



Provisional Record

Ninety-first Session, Geneva, 2003

Ninth sitting

Thursday, 12 June 2003, 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Noakes

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

We will now resume the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Original Portuguese: Mr. PITRA DA COSTA NETO (*Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security, Angola*) — On behalf of the Angolan Government, I would like to offer my warmest greetings to all participants in this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to express my wishes that this should represent a time for reflection and for commitment to making the world of work increasingly dignified and just.

May I also pay my tribute to and congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia, on behalf of the Angolan Government, on his re-election to the post of Director-General of the ILO. This re-election is testament to the important place which he has given to decent work, as a way of contributing to greater social justice, productivity and equality in labour relations in the member States of our Organization.

In the present context of the globalization of economies, one of the greatest challenges for developing countries is to find the right balance between economic competitiveness and social justice.

The Republic of Angola is witnessing one of the most significant moments in its history. The return to peace has finally brought renewed hope and opportunities for a new cycle in the life of all the sons and daughters of Angola, where the challenges of national reconstruction and economic and social development are battles to be won in the short and medium term.

In this context, education, technical and vocational training and the development of human resources in general assumed a prime place in the programme of the Angolan Government.

The Report of the Director-General presented to this 91st Session contains useful reflections for tackling the complex tasks which our countries are facing. Discrimination in the world of work will not disappear by words alone, but by applying coherent and consistent public policies, developed with the involvement and participation of the whole of society, in particular public bodies and social partners.

In Angola, our Government has adopted policies, approved legislation and established practices against the stigma of discrimination in the labour market and in the workplace. The disabled, the seropositive, victims of gender discrimination, former soldiers, young people and children are some of the target groups

deserving better attention and protection in my country's new legislation.

Among the agenda items before this Conference, my country attributes great importance to the implementation of a better identification system for seafarers – a measure which will contribute to the combat against piracy in the maritime world. We also attach great importance to the regulation of casual labour, family work and informal work, among others.

Other legislative measures which have been taken by the Government of Angola involve the protection of our national human resources. We believe that the review of the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), should be given more discussion among the delegates who are present at this session of the Conference, so that the content of the Convention can be made broader and more up to date.

With regard to social dialogue, my country has created a National Council for Social Consultation, thereby formalizing a place for discussion between social partners and the Government in a spirit of co-responsibility, a place where ideas can be shared on the major economic and social policy options. It will facilitate negotiations on salary policy and work conditions and will attempt to build a climate of social peace, which is so important for a country which has been largely destroyed during more than 30 years of war, and which no desires reconciliation and respect for differences, with the dedication of all to build a path towards reconstruction and development.

We trust that we can count on the help and solidarity of all countries and organizations which would like to participate in this massive effort. Angola, in a spirit of fraternity, is working to build the better and more prosperous society that our citizens deserve.

Original Indonesian: Mr. NUWA WEA (*Minister for Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesia*) — First of all, allow me on behalf of the Government of Indonesia and on my own behalf to congratulate the President on his election to lead the debates of this important yearly Conference, a mandate which we are confident he will discharge with skill towards the successful outcome we all expect.

My congratulations also go to the distinguished Vice-Presidents, whose task it is to assist the President in his duties. I feel sure that their combined experience and knowledge of labour issues will be of great benefit to this Conference. At the same time, I would also like to express my appreciation to the secretariat of ILO, who are providing us with a set of comprehensive reports tabled for discussion.

I should like to begin by saying that the Indonesian delegation fully endorses the views expressed in the Report of the Director-General under the apt title, *Working out of poverty*. It is my opinion that poverty is one of the most important and pivotal problems facing the world today, but one which until recently was not given the absolute priority which it deserved from governments and donors alike.

Indeed, efforts to eradicate poverty in developing countries should not be the sole responsibility of governments. In order to have any effect, they must be the common responsibility of all. In this regard, the developed countries must be persuaded that ensuring developing countries unimpeded access to their markets is essential if a major dent in third world poverty is to be achieved.

Within developing countries themselves, governments, the labour and employer organizations, as well as all the elements of civil society, must be made aware of the important role they all play in poverty reduction through the optimization of the climate for investment, the improvement of education and health and by ensuring a greater participation of workers and the determination of their work conditions.

In this context one of the objectives of the Conference should be placing poverty eradication at the centre of the ILO's fundamental aims and making it an integral part of its policies. Indonesia's own strong commitment to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of decent work has often been stated in this forum. In application of this principle therefore, the Indonesian Government has set up a national plan of action as well as an inter-ministerial committee in response to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and the Programme on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers initiated by the World Bank.

In 2001, we also put in place a National Committee for Poverty Elimination, whose task is to develop programmes specifically geared to addressing this issue. The promotion of decent work is one of the Government of Indonesia's foremost priorities, and in this regard, the Government has set about improving the legal framework surrounding worker protection and the implementation of ratified ILO Conventions. To date, the Government has ratified 16 ILO Conventions, including eight core Conventions. To these, the House of Representatives has just added the Bill on the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), for their deliberation and adoption.

This year also saw the introduction of a new law on labour, following that of a Law on Free Trade Unions in 2000. This new law reaffirms the core Conventions, and the right of workers to organize, go out on strike and promote collective bargaining; it also prescribes basic conditions of work, annual leave, retrenchment, severance pay, and health and safety. In addition, Parliament is currently discussing the draft bill on industrial dispute settlement procedures. The laws have established the foundations for a modern and fair industrial relations framework which promotes workers' rights, welfare and employment creation. Throughout this process the ILO Office in Jakarta has provided the Indonesian Government with valuable input and opinions on the drafting of these new laws. Various programmes promoting the implementation of ILO standards are currently under way which testify to the importance of the part they play in our reform process.

In response to the ILO Global Report, I should like to emphasize that Indonesia is also committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination, whether in employment or any other areas. Equality of treatment in employment or occupation for our people has become the basis of our philosophy, as contained in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Our national laws and regulations clearly prohibit discriminatory practices. Constant efforts are therefore being deployed to provide better and wider employment for women and young people, whose contribution to the national economy and hence to the eradication of poverty is crucial.

Original Arabic: Mr. NEFFATI (Minister of Social Affairs and Solidarity, Tunisia) — It gives me pleasure at the outset to congratulate Mr. Michael Wamalwa on his election as President of the Conference, and to congratulate the other Officers of the Conference. I wish them success in their mission.

It also gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia on his re-election as Director-General of the ILO for a second term and I wish him every success in order to continue the radical reforms embarked upon lately.

The Report of the Director-General, *Working out of poverty*, is rich in information and proposals. The Director-General highlighted the relation between decent work and the eradication of poverty and development, maintaining that it is necessary to take some basic measures in order to improve income and living conditions as well as to provide productive work that respects fundamental rights at work, because this is the appropriate base from which to eliminate poverty. The proposal submitted by the Director-General would enforce the eight development objectives of the Millennium Declaration. We endorse the approach embarked on by the World Bank and adopted by many international organizations, including the ILO, which consists of preparing strategies to eliminate poverty based upon giving the fundamental responsibility for devising and implementing policies to the governments of the countries concerned, with the participation of the social partners.

The support of the Director-General for this strategy and his call to adopt it, clearly shows the will of the Organization to promote social justice and to guarantee the fundamental rights at work.

