESIAS (*Minister of Labour, Venezuela*) — I bring fraternal greetings to you from the people and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We would like to refer to the Report, *Working out of poverty*, presented by the Director-General because it focuses on an objective which we all share: to vanquish the poverty that affects all our countries.

Mr. Somavia correctly identified decent work as a way of vanquishing poverty. We likewise feel that resolving the problem of unemployment does not justify the creation of any type of employment, nor does it justify the degradation of working conditions, the elimination of legal protection for workers or the reduction of labour rights.

We have to move forward in creating sources of decent work. To do so, we think we have to move towards strong democracy. That means a democracy that is not merely made up of words and that does not solely comprise political reforms, but rather one that reaches into the economic and social spheres.

We are referring to a pluralistic system, capable of inventing formulas which enable us, in practice, from the rule of law, to build a rule of justice. We are in this process at present in Venezuela. We are laying the foundations of an economic model which will promote fair development. Among other things, this supposes an investment of time and resources in vocational training for workers and also for employers. This means that we have to stimulate development of micro-enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperatives. We have to increase and improve social security coverage and working conditions. We have to eliminate child labour and, of course, all types of discrimination.

The numbers and figures presented in the Director-General's Report on the state of poverty in the world lay bare the true face of neo-liberal globalization. That which is being globalized is, in fact, poverty. That which has been globalized is growth with social exclusion. What a terrible failure! A failure that is gradually leading, as in an awakening, to an ethical and moral commitment of the peoples of the world with regard to their own lives. All governments have the obligation to join this commitment.

Certainly it is true that the poor are not the source or the cause of poverty. At least that is what is true for those who believe in social justice. We also feel that it is not possible to find any solution without counting on the strength of people. The poor are an essential part of finding a solution to economic problems. We have to work out of poverty, which necessarily means empowering the poor.

To do this, we have to find new ways of promoting social dialogue, which will then enable us to build this strong democracy that we have been talking about. It is not enough today to have dialogue between the elite who agree in the name of their people – people who are ever more demanding, ever more needy and ever more aware of their rights. New governance means increased transparency and participatory decision-making. This means we have to change from dialogue at the top to dialogue with the real social actors.

In Venezuela, with a historic level of trade union participation of below 18 per cent, where more than 70 per cent of workers' organizations belong to the public sector, we cannot establish genuine social dialogue or true democratic tripartism if we do not turn to the "grassroots" players: to businessmen, workers, and local governments, respecting, of course, the independence and freedom of action of all trade union movements, making certain that there is plurality and overcoming what, over more than four decades, has meant in our country a stewardship of the state over workers' and employers' organizations.

Today, and for more than a year now, we are holding social dialogue between the real actors in Venezuela. In the automotive sector, in pharmaceuticals, in textiles, in tourism, in transportation, in small and medium-sized enterprises, in cooperatives, in construction: the actors themselves, that is to say, businessmen who head their businesses, workers, who are actually on production lines every day, together with their "grassroots" organizations, and, finally, the Government have reached agreements of social dialogue based on tripartism, so that we can devise shared goals. We have seen, in practice, that dialogue is a powerful tool for the protection of employment and the generation of decent work.

We are building social dialogue where not only is there no exclusion but where those who have already been socially excluded are once again a part. Today trade union organizations in the private sector are growing, as well as in small and medium-sized enterprises and in the service sectors where, over a year ago, there was no type of unionization at all. Today we are strengthening employers' associations in the small and medium-sized enterprise and micro-enterprise industries. We are trying to create a cooperative movement as well.

Day by day we are strengthening social dialogue in Venezuela. Proof of this marvellous plurality is the broad constitution of delegations of workers and employers representing our country today.

In the public sector we have finally abandoned indiscriminate privatization and we have begun to return enterprises to joint State and worker management. Today, we have the oil industry and the state electricity industry with 20 per cent of their managing boards made up of trade unions officials elected by their workers. In this way we are building tangible social dialogue in Venezuela.

Finally, we would like to reaffirm here, before this assembly, the commitment of our people and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to justice and peace

Mr. PEET (*Minister of Labour and Immigration, Bahamas*) — It is my singular pleasure to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents, on behalf of the Government and people of the Bahamas, on your having been elected to serve in these most distin-

guished capacities during this Conference, and we pledge our continued support as we work together in the spirit of true tripartism.

I would also like to congratulate his Excellency, Mr. Juan Somavia, on having been elected to a second five year term as Director-General of the ILO and I applaud his unwavering commitment to the ILO's initiatives designed to significantly reduce levels of poverty around the world, as outlined in the comprehensive Report.

Poverty around the world must be overcome and all of us must do our part to combat it within our respective countries. In our efforts to do so, we in the Bahamas, under the distinguished leadership of our Prime Minister, Mr. Perry G. Christie recently launched an urban renewal programme, called the "The Fami Road Project". The objective of this project is to identify and implement more effective ways to reduce the level of poverty in our country, beginning with the island of New Providence and then moving to our Family Islands. The programme seeks to promote increased self-worth and dignity among workers by providing them with training and educational opportunities, while at the same time assisting them by improving their housing conditions. The plight of children, the elderly and the disabled have all been factored into this worthwhile initiative, one that is actively supported by the Ministries of Social Services, Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, National Security and Labour and Immigration, as well as other respective social partners.

We have sought to make the transition from school to work smoother by offering prospective high school graduates on-site job training, which is now a prerequisite for graduation. Additionally, a number of other youth development programmes have been established to prepare our youth for the challenges of the job market. It is the sworn duty of the Government of the Bahamas to work along with our social partners to provide employment opportunities for all of our citizens.

Recent amendments to our labour legislation have resulted in more equitable working conditions and benefits for all parties. Additionally, the Government of the Bahamas had stabilized the tourism and financial service sectors of our country by increasing opportunities for greater economic investment and this has, in turn, increased the demand for skilled labour.

Our "skills data bank", in conjunction with the "one-stop service centre" initiative, allows employers, actively employed persons and unemployed persons to place vacancies and résumés on the Internet, all in an effort to improve the standard of living of our people.

Those of us who are privileged to serve as Government members in this distinguished organization must recognize that the best way to effectively combat the social ills that beset our countries is first to fully involve the workers and employers in nation-building. We must endeavour to concentrate more upon the things that unite us as partners instead of those that divide us, while always respecting and protecting the other's right to have a different point of view.

The Government of the Bahamas remains committed to strengthening the ongoing cordial ties with workers and employers in our country, in our region, and indeed throughout the world. This commitment has been the catalyst for even stronger collaborative

and consultative tripartite relations between our social partners.

The Bahamas believes that only through sustained social dialogue can the social partners of our respective countries eradicate poverty. No single partner has all the answers. Only through our collaborative efforts will we be able to establish and maintain worthwhile initiatives for improving job security, thus eradicating forced labour and discrimination of any kind in the workplace.

We must be truly committed to these worthwhile objectives and not allow ourselves to go through the motions because it makes us feel good to be able to say we tried. We must be sincere in our efforts.

As I close, I wish to reiterate the pledge of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas to the ongoing training of our labour force by supporting a number of public and private sector programmes, all in a continuing effort to reduce the level of poverty and address the social ills that stem from it within our country and our region.

Discussions are ongoing between sister Caribbean nations on establishing a labour college in the Bahamas and hosting the CARICOM Labour Ministers' meeting in early 2004.

These two objectives, and others, would further provide unparalleled opportunities for my country and its CARICOM tripartite partners to address and reduce the social ills that affect us as a Caribbean community and, by extension, the world.

*Original Arabic:* Mr. KHREISHI (*Workers' representative, Palestine*) — I would like to congratulate the President on his election as President of this Conference. I would also like to greet the Director-General of the ILO and I would like to greet all of you ladies and gentlemen, the members of this Conference.

Whether it be men or women, or elderly people in Palestine, everybody lives under curfew. Yesterday the Palestinian people called on the international community for assistance in order to supply milk to the children, drugs to the sick, and so that we can put an end to the occupation of our territory.

We would like to thank the sister and friendly trade union organizations which have provided us with very valuable help, above all the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions and the World Confederation of Labour. I would also like to thank Arab employers' organizations in all the Arab countries. All these organizations have helped us, they have provided us with food aid and medicines and milk for our children.

It is true that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. Extreme poverty and chronic malnutrition in Palestine are threatening the whole region — 67 per cent of the Palestinian people are living below the poverty line. Unemployment is very high. All this has not come about by chance. It has only resulted from support for the occupying force in our region. For how much longer must our people put up with famine? When will the international community awaken and put an end to the situation in our country? Our country's GDP, before the Palestinian intifada, was not even \$4 billion. On the other hand, the GDP of the other country, that is Israel, amounts to more than \$110 billion. These two entities, these two states, have been set up on the old soil of Palestine, the historic territory of Palestine.

Our GDP, as I say, amounts to only \$4 billion, whereas Israel's amounts to \$110 billion. All that we want is to build our national institutions, to build our labour institutions, and to do so we need the help of all international institutions, in particular that of the ILO. We need transparent programmes in which employers and workers can be consulted as well as workers' organizations and the Palestinian Authority. All of these things are non-existent in our country at the moment as is very well known. The reason is also very well known — the occupation of our country.

The Muslim Caliph Omar Ibu al-Khattab said that "if poverty were a man, I would have killed him". Do you not think that it is necessary that all the efforts of the international community and of the workers should be united in order to release the Palestinian people from this situation?

The Gospel describes Palestine as the land of milk and honey. Now I would ask you why our plants are now dead, and why has our territory been transformed into a barren land? Since the age of Christ, we had always lived in prosperity and, as I mentioned, the Gospel said that our country was a land of milk and honey.

The programmes which we need have to be explicit and prosperous and all three parties and the Palestinian Authority have to be consulted. There must not be any marginalization and there must not be any interference by the parties which are directing policies according to certain people's interests.

We have written to the Director-General saying that we respect him a great deal and we said that we do not understand the present situation and that we do not accept any interference in the programmes and that we are satisfied with these programmes.

We therefore need support for the Palestinian Fund — this is a fund which provides services to all workers in Palestine. It is not a fund which is aimed at certain categories and not at others. That is why we call on the Ministry of Labour to apply the programmes which have been devised by taking equal decisions and by respecting the fundamental principles of the ILO, that is equality and consultation.

Mr. President, you come from Kenya, you come from the country of the combatant Jomo Kenyatta who led your country to independence and liberation.

In conclusion, I would just like to remind you of the existence of the Iraqi people and greet the Iraqi people who are suffering under American occupation. I would like to greet all the workers from the friendly countries.

*Original Italian:* Mr. CEDRONE (*Workers' delegate, Italy*) — This year the Report by the Director-General tackles the issue of discrimination at the workplace which, in my opinion is at the core of ILO activity.

Eradicating this discrimination would mean complying with one of the basic principles of human dignity and freedom which are the mainstays of every democracy. This is the reason why it is important to highlight here the significant role of the social partners, which must be supported by serious government efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the workplace. We all know, however, as evidenced in the report that very much remains to be done both in developed and developing countries where we must not only struggle against discrimination, as has been stated by many speakers, but also against

unemployment, because very often in those countries finding a job is simply a dream.

In those countries there are no forms of protection and even trade unions are virtually non-existent or, if they do exist, they can do nothing. This is of course an unacceptable and incomprehensible phenomenon.

It is quite unacceptable that on the occasion of international meetings, including today's meeting for example, many States adopt declarations on human rights and social rights as mentioned in the Director-General's Report and then do not take the necessary measures, but just pay lip service to those declarations when going back home. A number of countries do not transpose these Conventions into their legislation, even after decades, and worse still they do nothing about complying with them. This of course tarnishes the credibility of international organizations in the eyes of world public opinion as they are considered expensive and useless. Today this is no longer possible in an economy and in a world which is ever more globalized and interdependent.

Thus, the rules of the game must be changed. It is necessary to have a greater transparency in the decision-making process and in the measures which are to be implemented. We need to have mechanisms which comply with decisions and rules via a system of monitoring and sanctions. For these reasons, the trade unions have proposed to couple trade agreements within the WTO and the compliance with the ILO agreements by the parties concerned, through joint work between WTO and ILO. Conversely this issue has been removed from the agenda of the next WTO conference to be held in Cancun. The European Union, though initially unwilling to do so, has ended up by accepting this decision to postpone the examination of this issue. Hence, once again, economic and trade interests have prevailed over the rights and dignity of human beings, this is not acceptable. It would therefore be useful for the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, established by the ILO, to make its conclusions known before the next WTO conference.

The Report shows that we need a stronger and more incisive International Labour Organization, better able to take action, with the aim of increasing its credibility in the eyes of world public opinion.

This is why we ask governments not only to comply with Conventions, but also to honour their financial commitments. We also propose that the activity of the Turin Centre be integrated in the ILO general budget and not remain linked to voluntary contributions provided by some governments. We also urge the ILO to play a fundamental role in the reconstruction of the social fabric of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and all those countries beleaguered by forgotten wars.

In short, we call for a stronger and enhanced ILO, that can set an example of democracy based on participation. Its Conventions must be respected, and must not be allowed to be simply an adornment worn on special occasions.

*Original French: Mr. KAMARA (Minister of Employment and Public Service, Guinea) —* Every year at this time we consider the major labour issues facing the international community. Allow me to congratulate the Director-General of the International Labour Office and the Governing Body for the quality of their reports. The choice of agenda items shows the Organization's determination to continue its

fundamental and historic mission to create the conditions for lasting peace and prosperity for all.

We have, on our agenda, an issue of pressing importance — decent work as a means of working out of poverty. The contemporary world is faced with a paradox between, on one hand, the acceleration of technical and technological progress and, on the other, the continuing growth of poverty. The wealth of a few is in stark contrast to the abject poverty of millions of people all over the world, which is unlikely to change unless urgent, appropriate measures are taken in international solidarity. The Director-General's Report calls on us to adopt a common front in our efforts to make the world a fairer place by rolling back poverty.

In Guinea, the Government has made this its top priority by adopting a series of measures and policies, *inter alia*: a poverty reduction strategy in force since 2002, which has become a model for the West African sub region; the formulation of a national employment policy, with the support of UNDP and the ILO; a national plan to combat HIV/AIDS, with a tripartite component focusing on the world of work; the development of sectoral policies to assist disenfranchised and vulnerable groups, and ratification of core ILO Conventions, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

All of these activities reflect my Government's firm desire to make an effective contribution to enhancing the economic and social welfare of all population sectors.

Training and human resource development are key issues at this session of the Conference. In Guinea, significant progress has been made through the National Office for Training and Vocational Skills (ONFPP), which is responsible for implementing national policy on training and vocational skills. However, considerable efforts still need to be made and so my Government requests most earnestly technical assistance from the ILO and other organizations working in the field.

In connection with the scope of labour relations, my delegation welcomes the interest shown in this issue because, in our view, and in accordance with the spirit of professional relations, the enterprise is the context for employment contracts and trade union rights. But it is also, in the economic sense, an entity in which, under the leadership of its directors, material and financial factors are brought together with human capital to produce goods and services. Unlike many labour codes, Guinean labour legislation replaces personnel delegates with trade union delegates.

The legislative branch took the view that trade union representatives are better placed, in view of their mandate and training, to discuss issues and demands that concern workers and, thus, to bring about social peace. That is precisely why union representatives are not appointed but elected, pursuant to the current Labour Code, and, in practice, social dialogue and regular negotiation have become a type of preventive action which strengthens the foundations of tripartite cooperation and social partnership. As regard ILO standards concerning health and safety at work, which is an important item on our agenda, we take the view that the risks connected with human labour, which have been studied at length in numerous ILO documents, should continue to be the focus of further efforts in the future. Such efforts should aim to establish operational plans of action to limit

the damage caused by accidents at work, illness and other problems inherent to every profession.

My delegation supports the conclusions and recommendations of the ILO's exhaustive study in the hope that the resulting plans of action may contribute to improving working conditions and the lives of workers in our States.

We are also called upon to consider improved security of seafarers identification. My country, as a coastal state, particularly welcomes the fact that this issue remains a major concern of our organization. The shipping industry plays an important role in the development of modern economies but, as we know, economic globalization has brought significant changes to transport and trade-related activities, as well as to seafarers' mobility.

Moreover, seafarers also experience precarious conditions, particularly when working under contract for international companies. My country, which has ratified the Accommodation of Crews (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1970 (No. 133), considers that a new legal instrument could improve the security of seafarers.

I would now like to come to a particularly sensitive subject, of critical importance for my country and the West African subregion, namely peace and security. Peace and security at the international level, and the regional and subregional levels, are the sine qua non for stability within States and sustainable development. At last year's session of the Conference, my country appealed to the international community for more sustained action to re-establish peace and security in the West African region. I am pleased to say that the international community responded to our appeal.

In this regard, I would like to thank the Director-General of the ILO, who supported a pioneering initiative by trade unions in the Republic of Guinea to get involved in the area of conflict management and prevention in Africa. Under this new formula, the joint efforts of all the social partners in the subregion will enable the emergence of a climate of hope.

I would like to conclude by thanking once again, on behalf of the Guinean delegation, Mr. Juan Somavia and all his team for their support, which has been so helpful to Guinea. My country will strive to strengthen cooperation with the ILO in order to promote the Organization's ideals, which are a source of inspiration as we seek to build a world of peace, social justice and democracy.

RATIFICATION  
OF AN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTION  
AND A PROTOCOL BY BELGIUM

The PRESIDENT (Mr. WOJCIK) — The Clerk of the Conference has an announcement to make.

*Original French:* The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — It is a pleasure to inform the Conference that on 10 June 2003, the Director-General recorded the ratification by Belgium of the Seafarers' Hours of Work and the Manning of Ships Convention, 1996 (No. 180), and the Protocol of 1996 to the Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 147).

*(The Conference adjourned at 1.15 p.m.)*

## **Eighth sitting**

Wednesday, 11 June 2003, 3 p.m.

