

**Second sitting**

Monday, 9 June 2003, 10.15 a.m.

Presidents: Mr. Wamalwa and Mr. Noakes

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT — A very warm welcome to all present. It is a great pleasure for me now to declare open the second sitting of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. Before we start, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Conference that the Employer Vice-President for this session of the Conference, Mr. Noakes, has been awarded, by the Queen of England, the Order of Australia, which is the highest honour that the Queen can bestow upon any Australian, and the Conference takes special pride in this as this is the last session that Mr. Noakes will be attending at ILO headquarters. I am sure that congratulations are in order from all of us.

(Applause)

Before starting our work and moving to the first item of the agenda, I should like to make a few personal remarks to the Conference. I take this opportunity to extend my warm and cordial greetings to you all and to welcome you to the second sitting of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. This sitting, and subsequent ones, will be critical to the success of the Conference. Apart from receiving various reports, we will have the honour of hosting the distinguished President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, and His Majesty King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We shall also hold a special sitting on the situation of the workers in the occupied Arab territories and one for discussion of the Global Report.

Today we shall commence the debates on the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body covering the period 2002-03. Without pre-empting the Director-General's Report, I take note that the main theme for the Conference is working out of poverty. The Report identifies decent work as the basic route out of poverty. We should all be able to agree on a common position on how best to eradicate poverty and achieve decent work.

It will be recalled that the ILO was created to set international labour standards to protect workers and also to provide a body of knowledge of world labour problems. Since 1919, the ILO, in its capacity as the international parliament of labour, has adopted 184 Conventions and 194 Recommendations touching on all aspects of today's world of work. These standards will achieve their intended purpose only if they are ratified and implemented by the member States.

The challenge that remains, therefore, is for this house to adopt labour standards which are flexible

and rectifiable by all member States in respect of their levels of development. This session of the Conference is taking place at a time when powerful forces are shaping the world, especially in the area of labour. Several developments, such as the World Summit for Social Development and the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, have covered a wide range of issues, including the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development, racism and equality of opportunity.

The phenomenon of globalization continues to be a major feature of our times. It is assuming greater importance owing to the potential to create opportunities for accelerated economic progress through expanded export markets, large capital inflows and higher investment, improved technology and management expertise. These in turn hold out the promise of greater productivity and a higher standard of living while bringing distant parts of the world functionally closer.

There is general consensus so far that the benefits and opportunities of globalization have mainly been realized by the developed countries. This poses a major challenge to the developing world as it exposes their industries to unfair competition from low-priced subsidized imports, thereby undermining their competitiveness. Entire sectors of economies may be destroyed. It follows, therefore, that while globalization alters the way business is conducted, only organizations with a culture that allows them to change will survive.

The major challenge for us all is to work towards a fairer, accountable and more transparent process of globalization. I personally share the view that every effort is needed to ensure that today's open global economy works for the benefit of all, rich and poor, weak and strong, big and small. We must endeavour to develop a global economy capable of creating employment and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable in our society. It is for this reason that I welcome the concept of decent work for all, as it connects growth strategies in open economies with people's daily lives and aspirations; it is a solid foundation of social peace, political stability, and enjoyment of fundamental human rights. This Conference has the responsibility of debating and approving the Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05, which already reflect the major commitment of putting the organization's Decent Work Agenda into practice. This will be achieved through implementation of the ILO's four strategic objectives, namely to promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work, to create greater opportuni-

ties for women and men to secure decent employment and income, to enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all and to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue. The issue of productive employment is a core mandate of the ILO and remains a critical challenge. As members of the International Labour Conference may recall, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action in which governments committed themselves to promote the goal of full employment as a basic priority for economic and social change. ILO support in this regard will go a long way to assist member States in the task of translating the renewed commitment to the attainment of full employment as emphasized at the Summit. Widespread inequality and poverty still persist in the world today despite remarkable global progress over the last decade. Countries in the developing world, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, are still grappling with a myriad of social, economic, cultural and political problems which are not conducive to productive employment generation and growth. This situation has been aggravated by the implementation of the Bretton Woods institutions structural adjustment programmes in the face of dwindling international donor support. This is one reason why the International Labour Conference should come up with a series of new measures for the realization of the Global Employment Agenda. We must place job creation at the very centre of economic and social policies. It is through employment that we shall eradicate poverty and ensure the enjoyment of basic human rights.

The other major challenges of our time are the achievement of gender equality, the eradication of child labour and the control of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Issues of gender disparities have not been adequately addressed and mainstreamed into national development agendas. Until this is achieved, the goal of decent work may not be realized. I am convinced that the adoption of this year's Global Report, *Time for equality at work*, would enable us all to realize the full potential of women and men in the world of work.