As a result of the pioneering policy devised by His Excellency, President Zine El-Abidin Bin Ali, Tunisia has made the social dimension a vital part of and an essential basis for its development policy, based on the principles of the global nature of the balance between political, economic and social reforms and the complimentary nature of development, democracy and human rights. Therefore, we have adopted a global strategy that aims to protect Tunisian citizens from the threat of exclusion and marginalization and to establish the principle of solidarity among the different social categories of society in order to build a society that reflects balance and solidarity. In this framework, the State has worked to assist those who are vulnerable to create income sources and small projects through microcredit arrangements and to promote independent work while expanding social coverage and strengthening health and housing.

The State has also taken a number of measures to maintain and to create more jobs and to ensure a regular increase in wages in order to improve

purchasing power, in addition to the development of education and vocational training and the adoption of the principle of lifelong education in the framework of promoting human resources throughout the country, in order to ensure equitable distribution of the fruits of development. Our country has established a tradition of dialogue and harmonization between the social partners on the major issues of economic and social importance, particularly on the plans for development and the study of questions relating to work, social security, social development and employment.

Tunisia has also placed the fight against poverty at the top of its list of priorities, adopting a two-dimensional integrated approach: an economic measure that promotes integrating vulnerable groups in the productive circuit and a social measure that allows groups with specific needs to take advantage of social protection and special assistance.

While expressing its satisfaction at the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of resolutions relating to the establishment of the World Solidarity Fund, which had been called for by his Excellency, President Zine El-Abidin Bin Ali, Tunisia, hopes that this fund, which was created within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme in February 2003, will become an appropriate mechanism to achieve the development objectives of the millennium and that sufficient financial resources are mobilized so that it can begin its work as soon as possible.

Mr. SOODHUN (*Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, Mauritius*) — I wish to congratulate the President on his election and on his remarkable efficiency in conducting the deliberations of this Conference.

I am deeply honoured to address this Conference in my capacity as Chairman and spokesperson of the African Union's Labour and Social Affairs Commission, which held its first meeting in Mauritius in April. Some of the most pressing concerns raised at the meeting were rising unemployment, poverty and insecurity resulting from globalization. Employment creation, prevention of HIV/AIDS, the elimination of child labour and poverty reduction are the most urgent priorities of Africa. In this respect, we are thankful to the Director-General for the increase in the budget allocation for the region and for HIV/AIDS prevention.

I would like to reiterate our plea for the ILO's support in the elaboration of a social policy framework and in the implementation of the Jobs For Africa Programme. We believe that the way forward for Africa is to develop an integrated approach in which poverty alleviation will be our global priority. This integrated policy should include strategies to create employment and to assure revenue for those who are without income. Governments would require assistance in identifying avenues for employment creation and facilitating investment. At the same time, within the integrated policy approach, there should be greater support for the informal economy through the development of cooperatives and microcredit, especially for women workers. All of this should be backed up with sound policies on safety and health at work, social security and the elimination of child employment, in order to promote good governance and create the conditions for social peace. With this integrated vision, resources can be mobilized effectively and progress may be measured effectively.

As far as my own country is concerned, there is a strong commitment by the Government to realize the objectives of decent work. We are investing massively in education and training and are setting up a cyber city in order to increase employability.

Unfortunately, the export processing zone, one of the major employment providers, is undergoing severe setbacks in the context of the new trade regulations. We believe that a comprehensive survey of export processing zones in Africa would be useful in identifying the problems and developing strategies to maintain employment in the sector.

The Government of Mauritius has also taken steps to reinforce fundamental rights by ratifying three Conventions Nos. 100, 111 and 137, within the space of one year. We also intend to ratify the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159).

In the field of social protection, the Government is investing more than 44 per cent of its annual budget on social services and support to poverty alleviation through community development and microcredit schemes. Despite its budget constraints, the Government has approved a wage increase to compensate workers for the rise in the cost of living and has granted an interim increase of five per cent to the public service pending the report of the five-year salary review. A salary review granting a 20 per cent wage increase in the public service was approved last week.

With the support of the ILO, a study on work and the family has been conducted and the Government has approved a national plan of action to reconcile work and family life.

In the field of occupational safety and health, the legal framework is being modernized and strengthened in order to ensure more effective control at the workplace.

On the issue of gender equality, my Government has shown its strong determination to eliminate inequalities by introducing a Sex Discrimination Act and by setting up a Sex Discrimination Division within the National Commission of Human Rights.

Before concluding, I would like to express our great pride His Excellency, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, is, this year one of the guests of honour at this Conference. We wish to thank the ILO for honouring Africa and its people. We in Africa have to overcome many obstacles and have a daunting task ahead, but we should bear in mind that Africa has all the elements to succeed. It has the resources, the political will and the perseverance and the determination of its people. What we need is a common vision and the strength of purpose, the unity and the will-power to achieve that vision.

Mr. BURÁNY (*Minister for Employment and Labour, Hungary*) — Poverty, exclusion and social inequalities hit poor and rich countries alike. This carries the message that we should require all countries, regardless of their level of development, to respect international labour standards. But rigour of standards itself is not enough to reduce differences between rich and poor countries. A painful experience of the early twenty-first century is that poverty and helplessness are reproduced.

There is no doubt that the tasks laid down in the Director-General's Report are in line with the Decla-

ration of Philadelphia, and so they serve the noblest objectives of the ILO.

I ask the Conference that when it adopts the Report it should, at the same time, provide the financial resources necessary to deliver those tasks.

At this point I would like to touch upon the ILO *Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05*. In the light of the tasks before the ILO, and particularly in the light of the content of the Report, my Government supports the zero real growth proposal. Any other solution would be a painful step backwards.

In the course of the debate on the draft budget by the Governing Body, several countries have warned of the increasing share of extra-budgetary resources. It is true that the preferences of the two sources of funding differ considerably. However, we still do not share the concerns regarding the direction of the ILO.

In what follows, I would like to share with you some of Hungary's latest most important endeavours and achievements.

This spring the Hungarian Government created a ministerial office responsible for equal opportunities. One of the most important tasks of the lady minister recently taking office is to bring down employment-related discrimination.

The system of social dialogue in Hungary has been renewed, strengthened, and the creation of independent branch-level dialogue has been started with PHARE assistance.

The Government, in line with its promise, implemented a wage increase in the entire public service by an average of 50 per cent in October last year. It has also significantly improved the position of those with low income by assuming the tax payable on the minimum wage.

The Hungarian Government regards as its most important task in the field of employment policy to maintain the favourable level of the unemployment rate (currently at 6.4 per cent) and the expansion of employment. Subscribing to the objective of the European Union, we would like to raise the employment rate to 70 per cent until 2010 which involves the creation of 3,000-4,000 new jobs in the medium term.

To achieve our goals, we are planning to implement several tripartite programmes in cooperation with the ILO, on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

My Government greatly appreciates the activities of the ILO Office in Budapest and continues to ensure all necessary conditions for its successful and long-term operation.

The fast transformation of the world of work, spreading inequalities, question marks regarding globalization indicate that the mission of the ILO has never been so topical as it is today. I am sure that through its proven principles and set of instruments, along with its most up-to-date organizational and management methods, the ILO is well prepared to successfully respond to these challenges.

With these thoughts I wish the Conference successful work.

Original Turkish: Mr. BASESGIOGLU (*Minister for Labour and Social Security, Turkey*) — I would like to congratulate the President on his election at the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I also congratulate the Director-General on his re-election for a second five-year term, and extend my thanks to him for his comprehensive Report, in which

he has dealt with every aspect of poverty eradication — a global challenge of our time.

This year's Global Report, *Time for equality at work*, which is an inspiration to all of us, complements the Report of the Director-General.