*Presidents: Mr. Wojcik, Mr. Noakes*

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

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

*Original German: Ms. DEMBSHER (Government delegate, Austria)* — We all know, for more than a decade, the Director-General has been one of the driving forces behind efforts to eradicate poverty throughout the world. I am not exaggerating when I say that he was the initiator of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. This event, in 1995, triggered a conscious effort to address poverty at a high-ranking international level and created an awareness of the issue in many countries, including Austria.

It was only after the World Summit for Social Development that a regular poverty report was presented in Austria. Similarly, the EU strategy on poverty eradication, which has also led to an Austrian action plan on poverty, has been inspired by the spirit of Copenhagen.

In Austria the basis for the eradication of poverty and social marginalization is an integrated economic, employment and social policy. The title of the Report, *Working out of poverty*, could also describe the Austrian way forward. Austria has always maintained that a targeted policy to create productive jobs with an adequate income is the best way out of the poverty trap. This policy has been successful, because Austria, has a very low unemployment rate, compared with other countries. It is less than half the EU average.

In Austria, social protection is mainly based on a comprehensive social security system in the form of compulsory insurance, which covers all persons in gainful employment and their dependents who do not work. This system ensures access to sickness, unemployment, old-age and accident insurance.

Furthermore, social welfare provides a second means-tested safety net, which is, however, arranged differently in the nine Austrian Länder. The poverty quota in Austria, with a figure of 4 per cent acute poverty and 11 per cent at risk of poverty, is relatively low, but the Government is aware of the weak points in the social security net and, at the beginning of this year, set some ambitious targets in the government programme, which not will be easy to implement: unemployment insurance for new forms of work, such as freelance workers, the newly self-employed and

entrepreneurs; harmonization of the different social welfare arrangements in Austria; a package of measures for the equal treatment of the disabled; assistance for older workers, a training campaign and a minimum wage of 1,000 euros, which is to be achieved by persuading the social partners to conclude the appropriate wage agreements. A rise in minimum wages will improve the situation of women in particular.

A major weakness in Austria is indeed the considerable gulf in wages between men and women. Women still earn about 30 per cent less than men and women run a 13 per cent greater risk of plunging into poverty, whereas men have only a 9 per cent risk. And single mothers, of course, are particularly affected by this.

To alleviate the situation, a separate independent old-age insurance is to be developed for women, to which they will be eligible even if their marriage breaks down. The childcare allowance we introduced last year and which may be claimed until a child is 3 has been of particular benefit to women.

I am happy to announce that Austria is about to ratify the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). The dossier has already been forwarded to the Social Affairs Committee of the National Council in the Austrian Parliament, and so there should be no further obstacles to its ratification in the very near future.

Now to one of Austria's strengths — the protection of safety and health at work. Austria has managed to reduce the number of industrial accidents still further. The number of industrial accidents in the last ten years has fallen by about 35 per cent, to some 100,000. At the end of May 2003, for the second time, the Austrian national prize for health and safety at work was awarded to several exemplary companies. I unreservedly agree with the statement that a healthier, safer workplace is an essential element of decent work and combating poverty. Healthy workers work longer and thus have the possibility of notching up enough pension entitlements for a secure old age.

With regard to its responsibility towards Europe and the world, Austria set itself the goal in the sustainability strategy it adopted in 2002 of combating poverty and achieving an economic balance between countries. In this connection, I look forward to the report and suggestions of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

Finally, it remains for me only to thank the Director-General for his outstanding efforts to fight poverty and for his excellent Report. As I have said, a sound employment strategy is, in my opinion, the best way out of the poverty trap. Which is why I hope that the strategy for decent work and the Global Agenda

for Employment of the ILO will help to achieve that aim.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. MARIUS (*representative, Latin American Central of Workers*) — We would like to join those congratulating the President on his well-deserved election to preside over the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. We would also like to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia for his re-election as Director-General of the ILO.

The Report he submitted, which is focused on the situation of the working poor and the poor that have no work, reflects a key problem in Latin America, which is not the poorest continent but continues to be the most unjust.

The gradual rise in unemployment, poverty, marginalization, social neglect and impunity, and the increased violation of fundamental rights, continue to be the sad evidence of the failure of a development model that is focused neither on the individual nor on human labour, but on excessive profit and selfishness, causing, day by day, more despair and deplorable conditions of political and social destabilization.

In our region, there are always glimmers of hope, as in the case of Brazil and Argentina, and Latin American workers earnestly hope that they will become promising and exemplary realities and that there will be no further frustrations.

The slogan “grow first and distribute later” has not only not worked but has confirmed, in our view, that the problem does not lie in the efficiency of strategies nor in the ability of those who implement them, but in the very essence of the model. Therefore, we think it is wrong to believe that this model of globalization can be made human because, in its very concept, it has inherent negative results that have been obtained thus far, if we measure it in terms of overall development for our peoples.

Today, more than ever before, it is absolutely essential to pool thinking and develop creative dimensions to think, prepare and promote alternative models and strategies for development, the focal point of which will be the individual and human labour, the driving force of which will be social justice and which will be inspired by a common feeling of solidarity. This challenge is even more difficult when we bear witness to new parameters of world domination, where human rights, social justice and solidarity among peoples are shifted so that the force of weapons, the insatiable appetite for the control of energy sources and a growing contempt for international institutions and civilized dialogue and agreement are imposed upon us.

In this international framework, the ILO is increasingly appearing to be an obstacle and an ancient depository of principles and rights, scorned as being a brake on supposed modernity, which is the privilege of the business world. Above and beyond its limitations, the ILO is more necessary than ever before; obviously, it has its shortcomings, but we must strengthen and protect it with greater care in an international context.

The bad examples set by the new international framework are yielding and sustaining mediocre and appalling copies in the Latin American region where Colombia, Guatemala and Cuba are sad examples of the permanent and systematic violation of the fundamental rights of workers and where impunity is forever gaining ground.

We welcome the timely initiative of the Director-General to set up a World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. The experience of the Latin American dialogue that took place in December last year was not only a light at the end of the tunnel of reality in our region but most particularly a challenge which must be pursued and developed.

Only through sincere and open dialogue and only with healthy probing into new alternatives for development will we be able to confront new projects such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas and old sores such as foreign debt, which only prolong the domination and underdevelopment of our peoples.

In the fervent struggle for a more just, respectful and supportive world, based on work and the overall development of people, the ILO must play a key and unique role. This is where our commitment and our greatest strengths lie.

Mr. BATBAYAR (*Government delegate, Mongolia*) — I warmly congratulate Mr. Wamalwa on his election as President of the 91st Session. My felicitations also go to the three Vice-Presidents. I am confident that under Mr. Wamalwa's leadership the International Labour Conference will fulfil its mandate successfully.

I would like to convey to the Director-General the full support and sincere congratulations of the Government of Mongolia on his well-deserved reappointment. Mongolia expects a further expansion of the fruitful cooperation with the ILO during his new term of office. He will personally experience such an enthusiasm when he visits my country.

The reports by the Governing Body, the President, and the Director-General, present a unique opportunity to reflect on the current situation in the social and labour sector.

Social dimensions of globalization, presentation of the Global Employment Agenda, assessment of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, promotion of micro-finance, feasibility study on a Global Social Trust; these are the highlights of the activities of our Organization since the last session. Mongolia welcomes these new initiatives. Here, I wish to pay a tribute to the outgoing Chairperson of the Governing Body, Lord Brett, whose contributions are duly recognized by my country.

We share the conclusions in the reports before us, that we have to fight poverty in all its forms, including income poverty. Mongolia fully supports the Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05. We are specifically pleased with the new policy to increase budgetary allocations for technical support and for the ILO regional centres.

Mongolia continues its far-reaching social and economic reforms as it transforms into a modern society. However, its transition to a market economy does produce side-effects, the epicentre of which is the social and labour sector. This is a common reality in all transition economies.

Our mistake in the past was considering unemployment and poverty as by-products or secondary, instead of treating them as policy priorities. We have revised our policy. Mongolia considers that the success of any policy aimed at economic growth shall be measured by the rate of reduction in unemployment and poverty and by achievements in ensuring social justice.

Mongolia has recently modified its Labour Code on the basis of tripartite consultations, to ensure that the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work are fulfilled. It has ratified six fundamental ILO Conventions. Currently under consideration for ratification are the Forces Labour Convention, 139 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).

I am pleased to inform that, as a result of the Government's efforts and policies, unemployment in Mongolia has decreased to its lowest rate in the past ten years.

We recognize, however, that disparities exist and widen between urban and rural areas. In the specific conditions of the country internal migration increases and becomes a basis for the informal sector and shadow economy. All these factors distort the labour market.

In addition, the climate change and frequent natural disasters badly affect the quality of life and employment in rural communities. Therefore, our social and labour policy has to take into account the social dimensions not only of the globalization, but also of local polarization. Challenges to our tripartite community are stronger than ever before. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the Global Employment Agenda, we have to work more efficiently everywhere. And we have to succeed.

*Original Vietnamese: Mr. LE (Deputy Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam)* — It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the delegation of the Government of Viet Nam and to congratulate the President on his election to head the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I truly believe that under his Presidency, our session will be a great success.

First, I am glad to be able to inform you all that the Office of the International Labour Organization was officially opened in Hanoi, Viet Nam and went into operation in February 2003. Since then, the activities carried out by the Office have been very practical and effective, demonstrating a high sense of responsibility. We therefore believe that comprehensive cooperation between the ILO and Viet Nam will be further enhanced for the purposes of development and social justice.

The Vietnamese delegation would like to congratulate the Director-General and welcome his Global Report, *Time for equality at work*. Similar to the three Global Reports on the implementation of the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which were presented at previous sessions of the ILC, this Report gives a comprehensive picture of the implementation of anti-discrimination principles in the workplace. The Government of Viet Nam reaffirms its support for the ILO's concept that the elimination of discrimination is a core, continuous step towards social justice, the liberation of the workforce, and the protection of dignity, employment, social insurance and welfare of workers. We would also like to reaffirm the fact that equal rights between the sexes in occupations and in remuneration, as laid down in the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), which were the first two Conventions that Viet Nam ratified after resuming its status as a Member of the ILO in 1992, have been included in the

Viet Nam's Labour Code, which came into force on 1 January 1995. At that time, the Government of Viet Nam established a National Committee for the Advancement of Women to encourage more active and thorough participation of women in all socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of the life of the country. The Government also established a separate system of policies for protecting the legal rights and benefits of women at work, including healthcare, education, marriage and family.

We fully agree with the issues mentioned by the Director-General in his Report *Working out of poverty*. Over recent years, many of the international community's joint efforts, as well as the efforts of individual countries, for the alleviation of poverty have been strengthened and have produced great results. In Viet Nam, after more than a decade of economic reform, along with maintaining an annual average growth of more than 7 per cent, we have seen the rate of poverty reduced continuously every year. This result was due to the significant efforts and attention given to the issue by the Government, which has identified poverty alleviation as a strategic objective. Viet Nam's national poverty alleviation programme includes active measures, such as targeting resources to assist 1,700 of the poorest local communities with specific projects to improve their infrastructure including roads, electricity systems, schools, clinics, rural markets, safe water, and so on, with a view to enhancing the capacity of people to access job opportunities and to create their own jobs as self-employed people.

To continue those efforts and to strengthen the results already achieved, the Government of Viet Nam has recently announced a Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS), in which employment has an important part to play in promoting economic development and dealing with social security related issues. At present, the Government of Viet Nam, along with the social partners in the country, is cooperating with the ILO office in Hanoi to establish a decent work agenda for Viet Nam, based on the CPRGS and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. We truly believe that this agenda will cover the country's priorities on growth and poverty reduction as well as the ILO's global priorities. This will be an appropriate framework for strengthening cooperation between the ILO and Viet Nam on poverty alleviation.

As far as the legal system covering labour in Viet Nam is concerned, after the approval in April 2002 by the National Assembly of an Act revising and supplementing several articles of the Labour Code, the Government of Viet Nam passed almost 20 implementing documents to clarify the revised Code. These revisions and supplements have made the labour legislation of Viet Nam more appropriate both to the market economy and to international standards and norms, in order to better protect the rights and benefits of partners participating in labour and employment relationships and to strengthen the international integration process.

In this forum, we would like to share with you the negative impacts that severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) has had on labour, employment and business activities. Civil aviation, tourism, and hotels were the first to suffer. As you may be aware, Viet Nam was one of the first countries to be severely affected by SARS. However, thanks to the timely and

strong measures taken by the Government, with assistance and support from the World Health Organization, Viet Nam has been successful in thoroughly controlling the disease. To be more specific, since 8 April 2003, there have been no new cases of SARS in Viet Nam. On 28 April 2003, Viet Nam was the first country in the world to be officially acknowledged by the WHO as worthy of removal from the list of SARS-infected countries. This success has helped Viet Nam to relaunch its tourism and trade activities and to continue to attract investment and protect the climate for economic growth, employment promotion and income improvement for labour.

On this occasion, I am pleased to inform you all that on 28 May 2003, the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam officially ratified the participation of Viet Nam in the Minimum age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). Viet Nam is also cooperating with ILO-IPEC in effectively implementing certain projects to prevent child labour and the traffic in children and women in Viet Nam.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the delegation of the Government of Viet Nam, to sincerely thank the International Labour Organization for the support and assistance extended to Viet Nam in the past and I hope that the ILO will further support Viet Nam in the coming years.

Mr. FAHEY (*Minister for Labour Affairs, Ireland*) — One of the first priorities of the Irish Government, which was elected a year ago this week, was to put in place a new Social Partnership Agreement between the Government, employers and trade unions, entitled “Sustaining Progress”. The new Agreement represents, as did all of its predecessors, an evolution in social partnership. It is important that the Irish system of social partnership should continue to be dynamic and capable of reflecting developments in the broader environment, rather than being rigid and inflexible.

The first part of the new Agreement identifies ten main areas in respect of which, by consensus, new measures are to be addressed during the three-year period of the Agreement. Included amongst those initiatives are: housing and accommodation; migration and interculturalism; the long-term unemployed, vulnerable and redundant workers; educational disadvantage; and care — that is of children, people with disabilities and older people.

Ireland’s social partnership model has brought many benefits, particularly by providing the stability for Government, employers and workers that is so vital in planning for the future.

Chapter 5 of the new Agreement relates to “delivering a fair and inclusive society”. The core objective here is to build a fair and inclusive society, ensuring that people have the resources and opportunities to live life with dignity and have access to quality public services that underpin life chances and experiences. This core objective is very much to the fore in the Director General’s excellent Report, *Working out of poverty*.

The second part of the new Agreement relates to pay and the workplace. In addition to recommending pay increases over an 18-month period in the first instance, commitments are entered into on work/life balance programmes, statutory redundancy payments, the national minimum wage, employee representation and an anti-inflation initiative. The

Director-General’s Report, in a similar vein, develops an analysis of the interrelationships between the absence of decent work opportunities and poverty and the need to focus on policies to promote more and better jobs as a key component of the global drive to reduce and eradicate poverty.

Given that the causes of poverty are many and interconnected, one of the most encouraging aspects of the new approach to poverty reduction and eradication is the emphasis on policy coherence based on a comprehensive development framework.

Ireland is pleased to note that, in its Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05, the ILO intends to intensify its work with constituents in member countries wishing to use the Decent Work Agenda as a basis for targeting policies and programmes on the creation of more and better jobs and social inclusion. The ILO is able to facilitate joint analysis and connecting the “community of work” to national development policy debates and international initiatives with the aim of fostering a common understanding of the contribution which decent work can make to overcoming the poverty challenge.

A flexible agenda for national discussions between the social partners might include – as it has done so successfully in Ireland – employment and enterprise development, social protection rights and labour law reform, social dialogue, gender and partnerships.

I would like to refer briefly to the health and safety item on the agenda of this year’s session of the Conference. As a Minister with responsibility for policy in this area, I am struck by the fact that success in this area is dependent – in a true ILO tripartite manner, on the help of employer groups and trade unions, as well as individual employers and workers. Accordingly, I look forward with much interest to the outcome of the discussion on ILO standards-related activities in the safety and health area.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in furthering the objectives of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and particularly, their efforts in raising awareness about this issue among trade unions and workers in Ireland. I also commend their involvement with the NGO Concern in recently launching a campaign entitled “School is the best place to work”. I wish them every success with this initiative.

Finally, I would like to inform the Conference that the Irish Government, through its Irish Aid Programme, has recently announced its intention to provide 600,000 euros for the ILO programmes on forced and bonded labour. This is a direct follow-up to an intervention by my predecessor at the 2001 session of the Conference, and I look forward to fruitful outcomes for the initiatives covered by this funding.

*Original French:* Mr. JUQUEL (*Workers’ delegate, France*) — The world is characterized by deep inequalities which continue to grow between rich and poor countries and within countries themselves. This situation leads to poverty and a denial of human dignity, creating tensions, frustration and violence.

The Director-General’s Report, *Working out of poverty*, addresses a crucial issue for the future of our planet. At a time when the framework of negotiation and consensus provided by international law has recently been called seriously into question, it is important to recall the Preamble to the ILO Constitution, which states that “universal and lasting peace

can be established only if it is based upon social justice,” and the Declaration of Philadelphia, which states that “poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere”.

We share the stark conclusions of this Report and its suggestions. While we cannot legislate employment into place, we do need an active policy in this area.

Consequently, my organization, the CGT, along with other trade unions from France and other Member States of the OECD called on the recent G8 meeting in Evian, and on the OECD countries, to kick start world growth in order to meet people’s basic needs, to develop employment, to provide for high-quality social welfare, and to promote sustainable development and a responsible economy.

Let us put an end to the distinction between the economic and social spheres. Sustainable development cannot take place in one without taking place in the other.