In the developing world, and particularly in Africa, child labour has also been aggravated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic which has occasioned setbacks in our efforts to achieve the Decent Work Agenda. It has, among other things, resulted in many child-led households who have to fend for themselves. Members of the International Labour Conference, and indeed the international community, must therefore redouble their efforts to address these issues as a matter of priority.

In many parts of the world bad governance and lack of democratic systems have undermined economic growth, which has in turn caused widespread poverty and, in some instances, political instability. For instance, my own country, Kenya, 40 years after independence, is only now rediscovering democracy following 25 years of misrule which left the country in economic ruin. It can be argued that Kenya can only be compared to a nation that has been at war. Kenya's new democratic Government, led by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) came to power on a firm agenda that was designed to reduce the country's high levels of unemployment, and committed itself to creating 500,000 jobs a year. This was in recognition of the fact that poverty continues to be the cause of various forms of child labour, in addition to other factors, such as lack of education and inadequate legislation. It is for this reason that our Government has recog-

nized the need to provide free and compulsory primary school education as an appropriate strategy for addressing the twin problems of poverty and child labour. It is worth noting that following the bold introduction of this measure at the beginning of this year an additional 1.5 million children, who otherwise would have been engaged in child labour, have enrolled in primary schools. Similarly, a programme is being implemented by the Government through which thousands of street children aged 16 and above have been absorbed into vocational and rehabilitation institutions for courses that are designed to equip them with the necessary abilities and skills to prepare them to become productive citizens of our country's informal and industrial sectors. These programmes are central to the new Government's efforts to ensure that her people are accorded adequate job opportunities to achieve self-reliance and abandon the culture of handouts, which is demeaning and destructive to the human spirit. Kenya therefore requests the ILO to support the commitments of our Government to creating 500,000 jobs a year.

In conclusion, please allow me once again to express my gratitude to the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, all members of the ILO Governing Body and the entire ILO staff for their commitment and dedication to the ideals of this Organization in successfully steering the International Labour Conference thus far. We have walked a long rocky road together in our tripartite relationship and we have achieved many goals, because it has been the unspoken commitment that each generation in this tripartite body has been duty-bound to push the struggle of the worker the extra mile. It now falls upon our generation to continue in this noble spirit and, in the words of Don Quixote, "to dream the impossible dream" and "to try when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star".

SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS
OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE CONFERENCE (*cont.*)

The PRESIDENT — Moving on with our business today, you will recall at the first plenary sitting last Tuesday the Conference took a number of decisions regarding the suspension of certain clauses of the Standing Orders of the Conference in order to allow for a more lively, interactive discussion on the Global Report on the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. Under article 76 of the Standing Orders of the Conference, we are now called upon to confirm the decisions taken last Tuesday.

(The proposals are adopted.)

Before starting the discussion on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General, I should like to make the following statement on my own behalf and on behalf of the Officers of the Conference to remind you of the principles by which we shall be guided in our debate.

These principles were established by the Working Party on the Programme and Structure of the ILO, approved by the Governing Body and communicated to the Conference in 1967. They are set out in paragraphs 54 to 58 of the Working Party's report, which are recalled in the *Memorandum* on the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference, a copy of which you should all have.

The Officers of the Conference wish to draw the close attention of all delegates to the contents of paragraph 58, which reads as follows:

“In periods of acute political tension, the ILO has a twofold responsibility – to uphold the values of human freedom and dignity enshrined in its Constitution, and to circumscribe rather than extend the area of international tension by ensuring the fullest possible degree of continued cooperation in pursuit of the objectives of the ILO.”

Every delegate to the International Labour Conference has an obligation to the Conference to keep these considerations constantly in mind, and the President has an obligation to ensure that the Conference does not lose sight of them.

It should be remembered that the debates of the International Labour Conference must not encroach on what is being discussed by the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, which have responsibility for political decisions under the United Nations Charter. I should therefore like to ask all delegates to comply with these principles. We, the Officers of the Conference, are committed to ensuring these principles are upheld.

I should also like to say that I rely on you all to conduct our discussions with both the openness and the dignity that are appropriate to the highest international body in the realm of social and labour-related matters.

Freedom of expression is a vital feature of the International Labour Organization. However, in order to exercise this right in a spirit of mutual respect, it is of paramount importance, that all delegates use parliamentary language, respect the accepted procedure, refer only to the items under discussion and avoid raising any questions alien to these matters. We have to accept a certain amount of discipline if we want our work to be carried on in an appropriate way and be crowned with success.