In our opinion, the emphasis laid by the ILO on the correlation between decent work and poverty reduction gives us a clear projection as to future activities. In this context, in a world where heated debate focuses on the issue of globalization, the ILO's contributions to combating poverty, and to technical cooperation programmes in particular, have acquired even greater significance from the perspective of the social dimension, in view of the positive impact that this will make on the elimination of inequalities prevailing in the world. I share the view that the principles embodied by the ILO's Decent Work Agenda could ensure social justice in a wealthy and globalized world. Within this framework, we in Turkey stress once again the importance of tripartism and our commitment to this principle. I sincerely believe that in this way we can enable people to live their lives in a better way, in a society strengthened with social justice, and in an environment compatible with decent work principles.

If globalization is unavoidable, which no one disputes, it can still be channelled in such a way as to conform to the concept of good governance, which no doubt will play a vital role in the elimination of injustice, which is a universal complaint today.

Towards the end of the 1990s, owing to the economic crises that affected various regions of the world, largely because of the impact of globalization, unemployment took its place among the urgent problems awaiting solution in Turkey also. For this reason, my Government has adopted an emergency action plan and has been implementing the measures prescribed in it. In addition to short-term measures, we support SMEs and encourage new businesses within the framework of active employment policies.

In relation to the remaining three strategic goals of decent work — standards, social protection and social dialogue — we have achieved considerable improvements. One example is an important development regarding standards, namely, the Job Security Act, which entered into force in March this year, providing protection measures, including the option of reinstatement, against unfair dismissals. Another example was the replacement, a few weeks ago, of the Labour Act of 1971 with a new one, ensuring full compliance with European Union law, the ILO Conventions we have ratified, and the requirements of our time. The revised Labour Act regulates various modes of flexible work, which are of great importance for promoting employment, contains provisions reinforcing gender equality at work, and provides for setting up a wage-guarantee fund and a severance fund to be used in cases of the inability of employers to fulfil their obligations.

As regards social dialogue, it is now well-established practice that draft Bills amending national legislation be prepared by a tripartite board. The Job Security Act which I mentioned earlier, the revised Labour Act, and the two draft Bills, one on trade unions and the other on collective labour agreements, strikes and lockouts, which are currently being examined by the social partners, are all products of committees of this nature. In the meantime, the draft Bill concerning the ratification of international labour

Conventions Nos. 155 and 161 went through the sub-committee of the Turkish Grand National Assembly last week, and ratification is pending.

In the field of social protection, one development worth mentioning is the social security reform that has been implemented since 1999. In the first stage, measures were taken to prevent informal employment and to restore the actuarial balance of the social security institutions. Secondly, private pension schemes were introduced, and improvements to the health services and a comprehensive social assistance system were designed. The third stage, which is still in progress, will involve reorganization of the social security institutions.

I take pride in saying that the Government, employers, workers, and trade unions in my country have always taken a positive approach when it comes to cooperation with the Government on challenging issues. This approach has been largely responsible for the success of the IPEC programmes which we have been implementing with the collaboration of the ILO.

I am optimistic that, thanks to a constructive attitude of this kind, satisfactory results will be achieved in the fight against poverty and injustice, as well as in making decent work principles prevail, both in my country and throughout the world.

Ms. STO. TOMAS (*Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippines*) — In the past few months, the invisible invasion of an unknown virus has almost brought the world to a standstill. The slowdown in the movement of goods and people has further hobbled a global system that has not quite recovered from an earlier financial crisis and sporadic terrorist attacks. The initial, and perhaps understandable, reaction was to build higher walls, to isolate those perceived to be the source of this unwelcome guest. But isolation was not the answer; isolation has never been the answer. Cooperation was. Only when we started sharing information among countries, only after mechanisms for identifying potential carriers and their contacts had been put in place — again as a result of cooperation among countries — did we see fewer deaths and fewer infections. SARS, after all, is globalization in one of its more fearful forms, and it does carry a moral lesson — that unless we manage any and all kinds of globalization together, we may all perish from it together.

The Director-General's Report, *Working out of poverty*, should make us fearful about the magnitude of the problems we face. Would that these words spoke as loudly as viruses do? Would that words forced us to act as quickly and as decisively on poverty as we do about squiggly little microbes.

Poverty is a global phenomenon. Even the most developed countries have their own pockets of poverty. But the stresses of recent years have caused poverty to rise to unprecedented levels worldwide. Like SARS, poverty is spreading, and yes, like SARS, it kills.

It kills because poverty breeds a whole slew of miserable effects: there is illiteracy and ignorance, disability, poor health and malnutrition, even that great scourge of our age which is terrorism.

Over the past few days, we have heard examples of how poverty is being addressed all over the world. We have heard some of the success stories and they are instructive about how we may alleviate some of our own situations back home. They also indicate the possibilities for technical cooperation and assistance.

Our own poverty-free zones have resulted from indigenous efforts at developing self-reliant communities using local resources and capabilities. Lately, however, we have been helped by Japan in looking at how the design and distribution of community-based products can be improved.

Our National Programme against the Worst Forms of Child Labor has been helped by a grant from the United States and its target is to halve the number of child labourers over the next five years in the Philippines.

Communities in Mindanao, which have been areas of traditional conflict for the longest period of time and which have been hit by terrorism, now get assistance from a variety of bilateral and multilateral donors.

Under our own programme for overseas employment we have extended technical assistance on a TCDC basis, not just within the Asian region, but to other countries as well in other parts of the world. For the past 30 years, we have evolved a home-grown system for the welfare and protection of migrant workers.

In this development work we have been helped by countless partners, some of whom have been receiving countries themselves, and international agencies, like the ILO, who have helped refine our processes and procedures.

The point I am trying to make is that, for most countries, both transitioning and developed economies, going it alone is no longer an option. We all need a little help from our friends. We are not islands unto ourselves, separate and unmindful of each other. A globalized world is an interdependent world.

As in the case of SARS we have to break down the walls before we can build bridges. Only then, to paraphrase the Director-General's Report, can we prove the naysayers wrong and show that, indeed, another kinder and gentler world is possible.

Original French: Ms. AMELINE (*Under-Secretary for Equal Opportunity in occupation and employment, France*) — First of all, on behalf of the Government of France, allow me to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General, for inviting us together to consider the role of work in the elimination of poverty. He has always resolutely placed the human being at the heart of development, to ensure that globalization does not leave anyone behind. This road, which we have travelled together for many years, has been marked by important mile stones for which we have Mr. Somavia to thank. They include the Copenhagen Programme of Action (1995) and the commitment of the ILO to help children, who pay a high price for poverty. I very much welcome the renewal of Mr. Somavia's mandate for another five years.

The Report, *Working out of poverty* which we have before us is a major contribution to what is one of the major objectives of the Millennium Declaration, namely, the elimination of poverty and the search for social cohesion. This Report is a continuation of the activities carried out by the ILO for the promotion of decent work.

As a representative of a maritime region, I am extremely interested in the work currently being carried out under the new integrated standard-setting policy

of the International Programme for the Promotion of Decent Work in the Maritime Industry. I hope it will be possible to agree on solutions, as far as seafarers' identification is concerned, that will guarantee the security of countries and protect the rights of seafarers of intermediate ports.

I also commend the impressive work aimed at the adoption of a consolidated seafarers Convention which should help to modernize and bring social progress to the maritime sector.

The general proposals contained in the Report of the Director-General aim to reconcile the dignity of the individual with economic growth. This opens the way to progress that is more fairly shared out and better regulated.