A strong tripartite commitment, at the international and national levels, is absolutely essential if we are to have a lasting impact on poverty. Given that, we believe that the status and role of the ILO should be strengthened in international institutions and negotiations. That also means practical steps to show recognition for trade unions and the support of all actors for the development of the union movement. We strongly believe that another world is possible, as the Report rightly suggests, but we have to build it together, in order to achieve a globalization process kept firmly in check by the social dimension and a respect for fundamental rights.

We agree that the fight against discrimination is a significant part of the fight against poverty and that, if we are to overcome discrimination, we have to start by eliminating it from the world of work.

This is an issue which affects all countries, France included. In Europe in recent years, we have witnessed a rise in nationalism and populism, often based on xenophobia and racism, which has struck a chord among workers with low wages or precarious employment situations.

Issues related to security and measures taken by some governments in this regard threaten to exacerbate the problem of negative image-building of foreign scapegoats, which leads to discriminatory practices.

We concur with this Report in so far as we cannot simply rely on market forces to eliminate such practices. The union movement, together with employers and governments, have a significant part to play in eradicating racism from both business and society. Trade Unions have to ensure that employers respect labour laws in this regard, as well as eliminating expressions of racism from the ranks of their own members.

New forms of discrimination are emerging. For example, in France, young people from inner-city estates, whatever their racial origin, experience particular difficulty in getting jobs.

Unemployment and insecurity fan the flames of discrimination, particularly against women, encouraging the latter to remain out of the labour force and in the home.

Most instances of enforced part-time jobs, subcontracting and short-term contracts worsen inequalities and lead to low wages.

To work effectively against discrimination and poverty is therefore an indispensable part of policies

to counter social exclusion, reduce unemployment, enhance vocational training, and lead to better conditions of work and employment and greater employment stability.

Finally, a few weeks before the WTO Ministerial Conference opens in Cancun, I would like to insist on the importance of respect for core labour standards and the need for them to be taken into account by the WTO when it forms its policies.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. PÉREZ DEL CASTILLO (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Uruguay*) — *Working out of poverty* is a thought-provoking document and a hymn to optimism. We must not tire one moment in combating this cruel scourge.

How difficult it is, in just five minutes, to select some of the subjects that are worth expounding on. I would like to refer first of all to the loss of dignity of parents who are forced into poverty. “The most injurious and debilitating characteristic of poverty is loss of dignity”, says the Director-General. “Being able to support oneself and contribute to the family and community through work builds self-respect and the respect of others”. These are wise words to emphasize that man needs to feel useful and creative, to know that he can earn, with his own hands, what he needs for himself and for his family.

There is an old poverty that is not really even aware of it, and there is also a new poverty that is derived from unemployment and the loss of quality of life, which is more difficult to overcome than the former. It is individual regression with all its consequences, but it is also the loss of human capital that should be an asset for the entire community.

It is necessary to convince those who fall into the error of an economist’s vision that poverty is bad business for countries to look again, not only because it reduces the markets for potential consumers, but also, and especially, because it increases the expenditure necessary on education on the recovery of lost human capital and on maintaining citizen safety.

It is obviously not necessary to recall the links between poverty and unemployment. It is important to keep in mind the human face of unemployment before looking at numbers. Because unemployment is not a figure, it has a face, sometimes a very hard one, which reflects the loss of hope — something that one should never lose.

In Uruguay we are making every effort to stimulate initiatives that will generate jobs throughout our territory, encouraging an environment favourable to investment that will enable us to give stable and full employment to all our people.

However, we also support short, sharp programmes that will alleviate the current situation and prevent the social deterioration of the vulnerable sectors. We are trying to maintain labour capacity in the country and avoid sinking into marginalization both from the social and economic points of view, an aspect sometimes ignored when one has a short-term vision of public spending.

We are at a crossroads. It is obvious that we need to overcome blinkered interests, sectoral concerns and an emphatic refusal to see things from a different angle, depending on who is making the proposals.

We need to see an effort being made by the whole of society, including tripartite mobilization. Tripartism is a privileged instrument, it is consultation, it is seeking agreements and dialogue, but it

never replaces democratic government and it should never be an obstacle to fulfilling the political responsibilities of those who have been elected.

It will no longer be possible for the majority of people to have a stable job for life in a nearby organization. For this reason it is necessary to promote the entrepreneurial spirit: micro- and small enterprises must be set up. In effect, as stated in the Director-General's Report, training is necessary to help the thousands of people who wish to set up their own businesses and be self-employed, and who have the necessary skills and ideas to do so, to pursue their goal.

A major factor in the increase in poverty are the damaging effects of rural migration, where people come to the cities in search of work but instead find themselves without work, shelter, schools, or food, and are simply swelling the ranks of the urban poor.

Another point for future reflection relates to the equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth, and in particular growth achieved through labour-intensive occupations.

I would also like to recall the link between poverty and the unfair distribution of goods within countries and also between countries. It is not true that all of this derives from imperialism but it is true that the richest countries have an urgent obligation to create opportunities for trade and to accept not only out of their own generosity, but for reasons of justice, that tariff barriers and obstacles to international trade must fall.

May the doors to free trade open! This would be the best way of contributing to the economic and social development of the poorest countries! "Another world is possible", it is possible to banish destitution and extreme poverty. It is time for us to join forces in this struggle. The objective is the happiness of all men and all women.

I wish to conclude on a note of optimism regarding the struggle against our most pressing concern. We must now grasp hold of hope and utopia. Our obligation is to change utopia into reality. We must not give up, we must work towards this hope that we all have, or had, and many of us still hold dear, our hope that a fairer and more united world will become more than just a political campaign slogan.

*Original Russian: Ms. MORAVA (Government delegate, Belarus)* — First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Wamalwa on his election as President of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference and wish him every success in his work.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, for his Report in which he describes his vision of the role of the International Labour Organization in tackling one of the most important problems of our time, the issue of poverty.

The modern world is characterized by fast-moving multifaceted development in the economic and social sphere.

Globalization brings with it new possibilities. At the same time it is becoming ever clearer that not everybody in the world can avail themselves of the advantages of globalization to the same degree.

Growing competition has led to the restructuring of production, a loss of jobs and a growth in unemployment. There is more and more recourse to flexible forms of employment guaranteeing a lower level of protection to the worker.

The interests of hundreds of millions of workers require the active participation of the ILO in protecting labour and social rights.

The concept of decent work allows us to strike a necessary balance between the challenges which are before us, in terms of economic development and the circumstances of fierce international competition, and at the same time the requirement to guarantee the social protection of the workers. Decent work means compliance with labour laws and it means ruling out any recourse to forced labour or discrimination.

Child labour is still a complex problem, the root causes of which can be economic, social or cultural in nature. In June 1999, the International Labour Conference adopted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). This Convention is rightly included in the core Conventions.

As well as another 47 Conventions of the ILO, the Republic of Belarus ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in the year 2000. I think the ratification of this Convention by all members of the ILO would be a significant step forward in eliminating entirely child labour.

Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO serve as a guide for reforming our national legislation.

During this session we are looking at the standard-setting activities of the ILO in the field of health and safety at work. Indeed, there is a need now to assess the relevance and contemporary nature of ILO standards in this important area, analysing the way they are applied in practice, so that we can devise a united approach to the regulation of health and safety at work in the future.

We support the proposal to adopt a new framework Convention, which would include the core elements for ensuring rational and effective management of national systems of health and safety at work in modern circumstances. I feel such an analysis would be useful in other areas, for example, in the field of social security.

The Belarusian social policy corresponds very much to the approaches of the ILO. Despite many difficulties of the transition period, the Government of Belarus is doing everything it can to implement in practice the ILO Decent Work Programme. In line with the programme of social and economic development of the Republic of Belarus for 2001 to 2005, the main aim of our social policy is to ensure sustainable growth in the living standards of our population and the alleviation of poverty. At this time in our country, we are seeking to reform our labour and social spheres. We are working on many different areas — reform of the pension system, of social security and benefits, improving wage payments and employment policy. We are convinced that in this process of reform it is important to draw on the experience of the world community, so we are particularly concerned to ensure the active assistance of the ILO.

Belarus supports the policy of this Organization to strengthen ILO presence in the field and ensure that its consultative and technical assistance is closer to the real needs of the beneficiary countries. In his Report, Mr. Somavia expresses the certainty that despite the scepticism of many, another world — a world without poverty — is possible. We must do everything we can, both within the ILO and elsewhere to achieve this end.

*Ms. MUGANZA (Secretary of State responsible for Vocational Training, Professional Employment and*

*Labour, Rwanda*) — It is with great pleasure that the Rwandan delegation takes this opportunity to join the other delegations in extending its heartfelt congratulations to the Officers of the Conference, in particular to the Vice-President of Kenya for having been elected to chair this session.

I am convinced that under his guidance, the 91st session of the Conference will successfully conclude its deliberations.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia for being re-elected as the ILO Director-General, and my delegation wishes him success in his mission.

The Government of Rwanda supports the objectives of the International Labour Organization, as well as its normative role, and shall always ensure that all those working on its territory have decent work, namely productive and gainful work that is carried out in conditions of liberty, equality, security and dignity.

It is in this perspective that we support all the efforts that are made in the field of technical cooperation, namely, social dialogue, respect for workers' rights, employment and social protection.

My delegation has studied the Director-General's Report with keen interest. In this connection, I would like to point out that the Government of Rwanda regularly produces the reports that are supposed to be made in accordance with article 22 of the ILO Constitution.

Regarding workers' remuneration in Rwanda, the law clearly spells out that workers with the same skills, who do the same type of work, in the same conditions, must receive equal pay, regardless of their origin or social or gender differences. The Government of Rwanda works closely with employers' and workers' organizations in order to ensure that these provisions are respected.

Regarding the speedy and full payment of salaries, our labour laws stipulate that a worker's salary shall be directly paid to him or her, unless the employee has accepted other arrangements. It is also stipulated that the salary shall be exclusively paid in the currency that is legal tender in Rwanda and payment in kind, of all or part of the salary, is forbidden.

I would also like to emphasize that, in order to promote equal opportunities and treatment through the formulation and the implementation of national policy that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination in employment and professions, article 12 of the Labour Code states that distinction, exclusion or preference of any kind based on race, ethnicity, colour, sex, religion or political opinion are prohibited.

As for the protection of workers against forced labour, I would like to affirm my Government's commitment, through our recent labour laws, to the idea that forced or compulsory work is absolutely forbidden. Rwanda has also ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

Regarding training and skills development, we believe that this is one of the priority strategies for poverty reduction and sustainable development for our country. I trust that the Conference will adopt an adequate instrument to promote policies and programmes of training and skills development.

Concerning poverty reduction, I would like to point out that Rwanda is facing a difficult challenge because the country must achieve a very high growth rate in order to reduce poverty. Poverty was perpetuated by bad leadership and policies of division and exclusion

that have characterized my country in the past century and was aggravated by the 1994 genocide that claimed over 1 million lives within 100 days. Since then the Government of National Unity has put emphasis on national reconstruction and reconciliation. Today, 60 per cent of Rwanda's population lives below the poverty line. Most of these are the female- and child-headed households. National programmes in favour of the vulnerable groups are given priority in national plans and budgets. Our objective, as spelt out in our 2020 Vision, is to reduce that number from 60 per cent to 25 per cent and increase the per capita income from \$250 to \$1,000 dollars during the next 15 years.

The Government of Rwanda has committed itself to ensuring a conducive environment in which people will feel free, happy and prosperous, and have a say in decision-making that affects their lives. This has been witnessed by the recent Rwandan Constitution drafted in a consultative and participatory manner. The Government will focus its efforts on the development of public infrastructure, on correcting market imbalances, which would occur as a result of unchecked market forces.

As I conclude my speech, I would like to register my country's satisfaction with the regular support that we have been given in order better to manage our human resources, promote tripartism and social dialogue and formulate national employment and vocational training policies. This is the way forward to national reconstruction.

On this note, I wish this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference every success in its deliberations.

*Original Spanish: Mr. TREJOS (Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security, Costa Rica)* — I bring greetings from the people and the Government of the Republic of Costa Rica to this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. We hope that it lives up to our expectations.

Our delegations is certainly grateful to the Director-General and the officials of the Geneva office and also to the officials of the Regional Office of the ILO in San José for their cooperation in the efforts made by our Government to improve the practical application of the principles established in the eight core Conventions, all of which we have now ratified.

The Director-General in his excellent Report, *Working out of poverty*, draws our attention to the urgency of lending a human dimension to the world economy. Since it was founded, the ILO has fulfilled its mission of improving the situation of workers, since lasting and universal peace can only be based on social justice. This is the main purpose of the ILO, whose Director-General contends that work is the best and most dignified way of emerging from poverty, and that this requires public policies, rights, social institutions and market mechanisms which will enable everyone earn a dignified living and to meet the needs of their family.

This afternoon, I wish to make it clear that our Government agrees with the ILO. The State is the creation of human beings and must therefore respond to their needs and aspirations, first and foremost for work, since it gives meaning and dignity to life and is at the service of humanity. It does not matter whether this work is physical, intellectual, creative or productive, what is important is that it reflects the characters

of men and women and gives them a *raison d'être*. Hence work becomes a human right as well as an obligation to oneself and to others. This notion is clearly established in our political Constitution, where it is defined as an individual right and an obligation to society.

Nowadays we cannot cut ourselves off from the world in which we live, but we must embark on the quest for a different kind of globalization, one whose guiding principle is decent work for all within a framework of total respect, for democratic freedoms and individual and collective rights, globalization where the creation of decent work is not an illusion, but a feasible objective.

In our country, by dint of the efforts of all Costa Ricans, we have wrought big changes and made substantial progress towards human development. While we do want to take advantage of the process of globalization we are experiencing, we must make the fight against poverty the basic reason for all economic activity. It is not a question of depriving business people of what they have rightly earned, it is a question of creating jobs, of making sure that labour rights are really enjoyed by workers, of securing fair wages and seeing to it that each worker and his family is covered by social security.

Guaranteeing the highest level of well-being possible for the people of our country has been one of the central objectives, guiding the action of the Government of Costa Rica. We have attained it through historic, sustained efforts to support programmes in sectors, such as education, health, social security and capacity building.

We have to bear in mind that today's global community, like most communities, is far from ideal. Unfortunately, not all its inhabitants receive equal treatment or have the same opportunities. Poverty is certainly widespread throughout the world and affects all societies — no country is immune to it.

I would like to wind up by supporting and welcoming the Director-General's proposal as an essential instrument in finding a solution which will benefit everyone. At this juncture, we call on all concerned to make a determined effort, through dialogue, to set out on the right path, in order that we may secure better results for all of our workers and therefore for our societies.

*Original French:* Mr. OKOMBI SALISSA (*Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Congo*) — Allow me, on behalf of the Congolese delegation, which I have the honour of steering, my Government and myself, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Michael Christopher Wamalwa on his election to the presidency of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to congratulate the three Vice-Presidents. I have no doubt that under their guidance this session of the Conference will be crowned with success.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Somavia on his re-election as Director-General of our Organization.

The delegation of Congo appreciates the true value of the Director-General's Report, *Working out of poverty*.

Indeed, the fight against poverty is a major challenge of our times. We agree that poverty can only be eliminated if we have decisive tripartite commitment. Working out of poverty presupposes the mobilization

of everyone — at the national and international level — in a true spirit of solidarity. That is why Congo, my country, supports the work of the International Labour Office in relation to Africa which deals with five priority and interdependent areas: poverty reduction; good governance; crisis management; HIV/AIDS prevention and a reduction of its impact; and regional integration.

Congo would also like to encourage the ILO's work to promote and strengthen social dialogue, the results of which are clear in some African countries. Here, I would like to point out that a national tripartite meeting on social dialogue was held in Brazzaville this year under the auspices of the Regional Programme for the Promotion of Social Dialogue in French-speaking Africa (PRODIAF).

The economic and social changes that have occurred throughout the world in the last ten years, which have been marked by profound changes in the world of work under the effects of globalization, put into question the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150). The adoption of a new and more dynamic instrument which is easy for member States to apply and more useful is therefore necessary.

With regard to the scope of the employment relationship, which is item 5 on our agenda, it should be noted that some categories of workers do not have any protection due to the current states of a majority of national labour legislation, and also ILO instruments, which only covers wage earners employed by identifiable employers. Therefore, Congo supports the discussion that will be held during this session of the Conference to identify the full scale and elements of this problem.

Furthermore, we give our support to the general discussion which should lead to a plan of action for a more streamlined and focused use of ILO OSH standards and other instruments. This plan of action is all the more essential given that economic and social upheavals at the international level greatly affect working conditions.

I could not conclude without expressing the gratitude of Congo and its President, His Excellency Denis Sassou Nguesso, to the Director-General of the ILO who spares no effort to help all those belonging to our Organization.

Mr. ARNOLD (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, New Zealand*) — This year the Director-General's Report focuses on *Working out of poverty*, emphasizing that "the world of work holds the key for solid, progressive and long-lasting eradication of poverty". It recognizes that it is not possible to legislate employment in and poverty out, but at the same time appears to reject the notion that economies must grow if employment is to be created. According to the Report, the strategy of grow first, distribute later "has not really worked", and yet it is difficult to see how any country can increase employment other than through economic growth.

Developed countries may be able to offer their unemployed a benefit safety net but paradoxically, this can itself equate with poverty, as that word is currently defined. For the developed countries, "poverty" is a very different concept from the abject poverty with which the Report is generally concerned.

For developed countries, it is all too possible to legislate protections in the employment area that have

the effect of condemning those without work to a relatively impoverished life dependent on state handouts. If employment is the route out of poverty, it should not be hedged around with excessive restrictions. When that happens, those with employment to offer become reluctant to employ, making it more difficult to address the social justice issues which are the Report's concern.

Legislation cannot create productive employment; it can only successfully create a supportive infrastructure. Siphoning off too great a proportion of profit and earnings for redistributive purposes impedes the wealth creation that alone brings productive jobs.