Each and every delegate will have the right of reply if he or she feels there is a need to respond in the event that his or her government has been challenged. In such cases, delegates must inform the President of the sitting, before that sitting finishes, that they wish to exercise their right of reply. These requests should be transmitted to the President through the Clerk and not by asking for the floor at the sitting. The President, assisted by the Clerk, will agree with the delegation concerned on a time when the reply will be made.

The reply should refer only to the point under debate. It should not exceed two minutes, and it should be delivered in correct parliamentary language. Lastly, in order to avoid an over-lengthy debates, it has been a practice of the presidents to refuse to allow replies to a reply.

Please also note that the duration of speeches is limited by the Standing Orders of the Conference to five minutes only. All delegates and ministers attending the Conference will no doubt wish to take this limit of five minutes into account in preparing their speeches so that the President will not be obliged to stop speakers before they have finished their speeches.

Of course, according to the usual practice, the only exception to this rule will be in favour of the special guests of the Conference.

May I remind you once again that the list of speakers for the discussion of the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General will close at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 11 June.

Concerning the special sitting on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, may I remind you that on the proposal of the Selection Committee, the Conference has decided to allow speakers who so wish to take the floor both on the Director-General's thematic Report; *Working out of poverty*; and on the Report prepared for the special sitting, it being understood that the subject to be discussed in that sitting would not be discussed in the debate on the Director-General's thematic Report, and the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body. The list of speakers for the special sitting on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories will close at 6 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, 10 June 2003.

Finally, it goes without saying that all the principles mentioned above also apply to the special sitting.

For the fourth time, the Director-General has submitted a Global Report under the follow-up of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The subject this year is the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation.

In accordance with the decision of the Selection Committee, this Report will be discussed in plenary, separately from the Director-General's Report, on Friday, 13 June, all day, with the possibility of an extended sitting.

The discussion will be organized as follows:

The morning sitting will start with a general discussion during which ministers, delegates and spokespersons for intergovernmental and non-governmental and regional groups, may make introductory speeches; in the afternoon a thematic discussion of limited duration will be chaired by the Director-General personally. The general discussion will then continue, in order to allow as many speakers as possible who are enabled to take the floor in the morning, to do so in the afternoon.

To allow the largest possible number of constituents the chance to speak, the Conference has decided that the number of statements by each speaker will not be limited, but that within each government delegation a statement by a delegate should not be followed by a speech by a minister. The provisions of article 14 of the Conference Standing Orders, which limit the length of interventions and established order of speakers, will not apply to this discussion.

In order to enable the Officers of the Conference to organize, as effectively as possible, the time available for their general discussion, ministers, delegates and other speakers, are requested to inform the Clerk of their wish to speak also before 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 11 June. Those wishing to do so will still be able, however, to add their names to the list during the meeting. Further information on this may be found in the *Daily Bulletin*.

These are the main points we should like to keep in mind during our discussions. I am sure that with your help, we shall duly perform the tasks entrusted to us and together will ensure that this session of the Conference runs smoothly and successfully.

REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE GOVERNING BODY: SUBMISSION

The PRESIDENT — I now call upon Lord Brett, the Chairperson of the Governing Body, to present the Report of the Governing Body, which was published in *Provisional Record* No. 1.

Lord BRETT (*Chairperson of the Governing Body*) – I have the honour to present to you the report on the work of the Governing Body over the past year. This report focuses on the highlights of the Governing Body's year and does not cover in detail matters that are otherwise before the Conference.

In its fourth annual review under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Governing Body reviewed the annual reports on the basis of the introduction by the ILO Declaration expert-advisers. It particularly commended Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, for their continuing dialogue with the Office, and China for requesting technical cooperation on the issue of forced labour. The Governing Body endorsed the expert-advisers' recommendations and launched an appeal to the donor community for substantial and durable extra-budgetary support for the ILO Technical Cooperation Programme.

Through the dual reporting system informing both the Governing Body's Technical Cooperation Committee and the Steering Committee of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Governing Body examined the work of IPEC during 2002. In November 2002, the Governing Body discussed an advance copy of IPEC's comprehensive report on action on future priorities regarding child labour. Its Committee on Technical Cooperation also examined and approved the "Priorities and action plans for technical cooperation", which focused on the abolition of child labour. The Governing Body's consideration of IPEC's work in 2002 took place largely against the backdrop of the discussion of the Global Report, *A Future without child labour*, held at the Conference in June 2002. The Conference debate resulted in an Action Plan to abolish Child Labour, which was endorsed by the Governing Body at its meeting in November 2002. A real effort is therefore under way to mainstream child labour concerns in the different ILO programmes and activities, all within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda.