The Government of France can only approve these proposals. Placing work at the very heart of the ILO's approach to bringing about social justice is consistent with the general thrust of the policies implemented for a year now by the French Government. These policies are aimed at restoring the value of work.

We now live in a world without real borders. People, commodities, goods and information circulate more quickly than we could ever have imagined or dreamed of. People are closer together, and knowledge and technology are being shared. These are unprecedented changes which must be monitored and regulated because globalization increases competition and inequalities, between countries and between North and South. Globalization can also increase exclusion and discrimination at the work-place. It is also accompanied by a globalization of public opinion and the development of new forms of consumption which are more sensitive to the conditions in which goods are produced or services provided.

Generally speaking, France shares with the ILO the conviction that economic globalization must lead to a globalization of solidarity. We await with interest the proposals of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. What is needed here is a balance between the laws of economics and the requirements of social ethics. This means that we have to mobilize all parties concerned — governments, employers, workers and international organizations.

In this respect, we can only welcome the Declaration made at the recent G8 meeting in Evian, which said that "sound social frameworks [...] are also important for sustainable growth", and recognized the importance of the social responsibility of enterprises and encouraged them "to work with other parties to complement and foster the implementation of existing instruments, such as the OECD guidelines and the ILO 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work."

As the Director-General's Report emphasizes, poverty also leads to discrimination. The Global Report, *Time for equality at work*, gives us a detailed account of discrimination at work in all its forms. It also sets out an appropriate plan of action. We have to remind ourselves constantly that discrimination remains a tenacious daily phenomenon in the world of work. As the Report emphasizes, it is the traditional forms of discrimination linked to gender, age, race, religion, medical conditions, or disability which are taking on new subtle forms which require better adapted responses.

Discrimination based on gender was one of the first forms of discrimination to attract the attention of the international community. The ILO has done much

work in this area, but we know that progress is not immune to setbacks. Much remains to be done, and we need to be constantly vigilant in our efforts to monitor equality between men and women.

As a Minister responsible for equal opportunity in occupation, I know that there is a long and difficult road to travel between the recognition of the principle of equality in theory, particularly in the world of work, and its actual full application in practice. We must take up this challenge. Our country is on the right road. The Report notes that France is, within the OECD, one of the two countries — along with the United States — where the difference between the average salaries of men and women has been reduced the most over the last 15 years.

This is a matter of justice and equality for women. It is also a matter of economics. I must emphasize this point: equal employment opportunities are not only a factor in social progress, but a factor in economic progress. In this constantly changing world of work, with increasingly advanced technologies, failure to create a workforce, an innovation force and enterprise force, that is fully mixed from initial training onwards, will deprive us of half of our human resources.

I would also like to emphasize the fact that discrimination based on age, which is seen frequently in developed countries, is now being extended to developing countries. We must combat this phenomenon with determination.

In France we have become aware of what is at stake and we have begun to reform the pensions system in order to provide an equitable response to demographic developments. We have committed ourselves to a policy of national mobilization to increase the number of active workers over the age of 50 which is based on adapting posts, the retirement age, the recognition of skills linked to experience and continuous training.

Indeed, this continuous training, which should enable workers over the age of 50 to make full use of their experience, is one of the focal issues to be developed in collaboration with the social partners.

France fully supports the ILO in its efforts to bring about true equality at work, which forms part of the wider objective of decent work. Equality at work is an objective to which France is traditionally very much attached. At a time when my Government is ready to set up an independent high-level authority to combat all forms of discrimination, this Report is bound to provide us with useful information and ideas.

Generally speaking, we also wish to complement the implementation of laws and regulations that guarantee non-discrimination by promoting integration and support measures. This is the case with regard to the employment of women, and the need to give them greater responsibility in political, economic and social life.

It is the case with regard to the way migrant workers are welcomed in particular, the introduction of an "integration contract" laying down the respective obligations of the worker and the community. It is also the case with regard to the integration of disabled persons. In 2003, the European Year of Disabled Persons, we are revising our fundamental standards in this area in order to improve disability benefits and reinforce efforts to integrate disabled people at work and in society. This is an area in which the ILO, because of its tripartite character and its universal

dimension, has played, and will continue to play, a determining role.

In conclusion, I would like to remind you of our conviction that globalization with a human face, which will enable every individual to have a job and decent working and living conditions, is the responsibility of everyone – international organizations, multinational organizations, governments, workers and employers. Based on respect for human rights, particularly human rights at work, this globalization requires better synergy between

the international institutions concerned, in the interest of making progress towards better governance that promote employment.

Mr. PRESIDENT — As that is all we have time for before the special sitting, I declare the 9th Sitting of the International Labour Conference closed. Would all delegates wishing to attend the special sitting please remain in their seats.

(The Conference adjourned at 10.55 a.m.)

Eleventh sitting

Thursday, 12 June 2003, 11.30 a.m.

President: Mr. Wojcik

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

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

Original French: Mr. IVALA (*Minister for Labour and Employment, Gabon*) — Following the brilliant address by King Abdullah, it is an honour for me to take the floor to congratulate him on behalf of my delegation and my country, Gabon.

I should like to associate myself with the speakers who took the floor before me, to congratulate, on behalf of my delegation and in a personal capacity, the President on his election to chair this session. I am quite certain that his experience will ensure the success of this session.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia on his successful re-election to head the International Labour Office. I, personally, am very satisfied, particularly as, during his first term of office, cooperation between my country and the ILO was significantly strengthened.

The Report of the Director-General, *Working out of poverty* eloquently develops the link between decent work, poverty, development and the elimination of discrimination in employment. It points out to us at various levels, that the objective set by the international community, namely to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015, is seriously compromised because the gap between the rich and the poor countries continues to grow.

I am now going to outline some of the activities that my Government is endeavouring to undertake to overcome poverty and marginalization before the 2015 deadline. The Government has a specific policy to reduce poverty and, if possible, eliminate it. One of the strategies to achieve this remains the reduction of unemployment, in particular among young people who are the most affected. Our aim is to achieve full employment, despite the very disappointing economic situation in our country.

It is for this reason that, in June 2000, a National Employment Pact was signed between the State and professional organizations and that provincial job forums were organized in 2001.

In the same context, the National Employment Office and the fund for occupational integration and reintegration, were restructured so that they are now equipped to assist people in Gabon to find decent and dignified work.

The President of Gabon, His Excellency, El Hadjumar Bongo, has made a personal commitment

to fight against poverty and social marginalization. He decided, therefore, to establish a programme adapted to our national realities. In concrete terms, we have drawn up a poverty reduction strategy paper, involving all of the traditional social partners.

The Government is doing everything possible to promote and guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of workers, particularly through prohibiting child labour and forced labour, respect for freedom of association, equal remuneration and non-discrimination in employment. We have also ratified seven of the core ILO Conventions and we will soon be ratifying the eighth, which is the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). The ratification process is already under way.

The potential of our people, which is geared towards prosperity and development with equal access for men and women to employment, particularly in decision-making posts, will be one of the tools we shall use to defeat poverty.

Our Constitution states that everyone has the right to work and the right to obtain a job, and that no one can be discriminated against in their employment on grounds of their origin, gender, race or opinions.

The elimination of the worst forms of child labour is also one of the major concerns of my Government. Evidence of this is the two subregional consultations on the cross-border trafficking of children for the purposes of exploitation and labour that were held in Libreville in 2000 and 2002, and the many national and international meetings and seminars that have been held. We have recently also set up a special call centre with a free telephone number, that operates day and night so that the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations can be kept informed of any cases of child abuse.