Governments are notoriously bad at picking winners. Their task should be to foster the entrepreneurial activity from which employment grows. Eliminating poverty requires both entrepreneurial activity and supportive government institutions. Governments should indeed set minimum employment standards, but not at such a level that only large corporations can hope to attain them. Governments should refrain from the temptation to indulge in over-zealous legislative activity.

The important thing is that living standards should improve for everyone as they have in developed countries. There, as we have noted, poverty does not generally mean a deprivation of basic necessities. It more usually means a standard of living well below the average. Social factors may contribute to developed world poverty, but excessive employment controls also play their part.

Unfortunately, like many developed countries, the ILO itself is often reluctant to accept necessary limitations on legislative and quasi-legislative activity. For example, the revised maternity protection Convention, adopted three years ago, has to date been ratified by only four countries, none of which provides a period of maternity leave as generous as that provided by New Zealand.

Countries that, until now have been thought of — wrongly, as it happens — as providing better maternity protection than New Zealand might have been expected to ratify the Convention promptly. That they have not done so reflects poorly on the Convention's prescriptive approach.

Conventions should concern themselves with matters of principle, leaving individual countries to decide for themselves how best to put principles into practice. Prescription reflects a belief that "one size fits all" and is not only unworkable but leaves open a complaint route for anyone who considers the letter of the law is not being observed. Understandably, governments want to avoid that kind of difficulty, although at the same time they may be perfectly willing to accept the principle involved. The problem is that if over-prescription makes ratification impossible, principle may well be lost.

The maternity protection Convention is but one example of a protection not properly fulfilling its intended function. The linking of trade and labour standards is another. The inability of developing countries to meet what are essentially Eurocentric standards has been a concern of ours for many years.

In conclusion, a prescriptive approach cannot solve the problem of poverty. It should be more widely understood that imposing prescriptive first-world labour standards on countries lacking the capacity to achieve them will only exacerbate the poverty in which too many of their citizens live. Sadly, the same is also true

for developed countries where the combination of good intentions and over-prescription leads too often to employment deprivation.

Ms. SHOULEVA (*Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria*) — Let me, first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria, congratulate the President and his deputies, on their unanimous election to such important positions. Let me also wish them successful work during the Conference.

The Director General's Report presents a large scope of opportunities to exchange views and opinions on labour as a major means for fighting poverty. The detailed analysis of our experience in fighting poverty reveals the need to adopt a package of political and economic measures, adapted to the problems that different countries face all around the world.

The Report stresses the fact that more than half of the population in the developing countries and in countries in transition live in poverty. We in Bulgaria are in a similar position, as a transition economy.

The Bulgarian Government intends to totally transform this situation. Our commitment has been clearly stated in the new strategy for social policy, which introduced a new approach to finding a solution to the most acute social problems in Bulgaria by synchronizing economic, financial and social policies. The main goal of the strategy is to reduce poverty and achieve higher and more stable employment by meeting the demands of the labour market.

The main priorities of that policy are related to an increase in employment through the application of active measures in the labour market, for example, providing training to unemployed and employed people, and providing incentives for employers to hire disadvantaged people.

With regard to long-term unemployment, our national programme — designed to move people away from social benefits to employment — reflects the new approach towards labour market policy, consisting of the transition from a passive to an active one — from passive grants of benefits and compensation, to active provision of employment through creation of jobs that are of public benefit. A similar programme aims to provide employment for jobless people who have not worked the required period for pension entitlement. Still under implementation is a programme aimed at promoting employment among young university graduates. As a result of these and other programmes relating to the labour market, the level of unemployment in Bulgaria has now reached its lowest level for three years.

The Director-General's Report also notes that the informal economy creates crime and corruption, and a grey labour market. We still have to confront that challenge. We have decided that it is essential at this early stage to wipe out the common practice among employers of insuring workers on the minimal insurance base. Through negotiations between social partners, we have determined insurance thresholds by economic sectors and professions. This has increased the revenue of the National Social Security Institute and has improved retirement conditions for workers.

Our Government has introduced a package of measures both as incentives for employers and the promotion of employment. This has resulted in an improvement in the situation of vulnerable groups.

In the limited time available, I would only point out that the reduction of poverty is of special concern to our Government. The World Bank and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have together launched a project relating to poverty.

I am a strong defender of the statement in the Report that social dialogue has played a major role in establishing the background for the expansion of opportunities to find decent work as a way of achieving social inclusion and the improvement of living standards. Bulgaria will very soon set up an economic and social council to maintain and develop beneficial dialogue among the social partners and NGOs.

The challenge of reducing extreme poverty calls for policies that focus on various aspects of the lives of people living in poverty. The main subject of the Report and its conclusions encourage each of us to implement the recommended frameworks for action to reduce poverty by providing decent work.

*Original French: Mr. GUIDER (representative, Arab Labour Organization) —* In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! First of all I would like to congratulate the President on his election as President of this session. We in the Arab Labour Organization follow with a great deal of interest the work of the International Labour Organization and its programmes.

I would also like to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia on his re-election for a second term, and I wish him every success in pursuing his efforts to carry out the programme of action. We hope that the Arab region will benefit more from programmes and activities, in order to respond to the needs of the social partners in the region.

I think it should be stressed that the Director-General's Report on the relationship between decent work and the reduction of unemployment and poverty is dealing with a phenomenon that is increasing, and we hope that the ideas and proposals in the Report will be translated into action in our contemporary world.

Likewise we find in the Report the movement towards equality at work, for the elimination of discrimination in employment and in occupation, and we hope that this will be done away with as migrant workers suffer from discrimination and inequality because of erroneous racist views.

I am also thinking of the sufferings of our workers in Palestine, in the Syrian Golan and on the Chobaa plains in South Lebanon. The ALO supports the noble objectives outlined in the Report for the promotion of equality at work.

With regard to this Report we would like to highlight two essential issues.

First, we were astounded that the Report for the very first time uses the term "countries of North Africa and the Middle East" instead of "Arab countries", which leads us to query this and to demand a convincing reply.

Second, we call on this forum which is concerned with equality, non-discrimination and the principles and standards of humanitarian work, no matter where, that the ILO take a meaningful position by sending a fact-finding mission to enquire into the dismissal of workers in Iraq, where the number of those dismissed has now reached 500,000, which means that half a million families are without income and are deprived of their livelihood, which as we

know is of course absolutely essential for the individual and for the family.

The global village and the new world order are terms which have become widely used since the 1990s, and which reflected an optimistic view at the dawn of this century. Each of these ideas gave the impression that finally there was an awareness that we all belong to the same family. Unfortunately it has become clear that we have not had an easy path to a world without racism, fanaticism, and short-term views. We have in fact returned to the law of the jungle, to the settling of questions by war, aggression and falsification and the creation of false pretexts in order to achieve economic benefits without consideration for the humanism of the individual, his beliefs and his social liberty.

What is happening in the world today has led many thinkers to doubt the efficiency of international institutions. The basis of an effective world labour policy has totally changed and the capacity of organizations to control events has become questionable.

We believe that for international organizations to exist – including the ILO – we must build a complementary world order where there are no double standards. A world order that is honest and worthy.

*Mr. GONZI (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Social Policy, Malta) —* I would like to extend my Government's congratulations to the Director-General on his re-election for a second five-year term at the helm of the International Labour Organization, and especially on the inspired manner in which he has led the Organization during his term of office. One can only describe his leadership as leadership with values, especially the value of inclusion, where we all strive for progress without leaving anyone behind.

This is clearly the message that is derived from the agenda of this 91st Session of the ILO's Conference, as well as the Report that has been presented to us by the Director-General.

We have an agenda that covers a wide range of issues dealing with inclusion, an agenda that proposes a new plan for fighting poverty worldwide, new forms of work and measures for improving job security, for ending forced labour and fighting discrimination at the workplace. Allow me to touch briefly on three of these issues.

Firstly, the Government of Malta endorses the thrust of the Director-General's message that the way out of poverty is through decent work. Of course, no legislation can ever eradicate poverty, but education can. Investment in schools and in adequate teaching facilities are the crucial elements that will undoubtedly bring about a change in the levels of poverty that still persist around the world. I urge this Conference to include this perspective in its efforts to devise a forward plan on this topic.

The second issue concerns the need to invest in life-long learning. It is a topic that deals with the training and development of human resources in a global economy which demands an ability to respond to changes that are taking place at an extremely fast pace. Malta is an island economy that will join the European Union on 1 May 2004 — a step that presents us with opportunities which can only be achieved through membership. However, our long history has taught us a very simple lesson: our economic and social progress can take place only if our human resources are empowered to respond to the economic and technological scenario in which jobs are created.

This can take place only if there is a concerted effort to invest in the lifelong development and training of our workers. Of course, this effort must be a tripartite one, in which each social partner has an important and vital role to play.

The third point I wish to take up refers to the items relating to the scope of the employment relationship and occupational health and safety. In this context, I am pleased to report that during the past five years my Government, together with the valid contribution of the social partners, has managed to establish a new legislative framework with respect to employment and industrial relations, gender equality, cooperative systems of working, discrimination, health and safety at work and, of course, social dialogue. This process happened in a short period of time and my Government is aware that there needs to be a period of discovery and learning to come to grips with the implementation process of such wide-ranging legislative changes.

We now need to enter into an era of consolidation. This will bring about a better understanding of mutual responsibilities as well as the further development of social dialogue with an enhanced level of participation and decision-making in a tripartite environment. We shall also be looking ahead for more and better inclusion of civil society.

I will conclude with a simple statement: social dialogue is about governance. Poverty is also intricately related to governance. The challenges are common to all of us, because work is the primary mechanism for combating social exclusion and deprivation. Work restores human dignity and fosters personal agency and interdependence. There are specific concerns even in this area – the increased participation of women in the productive economy, the assisted work rehabilitation of the long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities and those suffering from mental health difficulties, the bridging of the digital divide and the reduction of pay inequalities.

This forum provides us with an excellent platform, not just for discussion but also for the discovery of solutions.

*Original Arabic:* Mr. AL MANA (*Employers' delegate, Qatar*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I would like first of all, on behalf of the employers in Qatar, to congratulate the President on his election as President of this session.

It is a pleasure for me to participate in this Conference in my capacity as President of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which represents employers from all sectors. It is an honour for me to participate alongside other delegates in discussing important issues that concern all sectors of society. Labour is the way to ensure our survival as human beings, and that is the objective that both workers and employers seek to achieve. We are now turning our attention to improving living standards for everybody through improving working conditions and incomes.

Legislation governing the rights of individuals and the relation between them, including relations between workers and employers, has had a great effect on protecting the rights of all parties.

In Qatar, the promulgation of the permanent Constitution, under the gracious auspices of his Highness Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar, enshrines the foundations of justice in society. It guarantees the rights of individuals and affirms equality between

men and women, and the right of women to work alongside men in many domains. The Constitution also stresses education, making it a priority, responsibility for which rests with the State.

The experience of democracy that is beginning to take shape in Qatar, including elections to the Central Municipal Council, is the best proof of an opening up of social dialogue, and proposal of solutions to popular issues, in a real practice of democracy.

I would like to affirm that Qatar attaches considerable importance to the private sector and relies on it in the comprehensive development process at present witnessed by the country. The private sector is strongly encouraged not only by the State itself. The Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry is doing its utmost to maintain the advantages of the private sector and seeks to increase them, as well as encouraging medium and small businesses to develop.

Attaching importance to the private sector means that we also need to concern ourselves with the interests of workers and employers. That is why so many workers are attracted to work in the private sector. This contributes to employment and to the minimization of unemployment, all of which has a beneficial effect on the entire economy and per capita income.

I would like to underline that Qatar's Chamber of Commerce and Industry is following with interest the activities of the ILO, particularly with regard to the private sector and its role in development and job creation, and widening the scope of employment opportunities for women, as well other important issues. We look forward to strengthening our cooperation with the Organization, in order to benefit from its experience in these areas

The State of Qatar respects all international instruments, particularly those relating to human rights. This is further proof of our concern to protect individuals whatever their religion or belief, a right enshrined in the Constitution.

Finally, I would like to say that in Qatar we attach a great deal of importance to the rights of individuals. We support our brethren in all countries and stand with them for the protection of those rights. We are against all forms of racial discrimination and against exploitation of individuals in any way, particularly the exploitation of children.

I thank you for your attention, and wish this Conference all success.

Ms. FENTON (*Workers' delegate, New Zealand*) — Firstly, on behalf of the Workers' delegation of New Zealand, let me congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents on their election. I welcome this opportunity to address the Director-General's excellent Report as the Workers' delegate for our country.

In particular, can I specifically endorse the Director-General's acknowledgement, on page 13 of the Report, of the importance of strengthening the fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue, which will enhance the bargaining position of working people living in poverty and promote greater gender equity.

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions places an extremely high value on the work of the ILO. It is vital for union organizations to be able to refer to a tripartite body in terms of conventions, guidance on key issues and analysis and understanding of labour markets in a global world.

Today I want to focus on one of those Conventions.

In December last year, the New Zealand Government announced that in 2003 they would ratify the International Labour Organization's Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Our Minister of Labour said at the time that ratification of Convention No. 98 had been made possible because "the Employment Relations Act provides rights for employees to join unions and promotes the negotiation of collective employment agreements".

I agree with that statement and my organization welcomes the ratification by New Zealand of this very important Convention.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, in a recent review of core labour standards in New Zealand, noted that "there remain several gaps in the current legislation, particularly the Employment Relations Act, which should be addressed. These gaps include the right to strike and protection from discrimination for striking workers, and the active promotion of collective bargaining.

Fortunately, the Labour-led New Zealand Government has commenced a review of the Employment Relations Act. In fact, Labour Party policy at the election last year stated that "The review will focus on giving effect to the aim of promoting, as opposed to simply permitting, the free association of workers and collective bargaining. Matters that will be covered in the review include whether more administrative support needs to be given to facilitate multi-employer collective bargaining, particularly where the size of employer units in particular sectors makes enterprise bargaining inefficient and ineffective; and the adequacy of provisions in the Employment Relations Act to discourage and prevent the undermining and avoidance of collective bargaining."

The reality is that although we now have a law based on good faith and the promotion of collective bargaining, there are no penalties or remedies sufficient to make good faith bite, and only 15 per cent of New Zealand workers are covered by collective agreements.

The problems in our labour market go back to the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act in 1991.

That law wiped out overnight a carefully constructed system of national awards that provided minimum pay and conditions based on occupational and industrial definitions of coverage.

It was always going to be hard for a law such as the Employment Relations Act, which is based on excellent objectives such as good faith and promotion of collective bargaining and collective agreements, to provide anything like the level of protection for workers that we had under the previous award system.

But what we need to do is ensure that the new law can give real and concrete effect to its objectives.

So, today, I welcome the fact that our Government has ratified Convention No. 98 as a demonstration of its commitment to workers' rights and support for workers to organize and bargain collectively. The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions will be working with the Government, and with employers, to make the Convention an effective reality in Aotearoa New Zealand.

*Original Spanish: Mr. ERRAZURIZ (Employers' delegate, Chile) — I would like to start by conveying the very warm greetings of the employers of my coun-*

try. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO, my compatriot Juan Somavia, on his recent re-election.

For our delegation, this Conference is once again an incomparable opportunity to comment on and discuss matters pertaining to the world of work, which are of interest for workers and for business people who participate together in the daily activities of production in all our countries.

We thought it would be a good idea briefly to address the question of discrimination in the workplace and its impact on the generation of new work opportunities, freedom of contract, reduction of poverty, and decent work. All these matters in fact, are on the agenda of this Conference and addressed in recent reports by the Director-General.

This modern age demands of us that we get our countries as fully integrated as possible into the globalized world, in which development and increased productivity are important tools whose principle objective has to be the improvement of the quality of life of all of our peoples. To face up to this challenge properly, we have to overcome structures based on antagonism between workers and employers. These structures may have had some historical justification, but today they are completely obsolete. They have given way to a much more fruitful relationship in which cooperation and agreement within healthy and critical debate enrich and consolidate the labour policy options adopted. It is therefore absolutely necessary that we avoid the creation of arbitrary discrimination of any kind in the workplace. In particular, we have to ensure that we do not, under the guise of certain kinds of negative discrimination, end up doing away with the essential right of freedom of contract. This will create inequities which will affect equality of opportunities in access to work, with the undesirable consequence of a worsening the vicious circle of poverty as well as losses in productivity and efficiency.

It is very difficult to find any Labour Code in the world which does not have some provision banning any kind of discrimination based on age, sex, race, political opinion or religious affiliation. However, in most labour codes, such provisions do not go beyond statements of intention which are nullified by the other provisions. The main source of discrimination in the workplace is not to be found in the conduct of employers, as is often suggested in these standards but in a set of legal provisions which, while ostensibly trying to protect the rights of the workers, creates structures of such rigidity that they leave large groups of society outside the system. This happens for example, when excessively stringent minimum conditions are set, for example on working hours or minimum wages, preventing young people, women, or people with restricted time available because of other activities, from freely entering the labour market in jobs which are adapted to the time they have available. Figures on youth unemployment bear this out. We have to move forward in our efforts to integrate sectors of society which are currently excluded from productive work.

Economic growth cannot continue if large numbers of people are excluded by a labour law system which, paradoxically, purports to protect them

With regard to Chile, we are very much encouraged by the fact that in the next session of the National Congress a significant legislative initiative is to be pre-

sented by the Government which recognizes the problem of growth with exclusion. The draft legislation is intended to adapt labour laws and regulations to the realities of the times we live in, protecting the right of people to decent work but at the same time affirming freedom of contract as a manifestation of the fundamental autonomy of human beings to choose the conditions under which they wish to work in the light of their own needs. Initiatives such as this remind us that at the end of the day we are all equal, and the State is only there to promote sound employment relationships which protect citizens but also respect decisions freely made by them.