As you can see, the Government of Gabon is trying to place emphasis on decent and productive work. It rightly feels that the creation of jobs for the sole purpose of providing work is not an effective way to fight against poverty.

Gabon is rising to this challenge. A Ministry responsible for poverty reduction has just been created, with the mandate of preparing a national plan of action to reduce poverty and to conduct national public information campaigns on poverty reduction strategies.

Moreover, the Government is endeavouring to make an attractive legal framework available to economic operators that would make it easier to establish enterprises and hence create jobs. In that regard, we have also reorganized our Labour Code, which shows the strong political will of the Gabonese Government to combat all types of marginalization.

The Government of my country is also determined to encourage independent employment, which should take its appropriate place in Gabon as an intermediary solution to enable our people to contribute to the development of the economy.

The Government's determination alone is not enough to combat poverty effectively and we therefore call on the international organizations to assist Gabon in this undertaking.

Original Arabic: Mr. DJILANI (Employers' delegate, Tunisia) — In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I am honoured and pleased to congratulate the President on behalf of the employers of Tunisia on his election to the Presidency of this session. We wish him every success in his work. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General, and would like to thank him. We are grateful to him for all the efforts he has exerted in order to advance this Organization, and I would like to congratulate him on his re-election as Director-General.

The development of natural resources and human resources is extremely important, and we believe that every enterprise that is trying to get ahead must take this element into consideration, as it is the one that will attract direct foreign investment.

There is considerable competition at present between all countries of the world because of globalization. Therefore one must have highly qualified manpower in a country in order to attract capital. President Zine El-Abidin Bin Ali, our President, has given great attention to this question because he believes that our human resources are our country's most important asset, as has been recognized by many competent international bodies including the Davos Forum.

Our organization realized the importance of this years ago, and has endeavoured to make Tunisian businessmen aware of the crucial need to develop human resources, and has urged them to open up opportunities before workers and cadres and to develop their capabilities, so as to keep face with the technological progress that we see daily in all sectors of industry.

We believe that human resource development and training are an extremely important element. We have been aware of this and we have cooperated with the other parties in order to reach solutions. No solutions would be possible without qualified manpower. Providing a county with qualified manpower is a collective responsibility shared by the workers and the employers. Both parties should discuss the matter.

Consultations are taking place at present in Tunisia, with a view to improving productivity, in order to become more competitive and achieve a breakthrough to foreign markets.

The partnership between business enterprises and academia is also something we are working on now. We believe that internships in enterprises are the best bridge between the two, for the achievement of our goals and to facilitate the entry of graduates into the business world.

In Tunisia, we have been able to protect our workers from injuries and accidents through training. I would like to mention here the assistance provided by the Organization to my country and to other African countries. Many programmes and workshops have been organized, but I would like to mention in

particular those organized for employers, some of which were sponsored by our country and were highly successful. We believe such good initiatives should be multiplied, and would like to thank the International Labour Organization for all its efforts in this domain.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-HAROON (Employers' delegate, Kuwait) — In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I would like to begin my statement by conveying the appreciation and the greetings of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Kuwait, which I have the honour to represent at this distinguished Conference, and I join the previous speakers in congratulating the President and Vice-Presidents on the confidence expressed in them.

I have to confess that whenever I read Mr. Somavia's work or listen to him I become more convinced that he is a dreaming, romantic man of letters, lost by the literary world to that of labour. You may share with me the view that reading the Report of the Director-General to this session of the Conference, on *Working out of poverty* cannot be isolated from his two previous Reports on decent work, submitted to the Conference at its 87th and 89th Sessions.

What may be immediately noticeable in this context is that the first was more specific and precise in addressing the issue of decent work. The logic of things necessitates that in handling a subject we should move from the comprehensive and general to the specialized and thus the specific — and not the other way around.

The chapters and paragraphs of the Report touched our hearts in a far-reaching intellectual excursion, through the vision of a man who bears the concerns and pains of humankind. Do you not agree with me that he must be overburdened?

The Report is spontaneous and full of details. Thus, it might distract the recipient from the essence of the issue, with a magistral plethora of offshoots and details. We cannot deny the role of the ILO in combating poverty, but this role should be within the framework of its competence, programmes and activities, because the eradication of poverty is a collective responsibility in which the United Nations with all its specialized agencies and various international and regional organizations take part.

It is not in favour of the Report that it introduces a human conception to the eradication of poverty, different from that imposed upon our developing countries by the international finance institutions — especially the World Bank — which virtually ignores the human dimension in its policies and programmes. Thus it achieves a certain balance between the approaches of the relevant international organizations.

The Report states that “the poor do not cause poverty. Poverty is the result of structural failures and ineffective economic and social systems. It is the product of inadequate political responses, bankrupt policy imagination and insufficient international support.”

The question here is: what can our Organization do when faced with this complex problem which exceeds the ability of international and regional organizations to solve?

While we cannot underestimate the value and importance of all the ideas and phrases set forth in the Report, what we would like to stress is that we must concentrate on combating unemployment and on the development of human resources in order to provide decent work for all job seekers, as a modest contribu-

tion by the Organization to the eradication of poverty, through an integrated project by which the member States could be guided and to which they could contribute in order to provide decent work opportunities in the labour market.

From the perspective of any available job saving the individual from the jaws of poverty and unemployment necessarily being decent work, unless it is morally reprehensible or illegal, and regardless of whether it is formal or informal work, part-time or full-time in a house or in an enterprise, such matters do not serve the cause of decent work, but rather impede its attainment and open the way to subjecting it to the influence of standards and their complexities.

Decent work as specified by the Report is an objective which it would be difficult to achieve, except in circumstances where there are multiple choices and opportunities for comparison between jobs. This would be a luxury that may not be available except to a minority of highly qualified persons, in both developed and developing countries, not the general rule for the unemployed and recent entrants to the labour market.

Original Portuguese: Mr. LOPES CORREIA (*Minister of Labour and Solidarity, Cape Verde*) — It is a great pleasure and an honour to speak at this session of a Conference which, as has often been said, symbolizes the possibility of harmony between capital and labour.

Work is one of the most basic dimensions of human existence. It is the key to the global, social question and to progress in our efforts to combat poverty. These efforts have been at the forefront of our agenda in Cape Verde. Work is also a key component in building social cohesion and sustainability. Consequently, broad social dialogue is in the common interest and should be the joint responsibility of everyone. Our government has been promoting social dialogue as part of its general attempt to enhance the democratic process. A new framework for negotiations between representatives of Government, civil society businessmen, trade unions and non-governmental organizations has been launched with the permanent sitting of the Council for Social Dialogue.

Cape Verde fully supports the freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, equal wages, non-discrimination in the workplace, and the elimination of forced labour.

As a small, poor, island country, we place great importance in human resources and, consequently, we have established a Ministry for Human Resource Development. Therefore we attach great significance to the issues raised for discussion, which are fully consistent with our targets for sustainable development.

With regard to occupational health and safety, we have taken decisive steps, such as ratification of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), followed by the issuance of Decree Law No. 55/99, of 6 September, with a view to reducing accidents and illness at work. The Government of Cape Verde sets great store by the integration of industrial accidents and illnesses into the social welfare system, and to updating its list of recognized labour disabilities, bringing coherence to the administration of its social security system.