As President of the International Federation of Pension Fund Management Companies, which represent companies in 24 countries. I would like to mention the subject of the new pension funds based on individual capitalization that have been introduced in many countries to replace the old systems. These reforms have been a significant factor in growth in the countries where they have been introduced. Because of their efficiency, these funds provide better pensions for members, but also, by being invested in potential high-growth sectors, contribute to economic growth and the consequent reduction of unemployment.

I would like to conclude by expressing our satisfaction with the excellent way in which we have been working in this Conference. We hope that the remaining sittings will be just as fruitful, so that the ILO can continue to do the excellent job that it has been doing in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to it by its Members.

*Original Turkish: Mr. KILIC (Workers' delegate, Turkey)* — At the outset of my address I extend to you all my sincere greetings on behalf of the working people of Turkey.

I congratulate the President on his election and wish him every success. I also congratulate the Director-General for his successful activities and for his re-election to this important post.

The Report submitted by the Director-General to this Conference points to the solution to the ever-increasing problems of unemployment and poverty in the globalization process. I thank him for this Report. Poverty anywhere constitutes a threat to prosperity everywhere. Happy individuals cannot survive in unhappy societies. Governments, in the effective fight against poverty, should fulfil their responsibilities in creating decent work opportunities. Developed countries also have important responsibilities in this area. The power of transnational corporations, which are some of those most responsible for poverty in the world, should be restricted. The IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization should be democratized, and the operation of these institutions for the benefit of all humanity should be secured. A special effort should also be made to solve problems in the area of workers' health and safety created by globalization in line with the interests of transnational capital.

Unemployment is on the increase in the world and in Turkey. One of the most important reasons for this increase is privatization that has no social and human dimension. In spite of economic growth, social injustice, poverty and unemployment are on the increase. Economic growth should be realized in such a manner as to provide welfare for the people. Increased unemployment is being utilized as an opportunity to impair

workers' rights and to dismantle the social State. These initiatives damage social balance and social dialogue in the countries concerned. Governments should honour their promises to the electorate and create not "work at all costs" but decent work opportunities.

The Turkish working people believe in social dialogue. However, the new Labour Code, enacted on 22 May 2003, has not been adopted on the basis of a consensus. Under the name of "flexibility in working life", the acquired rights of workers have been amended to the benefit of employers. If flexibility leads to practices against workers, it might cause social unrest in the workplace and in society. We shall observe attentively the implementation of the Act and will use all our strength through legal opportunities and the channel of social dialogue, to eradicate any problems that arise. I expect the effective operation of the tripartite consultation committees, stipulated under article 114 of the new Labour Code, to indeed come to fruition. The Minister of Labour and Social Security has demonstrated his good will concerning social dialogue thus far. The social dialogue which had been ignored as a result of pressure from various circles shall be revived and the same good will shall be demonstrated in the solution of problems that might arise during the implementation of the Code. The Director-General has also noted in his Report that the democratic organization of workers should be secured. I urge the necessary steps to be taken to bring our labour legislation into full harmony with the ILO Conventions ratified and to provide to public servants all the rights stipulated in 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). I also urge the successful activities of the ILO office in Turkey to be supported by new technical cooperation and training projects at the International Labour Office.

Another important problem in my country is workers' wage arrears. The wage arrears of Belediye members have exceeded US\$100 million. In the public and private sectors, some workplaces are refraining from paying wages and fringe benefits. The non-payment of these receivables is leading to great social unrest and I urge the payment of wages in arrears as soon as possible.

The last topic I shall be commenting upon is an important decision by the Netherlands against the interests of retired Turkish workers. The Netherlands has terminated the payment of supplementary benefits to Turkish workers receiving invalidity benefits and who have settled in Turkey, in violation of the Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118). I believe that the ILO should prevent this violation.

The Turkish working people urge for peace in the world. I hope that the Iraqi people will be able to determine democratically their own future in the shortest time possible and that they will be assured of workers' rights and trade union rights and freedoms in harmony with ILO principles and Conventions. The Turkish working people, who have considerable accumulated experience in this area, are ready to make any useful contribution.

Mr. MAMMADOV (*Employers' delegate, Azerbaijan*) — I greet you on behalf of the National

Confederation of Entrepreneurs' (Employers') Organizations of Azerbaijan and wish every success to the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to express our gratitude for the efforts of the Director-General of the International Labour Office in preparing this year's Report, which concerns one of the fundamental principles of the ILO, namely the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. I would like to commend the International Labour Organization on its campaign to eliminate discrimination in employment and occupation and promote gender equality, and for the special ILO programmes to raise awareness, build knowledge and skills and facilitate social dialogue in order to address gender and equality issues.

Azerbaijan, like other CIS countries, has reached a key historical stage in its respective transitional and development processes. Negative features of the transition — which include of the reduction of incomes, the growth of unemployment and the weakening of social support and security — affect all people, irrespective of gender. As a result of the transformation into a market economy, fundamental political, economic and social changes in the country have, in many ways, affected women and men differently. Gender mainstreaming is becoming an important tool for guaranteeing the well-being of decent working conditions for both men and women, who need to share common interests in the labour and social spheres, and for eliminating discrimination in the field of employment and occupation.

Poverty is linked to economy-wide problems of employment. Poverty eradication, through employment, calls for the removal of gender inequalities and the advancement of women's and men's equal rights at work. The promotion of gender equality in the world of work requires an enabling environment in which human rights can be enjoyed by all.

Equality is constitutionally guaranteed in Azerbaijan, and there is a long-standing tradition of commitment to equality. The National Constitution, the Labour Code, the Law on Employment and other legislative acts provide equal rights for men and women in employment and occupation, education and other spheres. As an employers' organization in Azerbaijan, we are concerned about creating and maintaining productive employment to help to reduce unemployment and poverty. The employers of Azerbaijan respect the fundamental principles of the ILO and recognize the value of freedom of association and rights to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of compulsory or forced labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment and occupation.

The National Confederation of Entrepreneurs' (Employers') Organizations of Azerbaijan has been cooperating with the ILO since 1999 and has benefited from a number of activities directed at strengthening employers' organizations in Azerbaijan. This successful cooperation with the ILO has resulted in the signature of a tripartite agreement with the Government and trade unions and the development of social dialogue in the country. The programme on SME Development for 2003-05, recently adopted by Decree of the President of Azerbaijan, creates a good basis for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which are an important source of economic growth.

As an employers' organization, we realize that the development of women's entrepreneurship is not only a significant means of poverty alleviation and employment generation, but also an effective tool for economic growth and sustainability. Thanks to the Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED) programme and the Bureau for Gender Equality of the ILO in Geneva and the subregional office of the ILO in Moscow, we have launched a regional project on women's entrepreneurship development through employers' organizations in Azerbaijan and Georgia, which will allow us to assess the present situation.

In conclusion, I would like to submit some of the suggestions of the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs' (Employers') Organizations of Azerbaijan which will increase the productivity of our cooperation with the ILO: assistance in designing equal employment opportunity policies for employers for increasing productivity and employee efficiency; increasing the support provided to employers' organizations in developing women's entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan and the incorporation of an ILO/WED project in Georgia and Azerbaijan into other relevant projects in this field; organization of seminars for employers in transnational companies on the regulation of labour relations and collective bargaining at the company level; organization of seminars to strengthen social dialogue and to promote effective mechanisms for tripartite consultations; and workshops and training for developing an occupational health and safety system in our country.

I would like, once more, to stress the importance of equality in employment and occupation and its impact in sustainable economic development.

*(Mr. Noakes takes the Chair.)*

Mr. AHMED (*Workers' delegate, Pakistan*) — On behalf of the Workers' delegation of Pakistan, I offer sincere congratulations to the President and Vice-Presidents on their elections. We convey fraternal greetings from the Workers' delegation to all the esteemed delegates.

We greatly appreciate the Report of the Director-General, *Working out of poverty*, and offer sincere congratulations to Mr. Somavia on his re-election as Director-General. We look forward to seeing the objectives and aims of this great Organization fulfilled.

The Report examines the state of affairs regarding poverty and unemployment in the world, a state of affairs where more than 1 billion people struggle on \$1 a day or less, and a far greater number live below the poverty line in conditions of material deprivation. High unemployment prevails, whilst the gap between rich and poor countries is widening, as pointed out on page 7.

In 1960, the income gap between the wealthiest fifth of the world's population and the poorest fifth was 30 to 1, but by 1999, it had reached 74 to 1. Resources, instead of being channelled to developing countries, are flowing out of them to the developed countries. Twenty per cent of the world's people own 86 per cent of the world's wealth, and it needs international action to achieve the minimum goals by providing debt relief and ensuring fair trade in order to allow the developing countries to tackle issues of poverty alleviation, instead of being obliged to implement constant deregulation measures, structural adjustments and privatizations while opening up their

markets at the behest of the WTO without any adequate social protection. Transfer of technology is also vitally important, and we support the Global Social Trust Fund which has been proposed. Arms expenditure must be redirected towards social and economic development and HIV eradication.

I am saying this because the Declaration of Philadelphia states that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. National action is also required to promote development and human resources development geared to the needs of the labour market. Strategic alliances need to be forged between different sectors, through social dialogue, in a way consistent with ILO Conventions that protect workers, to promote industrial development and cordial industrial relations, and to narrow the gap between the rich and poor. Our goal must ultimately be to abolish feudalism, promote gender equality, eliminate child labour and improve social protection.

We in Pakistan have achieved some success in reducing poverty. In South-East Asia, 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, and this requires tripartite action. We in Pakistan have a tripartite system of meetings which have made comprehensive recommendations on poverty alleviation. The newly elected Government has committed itself to poverty alleviation, and we hope and expect that the Government, which promulgated a previous industrial relations ordinance in 2002 that was in violation of the ILO's Conventions, will comply with its international obligations and allow dialogue to take place.

Measures have been taken to promote employment. The Government recently announced the allocation of new funds for employment promotion.

In the globalizing economy, bilateral relations are also essential for providing employment, eliminating poverty, developing human resources and protecting workers' rights. We fully support and appreciate the ILO's work in the field of employment training standards, workers' education, social protection and social dialogue, safety and health, gender issues and child labour. We also appreciate the work of the Asia Pacific Office and the Islamabad Office, and we look forward to the ILO contributing efforts in Asia and the Pacific and in South Asia, including Pakistan, to tackle these issues.

The goal of decent work can only be achieved if there is national and international action. We hope that this Conference will be a milestone for achieving a better tomorrow for workers. We wish it every success.

*(Mr. Noakes takes the Chair.)*

Ms. LUCERO (*representative, Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists*) — On behalf of the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists (BATU), the Asian branch of the World Confederation of Labour, I wish to extend my warmest greetings to all the distinguished participants at this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference and join them in congratulating the Director-General for his extensive, well-thought out, down to earth Report on eradicating poverty through decent work.

It is indeed enlightening to be guided into an analysis of the fundamental roots of poverty and equally challenging to be presented with an agenda and strategy to finally eradicate this scourge of the earth.

As you can imagine, for most of us Asians, coming from the continent where over half of the world's poor people live, the topic addressed so meticulously by the Director-General is very close to our hearts.

We are privy to the hopes and aspirations of the extremely poor workers and peasants in our midst who toil for such long hours, of the fisher folks who risk their lives and limbs at sea despite stormy weather, just to have at least one square meal for their family; of the migrant workers who are lured into illegal, and sometimes fatal, if not immoral, work owing to the miserable conditions in the poor land of their birth; of the street children who have never known the difference between play and work for survival; of the elderly and disabled who are left to fend for themselves owing to lack of social protection, and the girls and women tending to farms or household chores without the opportunity for social development.

We say, with downtrodden hearts, what a waste! Do we deserve this destiny?

As the Director-General rightly points out: "never have we seen so much wealth while so many continue to live in abject poverty". To be poor is totally inhumane and undignified, and to provide decent work to everyone is to provide dignity for all.

We believe that the presentation of this topic before this international body is a manifestation of our concern to finally achieve social justice for all.

We share in this vision for a just and humane society for everyone. We urge all our social partners and all stakeholders to take initiatives to put an end to this misery.

Let us join our efforts in promoting equality in the distribution and sharing of the world's resources by making them available to all.

As we move towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, let us build another possible world.

Mr. MARICA (*Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, Suriname*) — I wish to thank the President for giving me this opportunity to address my colleagues and other distinguished delegates at this session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this session of the Conference.

I am honoured to be in the position, once again, to take part in the discussions on an excellent Report prepared by the Director-General on the occasion of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference.

This Report, in combination with the previous Reports, gives us tools to help us in our battle against poverty, and provides us with goals to create decent work opportunities.

In the Report of the Director General attention is given to the threat posed by HIV/AIDS worldwide. As a member of the Caribbean Community, I would like to draw special attention to the HIV/AIDS threat that we face in the Caribbean.

Recent studies have shown that in the Caribbean a relatively high percentage of people are affected by HIV/AIDS. It is also known that our region consists mostly of small states with small economies, and the impact of HIV/AIDS on our productivity and economic competitiveness is devastating and undermines our policies to attract foreign investments and create decent jobs.

We have to work towards a solution to this problem. In Suriname a programme was implemented recently to collect finances to supply medicine free of charge to HIV/AIDS-affected persons. The overwhelming results of this action will enable us to make extended use of the skills of, among others, affected workers.

Another issue in the Director-General's Report that received my special attention was "working to end child labour". Once again, shocking figures regarding child labour are presented. Taking this into account, I wish to stress again that if we want to achieve a future without child labour, we should strive for a future without poverty. In my opinion, the most sustainable way of reducing poverty is to create productive and decent employment.

I would like to state that my Government is committed to ratifying the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). All the preliminary work has been completed and we are in the final stages of ratification.

The Report of the Director-General shows that in our struggle against poverty there are many threats that we must overcome. In my opinion, the primary action that we should take is the tripartite creation of a modern legal framework, in which our workforce is stimulated to achieve quality and quantity in production, while employers are committed to improving working conditions.

In this light, the Government of Suriname, through the Ministry of Labour, is in the process of tripartite consultations that should result in the amendment of our labour legislation.

Regarding the agenda item on human resources training and development, I may also inform you that my Ministry recently started a vocational training project in developing skills and the strengthening of institutions.

Occupational safety and health is a fundamental right of workers. In my country, we are in the process of upgrading existing legislation on this issue, and the first discussions in this regard have been started to introduce a new updated Safety and Health Act.

I would like to conclude with the statement that the Government of Suriname is committed to supporting all the efforts made by the ILO to create decent work in relation to poverty reduction and sustainable development for both workers and employers.

We trust and hope that the ILO will support our Government in the improvement of policies on child labour, HIV/AIDS and poverty eradication.

Mr. ERNESTA (*Government delegate, Seychelles*) — I should like to congratulate the President and Officers of the Conference on their election.

The Report entitled *Working out of poverty* is yet another piece of outstanding work by our Director-General, which demonstrates his never-ending efforts to share his excellent ideas and proposals to fight the major challenges of poverty.

Perhaps the first question we need to ask ourselves is "Why, in spite of all our achievements and progress to date, half of the world population still lives on less than US\$2 a day and more than 1.3 billion are chronically poor, struggling to survive on \$1 a day or less?". The plight of so many people is indeed an indication of the structural failures and inequities that still prevail in the twenty-first century. Should we not adopt a new approach to trade liberalization, one that recog-

nizes the importance of managing trade with the objective of achieving development goals?

The Director-General's thought-provoking Report presents a comprehensive analysis of the fundamental principles that should form the basis for any poverty eradication programme, and outlines the role of the ILO and its constituents.

I fully support the Director-General's reasoning, developed in the Report, that there is a need for a decisive tripartite commitment to the eradication of poverty.

All three ILO constituents have a pivotal role in ensuring effective economic and social systems and an enabling environment for growth and development, the promotion of decent work, thus the creation of wealth, and finally the protection of rights at work.

Ending poverty is, however, not a challenge for the ILO alone, nor is it the sole responsibility of governments. Sustained and long-lasting poverty eradication is an enduring process which requires concerted and sustained efforts by stakeholders at community, national and global level.

Moreover, poverty, as we know, has many faces and is manifested in many ways besides hunger and hopelessness. Lack of choices, illiteracy, powerlessness, poor health and social exclusion are all different aspects of poverty. It is a multidimensional problem that calls for a multisectoral approach beyond the traditional social sector focus.

Let me at this juncture share with you some of our successes and the challenge posed by our very achievements. Seychelles has been recognized internationally as having made great progress in socio-economic development. In fact we rank as 47th in the world and have joined a selective group of 53 countries with high human development. As a small island nation, we are very proud of our achievements, which reflect our hard work, synergy and political will, and of our development strategies that have placed people at the centre.

Our experience to date supports the Director-General's observation that what is needed is policy coherence in order to be able to combat poverty on all fronts. In 2000, the Government of Seychelles adopted its Statement and Strategy on Social Development, which is a shared commitment by the Government and all its partners to ensure that we continuously adopt appropriate measures to respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of our people. A performance audit was carried out in 2001 and a re-visioning exercise undertaken after wide consultations at all levels.

We have since shifted our focus from welfare to more empowerment. This year under the theme "Economic and social dynamism", we are embarking on a programme which will empower and motivate families to create more wealth through more hard work. We are, nevertheless, still committed to assisting the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. To sustain and even build on our achievements is our biggest challenge for, as a small island state where tourism is the mainstay of the economy, we are very vulnerable. The fragile tourism industry directly and indirectly employs 25 per cent of those in employment. Any threat to global peace and stability is, therefore, also a threat to our ability to provide the poor with opportunities to work their way out of poverty.

Today the world is having to face many new challenges such as full trade liberalization and the global-

ized world, which are not delivering the expected benefits. The poor are not better off; instead the rich are getting richer.

In conclusion, let me congratulate the Director-General and his team for such an inspiring Report. In ending, let us remind ourselves that aid and debt release for poor countries can only go so far. Given the opportunity to trade our way out of poverty, the world's poor will surely and gradually work their way out of poverty.

Mr. ABDELLA (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ethiopia*) — At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and on my own behalf, to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their unanimous election to preside over the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. May I also seize this opportunity to commend the International Labour Office for the various documents and reports submitted to facilitate the deliberations of the Conference.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate once again the ILO Director-General, Mr. Somavia, on his re-election to lead the Organization for the next five years and wish him every success in his endeavours. Having said this, I would like to note some points in relation to the Report of the Director-General, which contains very important issues of concern to us. It is obvious that without economic growth there will be no significant reduction in world poverty, and without reduction of poverty we cannot think of decent employment and income. Achieving decent levels of conditions of work and life for the populations of countries and safeguarding them against adversity is a great challenge for most African countries, especially for sub-Saharan countries, which are living in absolute poverty.

The prevalence of poverty is not only large but still increasing over time. This is the African reality. The economies of African countries are not able to accommodate the ever-increasing labour force. Despite numerous efforts to overcome the acute problem of unemployment, the outcome still remains bleak for many of our countries. The common strategy for employment growth has traditionally been sought in achieving greater growth of the African economies, especially through industrial growth. However, this approach has proved unrealistic since the African economies are primarily based on agriculture. As such, the importance of this sector for employment creation remains high. Raising labour productivity and increasing labour absorption in the agricultural sector will be very essential to increase overall employment and substantially address problems of unemployment and underemployment.

In light of this situation, Ethiopia has launched an Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) strategy, recognizing that more investment in agriculture will certainly lead to economic growth, and eventually to a better standard of living among the poor. In designing the strategy, the country's objective reality, in all aspects, was taken into account. The density of our rural population and its living standards were also taken as major indicators. However, this approach does not ignore the other economic sectors until the attainment of sustained agricultural development. Cognizant of the fact that agricultural development will lead industrialization, the industrial

development strategy was developed by the Government along with rural-centred agricultural development; these are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Thus, although the multi-faceted social, political, economic and cultural drawbacks accumulated over a long period in our history cannot be tackled in a short span of time, there are encouraging developments that augur well for success in the year ahead.

We firmly believe that for national efforts to produce tangible results, equal emphasis should be given to globalization commitments. The international labour standards, as basic instruments to exert a greater impact on economic development and social justice, should be respected and promoted by member countries as well as used to improve the lives of their people. In this connection I would like, therefore, to reiterate the commitment of my Government to remain engaged in the process of promoting ILO principles and objectives. Accordingly, it is gratifying for me to inform this Conference that the Council of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia, the highest authority of the State, has recently ratified two of the ILO fundamental Conventions – the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). With these, Ethiopia has now ratified all the ILO fundamental Conventions.

Turning to the remaining agenda items, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for all the reports submitted for consideration. The issues of human resources training and development, the scope of the employment relationship, occupational safety and health standards and improved security of seafarers' identification are all timely and pertinent to the work of the Conference. In particular, the efforts being made by the ILO to replace outdated instruments with more applicable and more useful ones in view of the dynamic economic and social changes is commendable.

In closing, I wish the ILO further success in the discharge of its mandate, especially in promoting its Decent Work Agenda as part and parcel of the global poverty reduction and development endeavours.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. SUBIRANA SUÁREZ (*Minister of Labour and Small Enterprises, Bolivia*) — I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election and to assure him of our cooperation in order to ensure the success of these proceedings. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General on his well deserved re-election and to thank him for the Report he has presented to this session of the International Labour Conference, as it will guide and broaden the debate.

It is necessary to emphasize that the principal theme of this Conference is decent and dignified work and that gender equality, the elimination of child labour and combating the scourge of AIDS are an inherent part of it. For that reason, Bolivia has made strides towards the attainment of these objectives.

In view of the fact that the World Day Against Child Labour will be celebrated tomorrow, Bolivia is proud to announce that, on Friday, 6 June, this year at 3 p.m. Geneva time, we presented to the International Labour Office the Bolivian instrument of ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 (No. 182).

Bolivia's efforts to stamp out this shameful type of work go beyond the international framework men-

tioned and focus on national legislation. In pursuance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990 Bolivia appointed municipal officers to defend the rights of children and young people, under Law 1702 which was passed in June 1996. This experience, which is unique in the world, enabled Bolivia to set up 324 offices for the defence of the rights of children and young people, or one in each municipality in the country.

In order to back up this big step forward we established a new legal instrument to protect this very vulnerable group of the population, the code for Children and Young People, which was brought into force by law 20/26. In addition to the mentioned above national and international legal instruments, resolution 220849 set up a national commission for the progressive elimination of child labour, which is responsible for implementing the national plan. This interdepartmental commission comprises representatives from the executive, legislative and judicial powers, specialized institutions and NGOs which ensure the valuable contribution of civil society, and it can rely on cooperation with international bodies.

Furthermore, the Ministry for Labour, in order to institutionalize this important instrument for the elimination of child labour, set up through ministerial resolution 597/02 a commissioner who acts as a technical secretary and coordinator for all the organizations involved in the interdepartmental commission.

Through the work of this interdepartmental commission, four different main areas of child labour in Bolivia have been identified: mining; the sugar harvest; commercial sexual exploitation; and work as domestic servants. In the first three areas, studies have already been carried out and specific projects have been proposed; studies on the last will be completed at the end of this month.

I would like to thank the ILO Regional Office for the cooperation they gave us on those subjects and for their help with respect to industrial safety.

Furthermore, through this specific action Bolivia is reaffirming its commitment to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and expresses its determination to continue working to that end.

Furthermore, as for the challenge of achieving gender equality in all sectors, Bolivia has passed a law on paid work in the home in order to provide legal protection for paid workers in the home most of whom are women, children and young people from the least protected layers of society. This law, number 24/50, was passed on 9 April this year.

These two big steps forward, both as regards the elimination of child labour and the law on paid workers in the home have demonstrated Bolivia's unequivocal commitment to the principles of this Conference. We have also shown, through these two specific issues – gender equality and the eradication of child labour – two ways of meeting the objective of securing decent and dignified work for all.

*Original Spanish:* Mr. LETZELAR VIDAURRETA (Minister for Labour and Social Security, Honduras) — The presence of the Republic of Honduras at this session of the International Labour Conference is witness to our trust and support in the International Labour Organization for its ongoing assistance in the various programmes and projects being carried out in the Central American region.

The Council of Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic, which I have the honour of presiding over, faced with globalization and the liberalization of trade, has aimed its activities at the promotion of the well-being of the population of the region, developing innovative labour policies which guarantee the implementation of fundamental rights, in harmony with job creation.

Our task is to continue promoting a policy of social dialogue and consultation, as a way of guaranteeing social peace and fostering the creation of labour policies aimed at job creation in order to reduce job insecurity and emphasize decent work, thereby reducing the unemployment which results from loss of jobs in the region, and supporting our population in its efforts to eliminate poverty, encouraging micro and small enterprises as a source of employment.

In this context, the Director-General's Report *Working out of poverty*, submitted to this session, focuses on the working poor and the poor who are excluded from work. This theme of the Report takes priority in Honduras since 80 per cent of the income of the working population comes directly from their labour activities. The characteristics of the labour market and the ways of integrating the economically active population are vital in order to raise economic growth rates and to ensure that the resulting wealth is distributed equitably.

Because of this we cannot ignore the fact that it is urgent that we undertake profound changes aimed at creating an environment that stimulates the growth of economic activity. To achieve this it is essential for us to define and build consensus for an employment and wage policy that lays the foundations for the development of fair and effective model for social dialogue, among the factors of production, that contribute to increasing investment and productivity, this translating into substantial improvements to the living conditions of workers and their families.

The Government of Honduras is beginning to implement a strategy for poverty reduction, basing itself on a global, long-term vision, focused on national transformation, whose end goal is to significantly and sustainably reduce the current levels of poverty and extreme poverty, on the basis of sustainable and equitable economic growth that provides the poor with access to productive resources. This strategy contains various targets which are global in nature, and whose aim is to substantially improve the living conditions of Honduran people, especially with regard to basic services of education, citizen security and health. Its goal is to substantially broaden the coverage and quality of these services, using new modalities, and to promote dynamic growth with the generation of more and better jobs. This strategy intends to achieve that half of the economically active population will complete secondary education.

Human development is as precondition to improving and raising competitiveness in our economy, as well raising opportunities for the population to work their way out of poverty. Levels of extreme poverty require that we strengthen our networks of social protection in favour of specific groups, such as women who are heads of households, children, migrants and ethnic groups, among others.

Poverty in our country means that we must design work programmes for the unemployed, thereby helping to reduce the high rates of unemployment and also

reduce our problems with ingovernability and juvenile delinquency.

Within the framework of this poverty reduction strategy we would like to thank the ILO for the development of a study on work and poverty in Honduras, which has enabled us to establish ties between work and poverty as elements that can contribute to the common goal of achieving national change and ways of improving the quality of life of the majority of people.

Finally, I would like to reiterate, on behalf of the Government of Honduras, our confidence and our support for the policies and activities of the ILO in the framework of poverty reduction, as well as in monitoring and defending fundamental rights at work, under the leadership of our Director-General — whom we would like to congratulate on his re-election — and the Governing Body.

Let us go towards a fairer and more human world of work!

*Original Russian: Ms. KARAGOUSOVA (Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Kazakhstan)* — First of all I would like to join my voice to the congratulations conveyed to the President on his election to this lofty post. I am convinced that under his skilled guidance, the Conference will successfully meet the important objectives before it.

Clearly, there is great topicality and significance to be found in the substance of the Director-General's Report *Working out of poverty*. We fully support the statement in the Report that only with the united forces of the international community, the international organizations and all of the social partners, can we more successfully combat poverty in the world. Indeed we must present a United front in attacking poverty making use of the advantages offered by globalization whilst averting its potential adverse consequences.

I would like to emphasize the ILO's constructive and consistent approach to attaining the declared objective of providing workers with decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, safety and human dignity. In order to uphold and implement rights in work and employment and prevent discrimination and protect jobs, Kazakhstan is actively implementing recognized international standards. It has now ratified all eight core Conventions, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The Government of Kazakhstan fully supports the ILO's integrated approach to eradicating poverty. This can be seen from the fact that for the past four years there has been a programme in place on eliminating poverty. This can also be seen from our Government's balanced yet focused social policy, which is already providing tangible benefits.

The country has now significantly reduced unemployment which now stands at 9.6 per cent. This is largely connected with the attraction of foreign investment, which has stimulated economic growth and created new jobs. The rise in employment has been facilitated by programmes adopted and actively implemented by the Kazakhstan Government on innovative industries and rural development.

Poverty has been significantly reduced. It formerly affected 1.5 million people; now it is 1,300,000 out of a population of 15 million people in Kazakhstan.

The progressive nature of the economic reforms in the social sphere and sustainable economic growth,

have allowed our Government to implement mechanisms to increase incomes through policies on wages. Over the past two years, wages in state institutions have actually grown by 30 per cent and next year we plan to increase the minimum wage by 32 per cent. Social payments are increasing, including pensions and these will be increased by over 30 per cent.

At our meeting two days ago with the Director-General, I again saw the particular attention that the ILO attaches to upholding the principle of tripartism in combating poverty. I can confirm that all questions relating to developing and implementing socio-economic policy in Kazakhstan are considered with full participation by the social partners. For over ten years Kazakhstan has seen cooperation with the three partners and every year tripartite agreements are signed, which allow progress in eliminating poverty.

We are developing cooperation with the ILO. Kazakhstan is now recognized as a leader in Central Asia and we were gratified that Kazakhstan was chosen from a number of transition countries as the site for the implementation of the multidisciplinary project on decent work. We hope that this can be implemented rapidly and successfully, which would complement our own efforts to reduce poverty through economic development at a local level, increasing employment and targeting social assistance.

I greatly value the technical and consultative assistance so promptly provided to us by the ILO and the social sector.

Kazakhstan has started drafting a new Labour Code and we have a new law on health and safety, which reflect all the international standards. Kazakhstan has always been attached to its ILO commitments, particularly as regards reporting under the Conventions; the delays experienced in the submission of reports were connected with the workload of legislative authorities and the diversion of efforts to the practical implementation of social reforms. We will overcome this in the very near future.

The very concept of labour is intimately connected with that of creation and this requires continual improvement and an increase in knowledge. All this can be implemented only in conditions of peace and cooperation. Our annual meetings here are in their own way a reflection of the desire for peace.

*Mr. ZHARIKOV (representative, World Federation of Trade Unions)* — I congratulate the President on his election to chair this session of the International Labour Conference.

The WFTU, on behalf of its 125 million affiliates and associates, in almost 130 countries, strongly supports the Report of the Director-General, which deals with the vital theme: *Working out of poverty*, seeking to define the role of the ILO in the framework of an international development strategy. The Report has drawn attention to the international commitments which have arisen between the World Summit in Copenhagen and the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The implementation deficit with regard to these commitments and programmes of action is now notorious. The recent deterioration in the world social situation is a direct result of the failure to implement these solemn commitments.

From the expressions of people's discontent all over the world, as shown by the nationwide strikes, mass demonstrations and protest actions in recent years, months and days, it is becoming clear how

working people are suffering from the neo-liberal policies imposed in the name of “globalization”. Production units are closing down; job cuts are rampant and unemployment is rising; living standards are falling, and, on top of these problems, attempts are being made to liquidate the system of pensions and social security or to privatise these sectors so that the big monopolies can make greater profits at the expense of people’s misery and poverty. The WFTU demands that appropriate lessons are drawn from the ongoing wave of trade union protest actions in all regions, in defence of their hard-won rights to social security and pensions, fair wages and working conditions.

It is absolutely unfair and unjust if peoples and countries are asked to sell off their national enterprises and public services, including such sectors as energy, education and health services, to foreign and local monopoly capital in the name of globalization. Countries may even be considered undemocratic if they keep strategic industries and vital services in the public sector. The so-called globalization package includes prescriptions for scrapping labour laws and restricting trade union rights.

The International Monetary Fund, World Bank and WTO actually impose these policies of virtual neo-colonialism. As the Report of the Director-General has mentioned, for developing countries, the inflow of foreign aid amounted to less than half of the outflows caused by debt service. Trade unions and civil society organizations gathered at the recent World Social Forums have denounced the fact that the unequal economic relations lie at the root of the increasing poverty and misery of millions of people all over the world.

Despite the ILO Conventions and the recent ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, there has been little change in the policies and attitudes of big employers and the home States of the largest transnational corporations. The largest financial and military super power, the US, has not even bothered to ratify core Conventions of the ILO. It is notorious that more than 85 per cent of the working people in the United States are not able to exercise their right of association while they are threatened with union-busting policies. We recall the statement by the Director-General that democratising globalization is the role of the ILO. The question is, how far have the ILO programmes advanced in this direction? How far has it succeeded in transmitting global concerns concerning the colossal, negative economic and social consequences of the ongoing neo-liberal version of globalization, which brings more unemployment and more poverty every day?

We suggest that the ILO compile a trade union development index assessing the extent of implementation of ILO core Conventions in order to assess precisely the non-implementation of these Conventions. The ILO should urge employers and, in particular, transnational corporations, to include in their annual reports, the extent of fulfilment of ILO Conventions by their affiliate enterprises in the different countries.

We also hope that dialogue in the ILO will be extended to the national level and that those departments concerned will take into consideration all the advantages such dialogue could produce.

The WFTU strongly condemns the fact that, while social programmes are not being implemented due to an alleged lack of financial resources, huge sums are wasted on arms budgets and for the pursuit of military

adventures, such as the recent illegal military occupation of Iraq by the United States and Britain.

The genocide of the Palestinian population by the Israeli regime continues with the most inhuman and repressive measures.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the WFTU supports the efforts of the ILO to ensure that the social priorities outlined in the Report and at this session are widely accepted and implemented, in order to enable the vast millions, denied their rights and condemned to poverty and misery, to work their way out of poverty.

Mr. SUNMONU (*representative, Organization of African Trade Union Unity*) — Please allow me to join those who have spoken before me to congratulate the Officers of the Conference on their well-deserved election. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, on his overwhelming re-election for a second term of office last March by the ILO Governing Body.

The theme of the Director-General’s Report, *Working out of poverty*, is the most appropriate remedy for the unfortunate situation brought on more than half of the world’s population by neo-liberal economic policies. It is the view of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and the overwhelming majority of organized African workers that it represents that poverty cannot effectively be confronted without dealing with the principle causes. As an African proverb says “leprosy cannot be cured with the medicine for skin rash”.

The main causes of third world poverty are as follows. One, neo-liberal economic policies that put profits before people, as was aptly described this morning by the South African President, Thabo Mbeki. Two, the huge debts and their enormous servicing with resources that ought to be invested in social and economic development. Most of these debts, it should be understood, have been paid more than three times above the original principle and there is no social or economic reason why they should not be unconditionally written off. Three, discriminatory trade barriers against the agricultural and industrial products of Third World countries in the markets of industrialized countries.

Neo-liberal economic policies have brought poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and injustice to the majority of humanity. They have also brought high indebtedness, loss of sovereignty and instability to most countries of the world.

The ILO, because of its unique position as the only tripartite organization among the United Nations agencies, should therefore address the above-mentioned issues in its proposed solutions to the ever-increasing poverty throughout the world.

The ILO’s Decent Work Agenda is accepted by all ILO constituents. It is a veritable venture to wealth creation, which is a better alternative to poverty-reduction strategies. When work is created through decent work strategies, poverty will automatically be eradicated. It is with this objective in view that the OATUU initiated its “Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development within African Trade Unions”, with the financial and technical assistance of the ILO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The experience gained during the pilot phase of this project is now being built upon, with the active support of the Employment Sector of

the ILO to expand the project to cover our members throughout Africa. Another area of our activity is the training of trade union experts, and the establishment of trade union cooperatives.

The Bureau for Workers' Activities has been of great assistance to our Organization in the capacity-building of our members through workers' education and socio-economic development, NEPAD, social dialogue, poverty eradication and gender mainstreaming.