Finally, in addition to these initiatives, the Government has drafted a new Labour Code, which will help

to modernize and streamline our labour legislation, based on the concepts of responsibility, quality and effort in promoting a strong and common culture of responsibility between employers and workers.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate our best wishes for the success of the 91st Session of the Conference, with a view to strengthening the ties which bind together the ILO family, in a world of increasing solidarity and social justice.

Mr. HAUSIKU (*Minister of Labour, Namibia*) — On behalf of the Government and people of Namibia, I wish to express my appreciation to the Director-General, the Chairperson of the Governing Body, and the Office for their thought-provoking reports and comprehensive documents that are made available to us for committee discussions and policy debates.

In his Report, *Working out of poverty*, the Director-General has once again refocused the ILO debate on the ILO's four strategic objectives. The Report provides guidelines, tested strategies and living examples of working out of poverty. In its efforts to realize the values embodied in the Decent Work Agenda through the fight against poverty, the Government of Namibia has put in place various policies and programmes aimed at reducing the decent work deficit. In the area of social protection, for example, the Namibian Labour Act of 1992, and Social Security Act of 1994, provide for protection regarding maternity, sickness and death benefits, for an employees' compensation fund and for the establishment of a national pension fund. The Labour Act and Social Security Act are being harmonized in favour of 100 per cent maternity protection for female employees.

With regard to the challenges of unemployment, employment opportunities and job creation, youth unemployment continues to dominate the highest percentage of the unemployed and those in search of employment. Our experience, however, is that those with tertiary, vocational and technical education are absorbed smoothly by the labour market. The skills deficit continues to haunt our labour market, and it is clear that Namibia, like other developing nations, faces a serious challenge in human resources development. As a result, the inadequate supply of skilled personnel remains Namibia's main development constraint.

In order to give effect to its political commitment, the Government of Namibia has made education one of its top national priorities in budget allocation. The improving primary school enrolment figures are obvious initial indicators that our heavy investment in education is already beginning to pay off. Just as we agree fully that, "the principle route out of poverty is work," as the Report states, we are also convinced that the principle route to decent work is education, training and continuous skills development.

The goal of decent work should continue to guide our debate and guide the ILO and its constituents in choosing the best approach and practices towards total achievement of basic human rights at the workplace – freedom of association, eradication of child labour, especially its worst forms, and the abolition of forced and compulsory labour – through the promotion of decent employment.

Over the past few years we have seen an increase in the number of ratifications of fundamental human rights conventions, yet we are informed in this Report that people living in poverty need a voice to obtain

recognition of their rights and demands for respect. They need representation and participation. They need sound laws that can be enforced and work for, rather than against, their interests. For us, ratification of seven of the eight core Conventions has brought about freedom of association in all economic zones, the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively, tripartite consultation structures and employment equity structures. However, we remain convinced of the truth expressed so clearly in the Report, that “breaking the cycle of poverty is really about creating a new cycle of opportunity”.

In pursuing its efforts to create decent work, the Government of Namibia has initiated strategies to promote the development of small and medium enterprises, and launched employment creation schemes for the unemployed, especially the young unemployed.

The Director-General, in *Working out of poverty*, states quite correctly that resources are not just money, they include “the conviction to act, the belief that a better society is possible, the sense of solidarity, the decision not to be morally indifferent to the plight of others”. We identify ourselves with this position, but we cannot go it alone. We agree fully on the role that social partnership can play at home and within the ILO and at the international level. It is here that the role of the ILO becomes very crucial in the fight against poverty, through the development of multilateral strategies for realizing the objectives that we have set ourselves in the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

My delegation commends the decision by the Director-General to decentralize 10 per cent of resources under the 2004-05 programme and budget, in order to expand and improve services provided to the constituents. This difficult decision should surely facilitate prudence in the use of resources. Sub-regional and national capacities should continue to be identified, acknowledged and effectively used in the implementation process. National priorities should continue to inform ILO planning, programming and activity implementation. Effective monitoring and programme evaluation should continue to inform the ILO of our achievements, while also helping us to share information on best practices at every level.

While supporting fully the zero real growth budget for the 2004-05 biennium, my delegation submits that it is time for the ILO to initiate a policy debate that would allow growth in the budget. By the same token, we urge non-paying member States to make extra efforts to pay their contributions on time. This will help the Organization to realize its objectives.

Finally, my delegation expresses its full support for the re-election of the Director-General and pledges its support to cooperate with him during his term of office.

Mr. RYSSDAHL (*State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Government Administration, Norway*) — I am very honoured once again to have the opportunity to address the International Labour Conference. On behalf of the Norwegian delegation, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating the Director-General on his re-election. I wish him every success in this challenging position. I would also like to thank and commend him for the quality of his Report, *Working out of poverty*, which I have read with great interest. I would also like to congratulate the ILO on its membership of the United Nations

Development Group (UNDG). This membership will enhance the ILO’s ability to implement the Millennium Development Goals. We believe it will contribute to better coordination, cohesion and division of roles at country level between the ILO and other organizations. This membership is demanding. The ILO will now be expected to work even more closely with the common United Nations planning frameworks – the Common Country Assessments and the United Nation Development Assistance Framework. I think that harmonization of its programming cycles with the rest of the United Nations system should be the next step.

The Millennium Development Goals have become an overarching framework for development cooperation. The broader understanding of what poverty is about — that it is not only a question of income but of the deprivation of dignity, rights, education and health, is also crucial in this context. It is important to keep up the momentum on the funding side. We must not, however, ignore the many other challenges, such as integrating the MDGs in our daily development work. The ILO and its constituents definitely have a very good starting point, because they are so close to the grass roots. This is one of the particular advantages that the ILO has, as has been pointed out in the Director-General’s Report.

Let me also use this opportunity to draw attention to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development in overseeing the implementation of the outcomes from last year’s World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The Norwegian Minister for the Environment, Mr. Brende, was recently elected Chairman of this Commission. The Commission has decided to focus on issues relating to water, sanitation and human settlements during the next two years. In addition, the Commission will address cross-cutting issues, among others, poverty eradication, financing, globalization and gender. In this context it is particularly important that the ILO and the CSD join forces in order to deal with these questions in a comprehensive manner. Minister Brende and the Director-General recently held a meeting in this connection and we look forward to discussing possible future cooperation between the ILO and the CSD.

Norway has noted with regret that, over the past few years, there has been a continuing fall in expenditure on programmes in Africa and in the least developed countries. From 1999 to 2001, this type of expenditure in LDCs decreased by 12 per cent. I would urge the ILO to do what it can to improve the delivery rates.

In March 2002, the Norwegian Government launched an action plan for combating poverty in the South. At least 40 per cent of our bilateral development assistance is to go to the LDCs. We are also seeking to follow the same principle when it comes to our multilateral assistance. We would urge the ILO to increase the share of expenditure that is allocated to these countries. I would like to point out in this connection that the influence of ILO standards has had a markedly beneficial influence on labour legislation in member States.

The Norwegian Government’s responses to global poverty challenges are to be found in the action plan for combating poverty in Norway. While in the traditional sense, poverty has been more or less eliminated in our country, living in social and material depriva-

tion in a welfare state with a generally high standard of living is a great hardship.

The Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05 are based on four strategic objectives. Norway fully supports the use of a framework of zero real growth in this connection. Norway also fully supports the structuring of the proposals under four broad headings.

The elimination of discrimination at work is essential if the values of human dignity and individual freedom are to be realized. The Director-General's fourth Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration, *Time for equality at work*, provides an update of the various responses and aims at mobilizing greater support for the elimination of discrimination.