Our activities in social protection, such as the fight against HIV/AIDS, occupational safety and health and migrant workers are being assisted by the Social Protection Sector.

It is thanks to the support of the ILO Regional Office and the Bureau for Workers' Activities that trade unions today are actively involved in the NEPAD process, as well as in the African Union. Without this financial and technical support from the ILO, African workers and trade unions would not have been able to play effective roles in the socio-economic development of Africa.

Our activities in the promotion of ratification and respect for international labour standards and the eradication of child labour received financial and technical assistance from the Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Sector.

The failure of neo-liberal economic policies has led to the phenomenal expansion of the informal economy. The OATUU and its affiliates have decided to assist the unprotected, underpaid and overexploited workers of the informal sector to organize and transform a significant part of the sector. The assistance of the ILO in our transformation of this large, informal African economy into a vibrant modern economy will be highly appreciated. Its potential for decent work and wealth creation is enormous, and the success of our work in the sector will be measured by the amount of transformation that we are able to bring to it.

For all this financial and technical assistance from the above-mentioned departments, branches and sections of the ILO, I express the profound appreciation and thanks of the OATUU and all the workers of Africa to the Director-General and all his officers and staff.

The critical financial and technical support of the ILO will continue to be needed to empower African workers and trade unions in creating decent jobs and wealth, peace, democracy and development in Africa.

Mr. O'NEILL (*Minister for Labour and Industrial Relations, Papua New Guinea*) — On behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea and our delegation, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Wamalwa on his election as President of the 2003 session of the International Labour Conference. We have every confidence and trust that with his able leadership, knowledge and experience, this session of the Conference will conclude successfully with tangible outcomes that will benefit all member States. We also extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Juan Somavia on his re-election as Director-General of the International Labour Office.

The Government of Papua New Guinea acknowledges the informative and comprehensive Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General on issues of discrimination and the

follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

We reaffirm and pledge our continued support to the ILO's role as the competent authority in setting labour standards, and in promoting and advocating tripartism and social dialogue as pillars of progress and development.

In responding to the impact of globalization, the Government of Papua New Guinea appreciates the technical assistance and cooperation provided by the ILO in various programmes and activities towards minimizing the resulting social costs. We also acknowledge the ILO's continuing efforts and commitment to advancing social justice in the global community today. We particularly appreciate its work aimed at providing women, young persons and people with disabilities with protection and decent working conditions, where freedom, equity, security and human dignity are practised and respected.

The Director General's Global Report emphasizes that "work is a privileged entry point from which to liberate society from discrimination." This is an issue that Papua New Guinea will discuss with the social partners and incorporate into its development policies.

Papua New Guinea ratified all of the ILO fundamental Conventions in 2000 and is also pursuing the implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The commitment of the Government of Papua New Guinea has entailed legislative reviews to incorporate the provisions of these fundamental Conventions into Papua New Guinea's national labour laws. These activities are consistent with our Government's development objectives for social and economic growth. The Government of Papua New Guinea has the following economic development objectives: good governance; rural development and poverty reduction through the empowerment of Papua New Guineans; and equal opportunity and equal remuneration.

In achieving these development objectives, the Government of Papua New Guinea takes particular note of the Director-General's Report, *Working out of poverty*, which, under the sub heading 'our experience', highlights skills development for sustainable livelihood; investing in jobs and the community; and promoting entrepreneurship. The report also emphasises our common challenge of building an employment agenda, building a more inclusive global economy and building partnerships.

Papua New Guinea welcomes the review of the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150) to encompass technological changes and approaches to learning and training and the emphasis on lifelong learning. It is hoped that the revised Recommendation will be based on the experiences of the reforms which occurred in several member States. The reforms in these countries have been undertaken through extensive social dialogue with various stakeholders in education and training.

Papua New Guinea has developed a policy to establish a National Skills Development Authority, which will coordinate all forms of training and establish a National Qualification Framework to better articulate training opportunities.

Papua New Guinea is in its third year of implementing Structural Adjustment at Minimum Social Cost (SAMSC), the Country Programme of activities for ILO constituents which promotes the following

four main objectives: fundamental principles and rights at work; decent employment and income for women and men; social protection for all; and tripartism and social dialogue.

Following the Decent Work seminar in Fiji in November 2002, the National Employment and Training Conference in February 2003, and the Tripartite Workshop on Decent Work in May 2003, we have now transformed the Structural Adjustment at Minimum Social Cost Programme into the Decent Work Plan of Action for Papua New Guinea. It became obvious during the conference that there is a critical need for an employment policy framework to be developed for the majority of our people in the rural and informal sectors. The Government of Papua New Guinea anticipates that many of the issues raised in the Report relating to workers' protection will be addressed through the various legislative reviews, which have already commenced.

In conclusion, we look forward to the outcomes of the plenary discussions and give assurance of our participation in the various committees, to gain further knowledge and experience.

Mr. ZINCK (*Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations and Productivity, Fiji*) — Like other distinguished delegates who have spoken before me, I extend my very warm and sincere congratulations to the President on having been elected to preside over the Conference. I also extend my congratulations to the three Vice-Presidents and other Officers of the Conference, who have been elected this year.

At the outset, I am pleased to assure you of the cooperation and support of the delegation of Fiji in achieving the objectives of the agenda of this Conference. I also take this opportunity to recognize the invaluable assistance that the ILO is providing to my country and to the greater Pacific area, and thank in particular the ILO Office for the South Pacific.

There is an urgent need for more timely and more focused assistance and for the introduction of greater efficiencies in the ILO's allocation of resources at the national and regional levels.

The Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work focuses on the elimination of discrimination in the workplace, which is also one of the central and most important concerns of my country.

My Government believes that the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality in employment and occupation are two sides of the same coin. As such, these are clearly provided for in Fiji's national Constitution, which states that all citizens shall be treated equally, regardless of their race, colour, gender or creed. To achieve this, we will ensure that the existing provisions are further strengthened in the draft industrial relations bill which is now in preparation, to ensure absolute protection against discrimination in the workplace and, in particular, sexual harassment. The draft bill is a compact document which incorporates eight major pieces of existing legislation and, in doing so, aligns our laws and practice with the Fiji Constitution and the relevant ILO Conventions, including the core Conventions, and, at the same time, addresses the specific concerns of our NGOs and other stakeholders.

The delegation of Fiji welcomes the general discussion on the scope of the employment relationship. We are particularly interested in the discussions on the

future form of labour management relations, and on how the development of new technologies will affect the formal and informal economies. This is a core issue and we will do our utmost to address it.

My Government has decided to reactivate the tripartite forum that was originally set up in 1976, and a meeting is scheduled to take place next month for the completion of the charter and the launching of the forum. Though informal in character, a tripartite forum is highly regarded in the Pacific region as being a mechanism that epitomizes the consensus-building goodwill and trust that is present in Pacific cultures and in which agreement can be reached on all issues involved in nation building.

Since the social scene in Fiji has changed, with Fiji having two trade union national centres, the Government has taken upon itself to invite both centres to be part of the National Tripartite Forum as they both represent a large number of workers and diverse sectors, which the Government respects and appreciates. We have done the same for employers and we highly appreciated the legal advice provided by the ILO on this issue and the confirmation that we are not breaching any part of the ILO Constitution. Indeed, we are only implementing our right of consultation under Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).

We hope and trust that the social partners will recognize the opportunities offered by the Government's decision to reactivate the tripartite forum at their request. We must all recognize that it is the responsibility of all social partners to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment for all our people.

Allow me to comment briefly on the ILO's standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health. The delegation of Fiji welcomes the general discussion to highlight the challenges and dominant features that shape future developments in this area.

As a maritime nation, we support the adoption of an instrument to improve the integrity and security of seafarers' identification. In Fiji, this is now accorded a high degree of importance, especially because of the new threats facing the world and our location in the shipping channels of the Pacific Ocean.

Fiji has now ratified 24 Conventions, including the eight core Conventions. We have currently met our reporting requirements and will continue to do so.

A balanced assessment of the activities of my Government with regard to the implementation of the ILO instruments and the provisions of the Constitutions will confirm that we are back on track. We are now going through a very important phase in our history, a transition period with the leadership of a new government, and we are fully committed to the principles and practices of the ILO.

In conclusion, we will pursue the path we have mapped out for ourselves and, in doing so, will seek the continued guidance of the ILO and the international community so that, at the end of the day, all persons in Fiji will enjoy a higher standard of living and level of social justice. Let us give true meaning to the attainment of decent work for all.

Mr. TABANI (*Employers' delegate, Pakistan*) — I greet you in the name of the Employers' Federation of Pakistan and felicitate the President and Vice-Presidents on their unanimous election to their respective high offices, and I am indeed delighted to be

speaking under your the President's chairmanship. We are confident that under his guidance this Conference will take the decisions necessary to resolve some of the most contentious issues facing the world of work.

The global recovery in 2002, according to the WTO, was uneven, with preliminary figures limiting the full-year growth to only 1.5 per cent. Uncertainty clouds the growth prospects for 2003, with the war in the Middle East posing a challenge to international relations and ushering in a new and uncertain basis for global governance.

The unfavourable employment situation of the last two years has reversed the reductions in people working below the poverty line which were achieved in the late 1990s. ILO estimates show that, by the end of 2002, the number of workers below the poverty line will have reached its 1998 level of 550 million. If present trends continue, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to halve world poverty by 2015 will be seriously threatened in many parts of the world.

In the light of the world economic scenario, the Director-General's Report *Working out of poverty* is timely and focuses our attention on the current issues. It is comprehensive and gives a general prescription to all member countries for increasing employment and reducing the number of people living below the poverty line. It discusses the eight goals established by the Millennium Summit.

The Report elaborates the adverse affects of globalization leading to insecurity, persistent inequality and social exclusion. The Director-General has defined his strategy in the Report with the words "breaking the cycle of poverty is really about creating a new cycle of opportunity and local wealth creation". The Report uses the four strategy objectives of ILO, elaborating on each one in great depth and detail, making it useful for member countries who wish to use the content and ideas in their National Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

An important issue that this Conference will have to address is improved access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which is a key to their growth. SMEs make up the largest portion of the employment base in many developing countries and are indeed the foundation of the private sector. Another important issue, that of youth employment, has been seriously taken up by the United Nations Secretary-General who, as Chairman of the high-level panel of the Youth Employment Network (YEN), has requested the ILO to take the lead in organizing the future work of the YEN. We are anxiously looking forward to some concrete results coming from the work of this panel.

I wish to compliment the Area Office of the ILO in Islamabad for its active participation in the Pakistani Government's efforts to eradicate poverty by playing an active role in including the concept of employment in the drafting of our PRSP programmes. The office has organized a variety of programmes on the four strategic objectives of the ILO, in addition to continuing IPEC programmes for Pakistan. We look forward to its continued cooperation and assistance to the tripartite partners. Similarly, the Regional Office in Bangkok has also continued to provide guidance and cooperation.

I will conclude by reminding the Conference of a quotation from the joint statement issued by the

Director-General of the WTO, the Managing Director of IMF and the President of the World Bank on the occasion of the WTO General Council meeting in Geneva on 13 May of this year: "We appeal to heads of Government at the forthcoming G8 Summit to provide the political guidance that is needed to allow the trade negotiations to move forward again ... Political opinion in the G8 needs to appreciate fully the value of liberalising world trade, particularly in agriculture – a sector of critical importance to development. Trade is vital not only for the direct benefits it brings, but also for increasing the flows of financial and real investment resources to developing countries which generate the income growth and job opportunities that help raise people out of poverty and make economies more resilient to shocks ... Better market access for developing countries' exports is essential for raising and sustaining their economic growth and reducing poverty at the same time [sic] ... Bold action now to reinforce long-term growth fundamentals through freer trade will boost confidence and help to strengthen the emerging economic recovery. By pulling together in a multilateral context the G8 will help to maintain the momentum of structural economic reform over the longer term in developed and developing countries alike".

I am sure you will agree that this quotation is fully supportive of the Director-General's Report and emphasizes the need for concrete action by the rich industrial countries to ensure success in reducing poverty all over the globe.

Mr. NAJAFIMANESH (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, Islamic Republic of Iran*) — We congratulate you on the inauguration of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference, on behalf of the Confederation of Employers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and appreciate the efforts of the Director-General and the Office in presenting the Report *Working out of poverty*.

Poverty eradication and decent work is negotiable and capable of investigation from a national and international point of view. Regrettably, there is a wide gap between income and technology in the northern and southern countries. To solve it, there must be an integrated coordination between developed and developing countries and humanitarian values should be taken into consideration.

One of the most important and best ways to alleviate poverty and discrimination is training. To achieve this, the technical assistance of industrial countries can be used in an effective and synergistic role.

We are living in a century where industrial media have expanded considerably and the transmission of experience and training is getting easier and more possible by means of IT. This leads to a shortening of distances and helps technical and executive abilities. So the technical assistance of the ILO definitely has had positive effects so far, and its continuing efforts are absolutely effective. We appreciate it and continue to wish that an office of the ILO be opened in Tehran as soon as possible.

Poverty eradication is not only an issue to be implemented by governments or employers but also requires the intense coordination of the other social partners such as workers' and employers' groups and governments. To achieve this, freedom of association is of the highest importance and without it there is no

chance of any action on working out of poverty and eliminating discrimination.

We are pleased to advise that effective measures have been taken in our country to join the freedom of association Convention. The Labour Code is being modified accordingly, with the cooperation of the ILO and the assistance of the social parties, which the Employers' Confederation takes as a national necessity.

Iran, with more than 2,500 years of history, is one of the most important countries in the region, linking European to Asian countries. It has a special strategic position, an expanded market of 300 million people in the region, with 20 developing countries of the highest importance.

Iran has immense and cheap economic resources, such as 9 per cent of oil reserves, 15 per cent of world gas reserves, cheap labour and energy. These elements constitute a suitable environment for investment.

Iran covers an area of 1.6 million square kilometres, with a population of approximately 65 million, 65 per cent of which lives in urban areas and 35 per cent in rural areas. Seventy per cent of the population is under 30 years of age. Iran has 20 million students, 1.6 million of whom are university students, and thus has an active population potential.

Iran, despite the abovementioned privileges, regretfully could not obtain its position in the world economy due to various events in the past 20 years. Iran has 1 per cent of the world's population but has only a 0.3 per cent share of world export. But in recent years Iran has taken measures to gain the position it deserves. In 1988, the economy of the country started to grow and at present its economic programmes have started to focus on market interest. Iran is in a position of economic transition.

In 2001, the GDP was US\$119 million according to the Atlas method and per capita income was US\$1750. In 2002, the GDP of Iran grew by 6.5 per cent; the share of the various segments of the GDP in 2001 was as follows: 7 per cent oil, 17 per cent agriculture, 22 per cent industry and mines and 55 per cent services. The stable investment in the year 2000 was 30 per cent of GDP.

In 2002, Iran had exports of over US\$24 million of which only US\$5 million was non-oil exports, while oil accounted for 80 per cent of the income.

Iran's economy is passing from a government to a market economy and the engine of its progress is the industrial sector. To achieve this, the following programmes have been implemented: free economy and a move towards market economy; simplification of the bureaucracy and working out of regulations; privatization; unifying the exchange rate; expanding non-oil exports and replacing with imports.

Poverty eradication at the national level is one of the main programmes of the Government and the employment confederations in the 2004 plan. It is predicted that there will be approximately 900,000 job opportunities in our country per year. But job creation needs investment and for essential investment we must offer security. In addition, other challenges are: management promotion; entrepreneurship promotion; productivity promotion; privatization; foreign investment. We are sure that investment will create wealth and we will then discuss how to divide wealth instead of poverty. Finally, I would like to thank the ILO once again for its efforts in developing

industrial relations and technical assistance in our country.

*Original Vietnamese: Mr. DANG (Workers' delegate, Viet Nam)* — On behalf of the Vietnamese workers and trade unions, I would like to convey to the President and all delegates of the 91st International Labour Conference our warmest greetings. We wish the Conference every success. We greatly appreciate the Report made by the ILO Director-General and the Governing Body at the Conference. The Director-General has presented us with an excellent Report, *Working out of poverty*. We fully share the Director-General's view that: Poverty is a nightmare. It is a vicious circle of poor health, reduced working capacity, low productivity and shortened life expectancy. For families, poverty is a trap. It leads to inadequate schooling, low skills, insecure income, early parenthood, ill health and an early death. It keeps poor countries from advancing on the path to sustainable development.

We are living in the twenty-first century – the century of the knowledge-based economy, but there are a lot of people living in poverty. Poverty is a global phenomenon that occurs everywhere, poverty is especially severe in developing countries and in transition countries. In order to eradicate poverty, we need national and international efforts; we need tripartite commitment and the ILO must play an important role in this struggle. We also support experience and the strategy expressed in the Report of the Director-General for *Working out of poverty*.

The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour represents and protects the legitimate rights and interests of Vietnamese workers that have been recognized by the national constitution and the laws of Viet Nam.

Over the past 74 years of its history, the Vietnamese trade unions have made a great contribution to the cause of national independence and construction. At present, the trade unions of Viet Nam are playing an important role in national industrialization and modernization to move forward to achieve the goals of our country being a rich, wealthy country and having a just, democratic and civilized society.

The IX National Congress of the Trade Unions of Viet Nam will be held in October 2003. The orientations, tasks and programme of action of the Vietnamese trade unions in the next five years will concentrate on the following issues: employment creation, training and retraining, reduction of unemployment, improvement of industrial relations, living and working conditions, occupational health and safety, social security, equality, gender, poverty alleviation, abolition of child labour, completion of labour legal regulations, etc.

Our stand is that economic development should go hand in hand with social development of which humans should be at the centre, and that the development of human resources is of great importance. We also promote the renovation of contents, methods of trade union activity, and strengthen organizational capacity to meet the demand of the shift of the market-oriented economy and international economic integration.

We are making every effort to apply practically the ILO Conventions and standards to Vietnamese conditions and to expand friendly relationships and cooperation with the trade unions all over the world.