In conclusion, I believe the ILO has pioneered international consensus and provided policy guidance on how to tackle discrimination at work.

Mr. OMOTADE (*Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Nigeria*) — It is my singular honour and privilege, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, to congratulate the President on his election to steer the affairs of the 91st Session of the Conference. I should seize this opportunity to congratulate all the elected Officers of the Conference and extend warm felicitations to all delegates and advisers. Let me once again congratulate the Director-General for his reappointment for a second term of five years. His reappointment, a tacit recognition of his competence and overall effectiveness, should be regarded as a challenge that should spur him on to greater achievements.

The International Labour Organization has been identified with the unassailable objectives of promoting social justice and lasting peace, particularly in the workplace and, by extension, in the world. As noted by the Director-General in his Report, ILO constituents have increasingly turned to it for assistance in handling complex situations such as unemployment, a safer work environment, social crises, threats, opportunities of trade liberalization and globalization. We salute the ILO for its consistency in the promotion and projection of fundamental principles and rights at work, which culminated in the Decent Work Agenda, and for its usefulness as an attractive medium for channelling technical cooperation and allied resources. The Declaration project is currently assisting my country in the review of its labour laws whilst involving the three social partners fully.

My delegation has read and digested the Report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body for its 285th and 286th Sessions, and the Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05. Of primary importance to Nigeria, and indeed the African region, are the Global Employment Agenda; child labour and the Decent Work Agenda; HIV/AIDS and technical cooperation. Permit me, at this juncture, to commend the ILO's Global Employment Agenda, which aims at developing a coherent and coordinated international strategy for the promotion of full, freely chosen and productive employment. It therefore places employment at the heart of economic and social policies.

Perhaps the most worrisome problem of the African region is unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, which stands at over 60 per cent. It is an indisputable fact that employment is basic to poverty eradication. In Africa today, the economic growth rate is generally low; hence, African countries have

been unable to provide employment for the rapidly increasing population. Consequently, there are millions of idle hands that are easily mobilized for violence, armed robbery and prostitution. The greatest economic challenge that confronts the African continent, therefore, is to address the myriads of socio-economic problems arising from a high level of unemployment and disguised unemployment.

It is in view of the foregoing that my country associates itself with the decision of the Governing Body that the ILO should assist and support, upon request, the efforts of governments in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans on youth employment. Also commendable is the ILO's decision to persuade decision-makers in developing countries and donor agencies to adopt labour-based methodologies in the implementation of their development programmes. These are steps in the right direction.

In my country, the present civilian administration has not folded its hands in tackling the problem of youth unemployment. It has embarked upon strategies for the promotion and generation of employment, as well as skill acquisition programmes, through the National Directorate of Employment and the National Poverty Eradication Programme. However, technical assistance is still required from the ILO in its Jobs in Africa Programme, to complement government efforts in reducing mass unemployment and pervasive poverty.

My delegation would like to acknowledge with appreciation efforts being made to combat child labour. These programmes have been largely successful in Nigeria. The phenomenon itself is a manifestation of the abject poverty in the land. Consequently, the reduction of poverty would, in the long run, curtail the incidence of child labour and reduce the work deficit.

It is no exaggeration to state that Africa suffers most from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is in this regard that the African region urged the ILO to elevate HIV/AIDS to an InFocus Programme in the Social Protection Sector. It is gratifying to note that the Director-General has graciously accepted to positively consider the request. We are also happy to note the additional US\$500,000 allocation to the HIV/AIDS programme in Africa in the budget proposals before the Conference.

The prolonged debate on the budget proposals finally ended with the consensus that a zero real growth budget be implemented for the biennium. I, however, wish to advise that, to ensure the continued relevance of the ILO, it must be equipped with all the wherewithal, in terms of adequate financial and human resources, to enable it to address adequately, and with renewed vigour, the multifarious problems that continue to confront not only workers and the workplace, but also the developing world. These problems appear to be on the ascendancy on a daily basis. The Organization can do this only through the instrumentality of a growth-oriented budget strategy.

Mr. TUGUSHI (*Workers' delegate, Georgia*) — The process of establishing a market economy and the demolition of the old system has been more complicated and painful in Georgia than in other post-Soviet countries. This was mainly predetermined by political instability, provoked ethnic conflicts and civil war.

In the period of the crash of old economic links, the national economy has not been ready for competition and thousands of workers have been left unemployed.

Three hundred thousand refugees from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region of South Ossetia, whose return to their own homes remains unclear, aggravated the problem. The process of the break up of the public sector and the growth of unemployment exceeded the development of the non-governmental and private sector, which was not able to employ the people who were freed from the public sector.

In 1994, on the basis of a recommendation of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, some efforts were made to reach economic stabilization in 1996-97 but, unfortunately, the level of economic growth decreased in the following years. The shadow economy and corruption caused a low income in the budget and a debt of wages, pensions and some social payments.

Progress in the development of employment and the formation of the labour market is low, which was formed as a long-term problem. Because of that, migration of working labour forces is high. Survey and analyses of the labour market in Georgia show that the share of hired persons from the whole employed is 35.4 per cent and self-employed is 64.6 per cent.

The income of the employed is lower than the living minimum, which produces the problem of so-called poor workers. According to the employment service, only 400 workers were hired in the whole country during the last four months, which is really very low. According to GTUA data, the scale of unemployment exceeds the official data.

Because of poor resources, the social security system of unemployed people is not effective. Only 3.5 per cent of unemployed people receive social assistance, which consists of US\$6 per month.

It is clear that the Government should conduct its policy in the social economic sphere, first of all, towards economic growth, the creation of new workplaces and the reduction of levels of unemployment. The further growth of unemployment will stimulate the increase of poverty and social inequality.

The Baku-Jeikhan and Baku-Erzrum pipeline projects give special importance to the development of employment and the formation of the labour market. These projects will create thousands of jobs, give a big profit to the social sphere and increase budget incomes.

Trade unions are well aware that it is impossible to overcome the existing level of poverty in Georgia unless sustainable economic growth is achieved.

The latter is enhanced by economic and structural reforms and fair distribution of resources. It is impossible to achieve the above objective without creating new jobs.

The main prerequisite for this is the improvement of the investment climate and the development of small and medium-sized business.

In addition, we are hopeful that with the assistance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the implementation of the project to eradicate poverty in Georgia will become more effective and less socially unacceptable for the population of Georgia. We also hope that cooperation with trade unions and non-governmental organizations will be transparent and fruitful.

With this in mind, Trade Unions Amalgamation of Georgia aims to get fully involved in this process, actively cooperate within the trilateral framework with executive authorities as well as with employers.

We cherish the hope that our relations with the International Labour Organization and their Moscow Office will continue to be productive in Georgia, thus contributing to the resolution of the problems in the field of labour.

Original Spanish: Mr. IYANGA DJOBA MALANGO (*Minister for Labour and Social Security, Equatorial Guinea*) — As I take the floor here in this important forum I would like to begin by greeting you in the name of peace and prosperity from the peaceful nation of Equatorial Guinea. We have gathered here to take up topics of great importance for the world of work, building social justice, which is essential for sustainable peace as you can see from the Preamble to the Constitution of this very prestigious Organization.

I should also like, on behalf of myself and my delegation, to congratulate the President on being unanimously elected to guide our work. We are convinced that under his leadership we will achieve success. We would also like to congratulate the Vice-Presidents and all the Officers of the Conference.

We appreciate the important items that have been placed on the agenda as well as the central theme in the Director-General's Report on the interrelationship between decent work, poverty reduction and development. This is a very timely topic and one that we should all consider seriously.