On behalf of the Vietnamese workers and trade unions I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks for the assistance of the friendly trade union organizations the world over, and for the effective support of the ILO to the workers and trade unions of Viet Nam over the past years.

We believe that friendship and cooperation among workers and trade unions in the world will be further developed for peace, development, democracy and social progress and for a better life of the workers.

Mr. JAIN (*Employers' delegate, India*) — I feel honoured, on behalf of the Employers' group of India, and indeed the entire Indian delegation, to extend our heartiest congratulations to the President and each one of the three Vice-Presidents on their election.

The seminal Report by the Director-General, *Working out of poverty*, contains contemporary perspectives as well as elements of a strategic blueprint for eradicating poverty.

The Report rightly points out that gainful work or employment holds the key for the solid, progressive and long-lasting eradication of poverty. In the context of poverty eradication and the promotion of economic growth, the agenda item relating to human resources training and development grows in significance.

Globalization and the emergence of a new economy call for highly trained manpower. Skills development is essential for sustained employment and becomes a very good form of social security. Promotion of self-employment should also be a major part of the ILO's approach to employment generation. The ILO could help set up a special fund for skills development in the developing countries. Globalization should result in the removal of poverty through the free movement and linkage of capital, technology, services and personnel.

While we are seeing greater movement of capital and, to some extent, of technology too, we are witnessing less and even restrictions on the movement of skilled personnel. There are barriers to global outsourcing, too.

Such non-tariff barriers are against the spirit of true globalization. The ILO must work towards removing such barriers as they run counter to the principle of market access emphasized in multilateral negotiations and forums. In fact, they amount to market denial.

The scope of employment relationships, agenda item 5, should be dealt with very carefully as it could seriously impact several economies. In a globalizing and competitive environment, enterprises should focus on their core activities, leaving peripheral and other activities to those who do it more efficiently and economically.

Flexibility in employment relationships is consistent with a fair deal for the workers, which must be ensured. In order to promote harmonious economic development, the differences in levels and conditions of development and related social issues in the various countries must be factored. This should be a precondition to application of obligations and standards. The obligations should be within the bounds of economic possibility, especially for developing countries like India, otherwise the very process of development may be adversely affected.

All three pillars of the ILO must work with a cohesive tripartite approach so as to mitigate inter-country

and intra-country inequalities. As highlighted in the Report of the Director-General, in 1960, the income gap between the wealthiest fifth of the world's population and the poorest fifth was 30 to 1. By 1999, it had become 74 to 1.

Another important discussion relates to occupational health and safety. The subject requires an in-depth study before adoption of any instrument, in order to evolve a holistic and integrated approach after considering the conditions and constraints of different societies and economies.

In India, a nation of more than 1 billion, a concerted effort, under a democratic framework, is being made to deal with the twin problems of poverty and unemployment, in order to ensure social justice. The number of people living below the poverty line has been brought down to about one forth and the standard of living in general is rising. India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world in this era of globalization. We are enthused by the ILO's initiatives, like piloting an approach to the extension of social security through a people-to-people Global Social Trust. Such initiatives will help us contribute towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. These activities should be synergized with other initiatives by agencies in the United Nations family, like the Global Compact.

To conclude, I would like to say that the Indian Employers are giving major impetus to corporate social responsibility and to the wider issue of corporate governance, to strengthen a value-based dynamic of sustainable growth. We want the efforts of the ILO to come to fruition in a global socio-economic scenario in which no country, family or individual is left behind.

*Original German:* Mr. RAMME (*representative, International Confederation of Executive Staff*) — On behalf of the International Confederation of Executive Staff, I would like to congratulate the President on his election as President of this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference, and I wish him every success in discharging his important tasks and duties.

I would also like to thank the full-time, part-time and voluntary workers of the International Labour Office on the great results of their work, which is described extensively in the report. This excellent report gives information on the status of workers' basic rights all over the world and about the diverse approaches to improving the situation of workers.

I would like to concentrate mainly on the following points. First of all, on behalf of our Confederation, I would like to say a few words about the compatibility of work and family. This subject is covered widely and appropriately in the report. As you may know, we ourselves recently organized an international conference in Prague, with the support of the European Commission, on the issue of equal opportunity for men and women in executive positions.

In our view, compatibility between work and family is the key to a balanced relationship between the sexes at the workplace. In the next few decades, the proportion of women and men in occupations in general will tend to become more balanced, not only because of demographic trends in many industrialized countries, for example in Europe or North America, but also because it is a part of women's right to self-fulfilment. This applies especially to highly skilled

workers because they will be in short supply in the industrialized countries in the coming years.

In order to be able to take up the challenges of an ageing population in these societies in future years, an increasing proportion of women in the workplace will be accepted as a matter of course. Since we, as executive staff, have a proportion of women that is still far too low, we expressly welcome this trend, and we call upon the social partners to do their utmost to guarantee that women enjoy equal access to jobs.

A policy aimed at promoting compatibility between work and family helps to ensure that women remain competitive on the labour market, because then they are not compelled, while raising children, to interrupt their paid employment for a longish period of time. Women can thus gain company-specific experience and undergo further training, and this will make them more productive. They also contribute a high level of social competence acquired from the family. This also applies to men, because, as the Scandinavian countries have already shown, men do indeed play an important role in the family and also contribute the skills they have learned in this role to their working lives.

The International Confederation of Executive Staff also demands a more flexible organization of working hours in the managerial staff sector, to make it easier for working mothers to combine their different duties. This also applies to fathers who decide to spend more time with their families. We therefore demand support for the creation of family-friendly jobs throughout the economy in all countries. This applies in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises, which do not have the same possibilities as large companies.

Compatibility of income between men and women is also an essential demand of the International Confederation of Executive Staff. The same work done with the same skills should entail comparable remuneration. We cannot allow a situation to continue in which women receive less remuneration simply because they are women. We expressly support the initiatives of the International Labour Office to put these demands into practice.

The second main point I would like to make concerns the unsatisfactory situation in various countries with regard to the right of executive staff to form associations and enter into collective agreements. It is one of the basic rights of all workers to form associations, yet this right is still being denied to executive staff in some places, such as Quebec, Canada. We are convinced that it is also the task of the ILO to exert its influence in specific countries in order that managerial staff, like all other workers, can form their own associations and be recognized.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that our Confederation is working hard to achieve the objectives of a just and humane world of work. I would like to conclude by thanking the President and delegates here for their attention.

Ms. SHURENCHIMEG (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, Mongolia*) — It is my great honour and pleasure to extend cordial greetings on behalf of the Mongolian Employers' Federation to the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Juan Somavia on his re-election as Director-General of the ILO and to express our thanks for his

comprehensive Report. This Report focuses on work as the best route out of poverty and features multi-faceted activities by the ILO within the Decent Work Agenda.

As you know, Mongolia is one of the countries in transition and, as with many developing countries of the world, we are facing such social problems as poverty and unemployment. No doubt, these are closely interrelated with the entire economic development of the country.

We share the view expressed in the Director-General's Report that "each of the Organization's constituents ... has a concrete role to play in ending poverty ... the private sector as an engine to create jobs, investment and enterprise ...". We consider that it is our social responsibility to contribute to poverty eradication and to help further the development of the country through employment-generation activities.

The Mongolian Employers' Federation is relatively young. It was established in 1991 with the re-emergence of the private sector in Mongolia. Today, this sector produces more than 60 per cent of GDP. Here I would like to stress the significant role of the International Labour Organization in the formation and development of employers' organisations in our country. Thanks to the ILO, the International Organisation of Employers and some national employers' organizations, in particular, the Japan Business Federation, we are growing into a capable employers' organization that is widely recognized at the national and international levels.

Most of our membership consists of small and medium-sized enterprises; businesses are young and lack experience. We also have a vast number of potential entrepreneurs among people engaged in the growing informal sector. We consider them as our potential members. Among those people there is a high demand for business management training and it is crucial for them to have access to various resources and information. As the Director-General mentioned in his Report, "the ILO 'Start and Improve Your Business' (SIYB) methodology is used in more than 80 countries". As we learned from their experience, the programme demonstrated its effectiveness and sustainability. Therefore, we would like to join this family of the ILO SIYB programme countries. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and with the assistance of ILO consultants, the Mongolian Employers' Federation prepared its own Mongolian version of the SIYB training package and is now drafting the project proposal. We do hope that the ILO will provide us with the necessary assistance and support in the realization of this programme for the sake of the many people working towards creating jobs for themselves and for others.

The Mongolian people say, "even a single drop pitches into the sea". We are working towards, and looking forward to, that "drop" of our effort contributing to a "sea of employment" throughout the world.

Another issue to which I would like to draw your attention is skills development. Today, in Mongolia, we can observe the imbalance between the number of university graduates and the number of skilled workers. Employers face a lack of skilled workers while on the labour market there is an oversupply of people with diplomas or even higher levels of education. Available jobseekers do not satisfy workplace

requirements. Therefore, employers would like to take an active part in the development of training curricula for vocational training institutions and in conducting short-term skills training.

Finally, I would like to emphasize here that the core ILO principle — tripartism and social dialogue — actually works in Mongolia. Certainly, we have to improve continuously our relationship and cooperation with the Government and with workers' organizations, but almost 10 years of experience have shown us that tripartite structures could be effectively used in the development and implementation of labour and social policy matters if constituents committed to the value of true partnership.

Ms. ASPAR (*speaking on behalf of Mr. VAN LEEUWEN, representative of Education International*) — Education International strongly endorses the Director-General's call for a decisive tripartite commitment to the eradication of poverty.

As a global union federation representing teachers and other workers in education, we are first-hand witnesses to the ravages of poverty across the communities of the world. It is our vocation to be wherever there are families, children, or young people, so the vast majority of our 26 million members live and work with the poor.

It is often not realized that teachers are themselves among the poor. In too many developing countries, their meagre salaries are paid months in arrears. Even when they get salaries, teachers are paid below the poverty line.

To survive, to feed their families, they must take on other jobs, driving a taxi or working as a night porter in a hotel, or running a street-side stall. The reports of the ILO and the UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Status of Teachers has repeatedly presented evidence about this.

The consequences of keeping teachers in poverty are dramatic. When teachers are forced to seek work outside the school in order to survive, you can imagine what that does to the quality of education. Yet a group of academics in the World Bank has the nerve to circulate a paper attacking teachers. This paper is a draft chapter on education for next year's World Development Report. There are real problems and I have just pointed them out, but you can only address problems by understanding their causes and the main cause is that teachers in many communities are truly part of the working poor. Engaged in the daily struggle for survival, described with such realism in the report. The response is not to blame the poor for their plight. The poor do not cause poverty.

Education International has engaged with the World Bank in seeking a constructive way forward, contributing through education to the struggle against poverty. But we are worried by the direction the Bank is now taking, which seems to be one of blaming the victims. It is in that context that we look forward to the report later this year of ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization.

Meanwhile, there is much to be done. We continue to support ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, and we welcome the strong support for this work from the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) and our colleagues in other global unions.

No nation is spared poverty; the growing teacher shortage in industrialized countries is directly linked

with the difficulty of retraining or recruiting teachers in neighbourhoods where poverty and violence all too often go together.

Violence in schools is a growing phenomenon. Some of the headline-grabbing tragedies of recent years have occurred in middle-class neighbourhoods, Colombine in the United States, Erfurt in Germany, Dunblane in Scotland. Beyond these tragic examples of dysfunctional modern society, is the daily grind of violence confronting our members, primarily in poor neighbourhoods where hope has been lost. A vital element in replacing alienation with hope is the central concept of the Report that "it is through work that people find a dignified way out of poverty". Vocation, education and training is one of the keys.

Education International will play an active role in the work of the ILO to revise the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150), adapting it to the conditions and needs of our times.

Nearly 60 per cent of our members are women. We represent one of the most feminized professions. It is time for equality at work and we will continue to be in the vanguard of action to implement this key part of the ILO Declaration.

Since last year's Conference we have had a significant success with the liberation of Dr. Thai, President of the Ethiopian Association, after six years in prison. Thai will be with us this week as a member of our delegation. We express our appreciation to the Director-General and his colleagues and to the Committee on Freedom of Association for their unfailing support for our efforts to win Thai's release and for ILO's commitment to monitor the situation as he courageously continues his action.

In Colombia; another long-standing case before the Committee on Freedom of Association, the news is not so good. Teachers continue to be killed, often at a rate of one per week, or exiled. Continued support from the ILO is crucial in putting an end to the ongoing violence and restoring respect for basic rights.

So, the struggle continues — a struggle against violence and poverty, against child labour, against violation of fundamental rights — a struggle for quality education for all, for effective public services in our communities, for the right to training and for the restoration of hope.

*Original Russian: Mr. MUKASHEV (Worker' delegate, Kazakhstan)* — Since the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was adopted five years ago, it has impacted positively on the development of social and labour relations in our young independent State.

In this five-year period, Kazakhstan has additionally ratified 12 ILO Conventions, including all of the core Conventions. At the initiative of the Federation of Trade Unions of Kazakhstan, our Parliament has adopted a law on social partnership. Collective bargaining and the concluding of agreements and treaties have taken on a universal character in Kazakhstan.

To date in Kazakhstan, in addition to the Republican Agreement, tariff agreements have been signed by most industrial and non-industrial professional unions and by all regional workers' associations. Collective agreements are in place at 70 per cent of enterprises and organizations that have trade unions.

I must also mention the tripartite input and trade union interests in the development and implementa-

tion of programmes to combat poverty and unemployment in our country.

To overcome social and labour problems, significant influence has come from the cooperation between Kazakhstan and the ILO. I would like to express gratitude to the Moscow Office of the ILO and the main specialist, Mr. Sten Taft Petersen and other ILO personnel for their assistance to the trade unions of Kazakhstan.

In our view, the ILO Declaration has eternal significance. We must all continue to make efforts for its full implementation. As stated in the Global Report, unfortunately Kazakhstan still has some instances of violations of trade union rights, discrimination against workers – and this is particularly the case at foreign, private enterprises. There is a very slow rise in the level of employment, though unemployment is now falling.

We are attempting to improve the situation and, where necessary, apply for ILO assistance. That was the case when there was a complaint against the American company, Tengis Chevroil. Thanks to the rapid reaction and recommendations of the Governing Body, there have been improvements in relations between the administration and the trade union and the situation is now almost normal.

In Kazakhstan, currently there is development of a model of balanced, sustainable development. Our country is beginning to take on the outlines of a social state. Economic growth makes it possible to attain social objectives. Last year, the monetary income and wages in real terms rose by more than 8 per cent.

The President of Kazakhstan has established new measures to raise wages and pensions and improve the prosperity of citizens with low incomes. In our country, there is an active process of democratization and the creation of a civil society. Increasing attention is being given to compliance and upholding of human rights and decent work.

Our trade unions are determined to continue the struggle for acceptable conditions for healthy and fair development. In particular, with assistance from the ILO in Moscow, we have developed and submitted to the Government an improved wage concept for the market economy in our country.

Work is under way on the development of an integrated Labour Code and we are convinced that this Code must be based on international labour norms and core principles. In this connection, it would be very valuable and useful to have participation by ILO experts in development of the draft Labour Code.

We also hope that, in accordance with the planned programme of cooperation, the ILO will provide assistance to Kazakhstan, the social partners and other consultative and practical assistance to resolve social and labour issues.

*Original Spanish: Mr. MALLCU (Workers' delegate, Bolivia) —* Bolivia as a member State of the International Labour Organization has ratified the eight core Conventions.

The Bolivian Labour Code established vital concepts such as the protection of workers, the inalienable nature of rights, social security, labour stability, a minimum wage and the right to organize.

Nevertheless, our confederation (COB) notes a lack of authority and political will on the part of the

Government when it comes to employers' application and complaints with these international labour standards in order to solve problems such as the creation of permanent jobs through the reactivation of production facilities which would enable us to establish conditions of sustainability and satisfy the basic needs of workers and their families.

In Bolivia there is no such thing as true tripartite labour relations because national and multinational employers do not shoulder their responsibilities or adopt policies for overcoming labour-related social problems through dialogue, but often plead the existence of administrative conditions, solely in order to stymie or undermine any activities aimed at guaranteeing compliance with labour standards and securing the rights of workers to fair wages and working conditions.

Furthermore, labour standards are constantly contravened or not applied since the Government does not comply with the conditions and agreements negotiated annually with the COB and its sections. They have not been able to ensure compliance on the part of employers who rest their arguments on article 55 of Supreme Decree 21060 which allows free hiring and firing without stating any reasons and which proves to be a mechanism which makes it easy to lodge the application of existing labour standards, giving employers one-sided advantage. Supreme Decree 21060 and article 55 thereof violate the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and turn the Declaration into mere words with no effort.

The right to freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, forced labour, child labour, social security and discrimination at work, are all issues ignored by employers. Union leaders are dismissed simply for demanding that their rights be respected. With regard to poverty reduction policies and strategies, we must broaden and deepen our efforts by strengthening the capacities of social partners, with a view to putting employment at the heart of economic and social policies.

With regard to decent work, and within the framework of the rule of law, we must include the principles of equality, dignity, fairness and participation. A democracy with abject poverty is not a democracy. Workers and trade unions are key players in democracy, which depends on dialogue and consultation. Consequently, decent work can only exist if the fundamental rights of workers, including equality of opportunities for all, are respected. These are the foundations which underlie the quality of work to which we are all entitled.

In view of this situation, we must ask for technical assistance from the ILO in order to implement the tripartite Declaration of principles and to abolish article 55 of Supreme Decree 21060, so that children, young people adults, and all the citizens of Bolivia and of the world can truly be given the right to a more dignified future.

And so that decent work can become a reality on our time, our Organization must, more than ever, be allowed to retain its independence and its close ties with international trade union movements, thereby strengthening our workers' movement.

*(The Conference adjourned at 7.05 p.m.)*

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