Focusing on the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, as well as the promotion of decent work, I should like to inform this assembly that the Government of Equatorial Guinea has not only ratified all the fundamental Conventions required under the Declaration but has also undertaken the necessary work to bring its legislation, conduct and national practice into line with them.

We are amending our labour legislation, above all with reference to measures of health and safety at work. We have considerably expanded our social security coverage to include groups with low or no income, such as the disabled. We have recently altered our minimum wage levels to include all parts of the national economy to enhance the purchasing power of workers, and we have undertaken programmes and projects to eradicate poverty and social exclusion. We are constantly combating child labour and the worst forms of child labour and we have raised the minimum age for employment from 14 to 18 years of age and undertaken studies to assess the extent of this phenomenon in our country. These are just some examples of what we have been doing.

There are obstacles which stand in our way because of the major changes that have taken place in our country. We have moved from being a mainly agricultural country to an oil-producing country, with the resulting shortage of skilled labour for that sector. People have been leaving the rural areas and unskilled labour has been moving to the major cities.

We would like to take this opportunity to request assistance from the ILO and the member States in order to implement programmes of human resource development that are in line with the needs of our labour market as well as the creation of new job opportunities as stated in the Declaration. We are convinced that our endeavours to reduce poverty and achieve development depend on these factors.

As is clear, we have chosen to take the path of the ILO. It is not enough just to work at the national level to achieve success; we need assistance from the outside to support our efforts and to contribute knowledge and experience. I therefore call on the conscience of the developed countries to request transfer of technology and open cooperation with the developing countries because, in a world that is increasingly interdependent and globalized, the solution to the problems of the North cannot be achieved without worsening the conditions of the world of work and the social environment in general if we set aside the problems of the South, with the subsequent widening of the gap between the North and the South.

It has been made clear that the protectionist policies and repression of immigration that may be adopted instinctively for its survival and well-being by the North will never be able to hold back the wave of immigration from the countries of the South. Proof of this is the fact that every day African citizens risk their lives to cross the Straits of Gibraltar seeking what is supposedly a better life. This immigration has been noted with indignation in many parts of the world.

We should not forget that "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere ... the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort", as stated in the Declaration of Philadelphia itself, with regard to the goals and objectives of the International Labour Organization.

I conclude my modest statement by once again wishing this 91st Session of the Conference every success in its discussions.

Mr. VARELA (*Employers' delegate, Philippines*) — First of all we would like to express our most sincere congratulations to the President on his election. I have no doubt that his many years of experience will help him chair and successfully conclude this session of the Conference.

The Philippine employers would also like to commend the Director-General on his Global Report, *Time for equality at work*, a very comprehensive study on the diverse and emerging forms of discrimination in the workplace. We fully subscribe to the Global Report's philosophical and moral premises. Indeed, social justice and individual freedom remain mere pronouncements unless there is a complete equality in the workplace.

For all the gains we have made in our collective efforts to improve the level and scope of equality at work, a new challenge emerges. As the Global Report points out, changes in the structure and dynamics of labour markets lead to more intractable and less visible forms of work inequality, such as those based on age, disability, perceived or actual HIV/AIDS, social status, religion and nationality.

We note with interest the findings of the Global Report, that even as new forms of discrimination based on different characteristics other than sex emerge, women are by far still the largest group facing discrimination at work.

And it comes as a surprise to learn that the pay gap between male and female workers continues to exist even in the developed and industrialized economies of the OECD.

As the Global Report has noted, discrimination at work will not vanish by itself; neither will the market,

on its own, take care of its elimination. In response, the Philippines has developed over the years a comprehensive, regulatory framework that seeks to prohibit and eliminate discrimination at the workplace, particularly against women, the disabled and, lately, against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Inasmuch as the Philippine labour force is essentially composed of its own citizens, racism is not an issue. Likewise discrimination on the basis of religion hardly exists, becoming a consideration only if religion is a bona fide qualification for employment.

The Philippine Constitution directs the State to protect working women by providing safe and healthy working conditions, taking into account the material function and such facilities and opportunities that will enhance their welfare and enable them to realize their full potential in the service of the nation.

The Philippine Labour Code penalizes an employer who discriminates against any woman employee with respect to terms and conditions of employment solely on account of her sex.

But in spite of the protective legal framework, the participation of women in employment is 63 per cent less than that of their male counterparts. Discrimination against the disabled is addressed by the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. This law expressly provides that no disabled person shall be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment and that a qualified disabled employee shall be subject to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, benefits, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as a qualified able-bodied person.

The State provides incentives for the employment of disabled persons. However, the chances of a disabled worker landing suitable employment, particularly in the formal sector, are slimmer than ever as a result of too few jobs available.

There is, therefore, a bill pending in our Congress that would require all our employers to ensure that at least 3 per cent of the regular workforce are composed of qualified disabled persons. The bill has elicited vigorous opposition from the employers.

The Philippines is also in the forefront of dealing with the emerging discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS. The Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998 makes compulsory HIV testing as a precondition to employment. Unlawful discrimination in any form from pre-employment to post-employment, including hiring, promotion or assignment, based on actual, perceived or suspected HIV status of an individual is prohibited. Termination from work on the sole basis of actual, perceived or suspected HIV status is likewise deemed unlawful.

Our experience suggests that our regulatory framework, no matter how adequate, has its limits. In other words, the most determined efforts to reduce, if not eliminate, discrimination through policy regulation are blunted by the imperfections of the labour market.

Elimination of discrimination must also be correlated with long-range strategies and policies to redress the imperfections of the labour market. These include addressing demographic trends and patterns and stimulating sustained growth and the generation of employment. Our experience indicates that poverty appears to be both the cause and effect of discrimination, and in this context, poverty has deeper roots than can be explained solely by mere discrimination in the workplace.

The root cause of poverty in the Philippines is the inability of the economy to create enough decent work for millions and millions of unemployed and underemployed.

As pointed out in the Global Report, is not only the duty of government to combat discrimination, it is everybody's responsibility. Enterprises, employers' and workers' organizations and the victims of discrimination and their associations all have a stake and role to play in achieving equality of work.

In keeping with the plan of action highlighted in the Report of the Director-General, the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines has initiated activities under its flagship programme of corporate social responsibility with valuable assistance from the ILO.

Our range of projects on the ground covers a number of ILO concerns such as elimination of discrimination at the workplace, the Decent Work Agenda, the Global Compact Initiative and several other social-oriented activities geared towards gender equality, child protection, healthy workplace and the development of small and medium enterprises.

On a final note, despite our economic downturn, brought about largely by global forces, we are pleased to report that our country, principally through the tripartite machinery, has made significant strides in promoting equality at work. We are firmly committed to doing more in the future.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.40 p.m.)

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Ninth sitting</i>	
Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General: Discus- sion (<i>cont.</i>)	1
<i>Speakers:</i> Mr. Pitra da Costa Neto, Mr. Nuwa Wea, Mr. Neffati, Mr. Soodhun, Mr. Burány, Mr. Basesgioglu, Ms. Sto. Tomas, Ms. Ameline	
 <i>Eleventh sitting</i>	
Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General: Discus- sion (<i>cont.</i>)	8
<i>Speakers:</i> Mr. Ivala, Mr. Djilani, Mr. Al-Haroon, Mr. Lopes Correia, Mr. Hausiku, Mr. Ryssdahl, Mr. Omotade, Mr. Tugushi, Mr. Iyanga Djoba Malango, Mr. Varela	