During the period under review, the Governing Body devoted much attention to improvements in its standard-setting activities. It held a first discussion on standards-related promotion and technical assistance in November 2002. At future sessions it will continue to address the question it started to examine in March 2003, namely, the questionnaires provided for in articles 38 and 39 of the Conference Standing Orders, of the possible content of a code of good drafting practices and, after active tripartite consultations, of standard final provisions currently in use in ILO Conventions.

The Governing Body noted with satisfaction that the ratification of fundamental standards had made further progress. At the end of May 2003, the total number of ratifications of those instruments stood at 1,191, or approximately 85 per cent of the possible total of 1,400.

During the year between May 2002 and March 2003, the Committee on Freedom of Association examined about 200 cases, and noted with satisfaction a number of positive developments, such as the release of detained trade unionists, the registration of trade unions, or the reinstatement of trade unionists dismissed by reason of union membership and activities.

In March 2003, the Office submitted a progress report to the Governing Body on work related to a consolidated Convention on maritime labour standards, which is due to be submitted to the Conference for adoption in the year 2005. A draft of this Convention is being prepared by the Office under the direction of the High-Level Tripartite Working Group on Maritime Labour Standards. During the same session, the Governing Body examined an Office paper on the outcome of the IMO Diplomatic Conference on Maritime Security, which was held in London in December 2002. It approved the setting up of a joint ILO-IMO working group on port security which will meet next month to prepare a draft code of practice on security in ports.

The Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization continued the practice of inviting distinguished speakers to present their thoughts on the social dimension of globalization. In November 2002, one such speaker was Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme who spoke about the Millennium Development Goals. He pointed out that these represent measurable goals towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly in New York. At the same meeting, Mr. Jean-Claude Faure, Chairperson of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, noted that the current strategy for international development assistance was based on the three pillars of governance, coherence and patient monitoring of performance. In March 2003, Mr. Trevor Manuel, Minister of Finance of South Africa, also addressed the Working Party, concentrating on the role of the state as regulator, balancing social and economic values in the context of globalization.

Among the other points addressed by the Working Party were investment in the global economy and decent work, governance, social partnership and globalization. There was broad agreement that the foundation of good governance had to be respect for human rights and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In November 2002 and March 2003, the Director-General reported to the Working Party on the various consultations held by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization with the heads of international agencies, the business community and labour leaders.

Regarding the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labour Convention, the Director-General appointed an ILO Liaison Officer in Yangon in September 2002. In November 2002, the Governing Body examined a report from the Liaison Officer on developments in Myanmar since June of that year, and requested that the stated commitment of the Government of Myanmar to eradicate forced labour be urgently converted into concrete action through the development of a comprehensive plan of action.

In March 2003, the Governing Body discussed a further report from the Liaison Officer, including a proposed plan of action presented by the Government of Myanmar, which she was not able to endorse because it lacked critical elements. A firm deadline of 30 May 2003 was set for an agreement on a plan of action that must include the minimum requirements to be meaningful and credible to the Governing Body.

In November 2002 and March 2003, the Governing Body examined a report on the progress of the Special

Technical Cooperation Programme for Colombia and strongly exhorted the Office to seek additional sources of funding for this important programme.

It deplored the fact that, despite the positive developments presented in the March report, the killings of trade unionists continued unabated.

In March 2003, the Governing Body adopted the ILO's Global Employment Agenda, which was first debated at the Global Employment Forum in November 2001. The Agenda's main aim is to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies. It does not promote just any employment, but *decent* employment, in which international labour standards and workers' fundamental rights go hand in hand with job creation. Extensive discussion by the ILO's tripartite constituents has been devoted to that Agenda over the past 18 months.

Further to the mandate conferred on the ILO by the United Nations General Assembly under the United Nations Initiative on youth employment – but it is youth unemployment that is the problem – the Governing Body asked the Office, at the same session, to assist and support, on request, the efforts of governments in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans on the important issue of youth employment.

In November 2002, the Committee on Employment and Social Policy discussed an assessment of the ILO's experience of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and endorsed the decision to broaden the Office's work on PRSPs. It also examined the role of microfinance for decent work and the explored the feasibility of a Global Social Trust further to a recommendation made by an international meeting of experts. In March this year, it commented on a summary of current global and regional employment trends and examined a document on employment and social policy in respect of export processing zones. The Governing Body also examined in March this year a report on the findings and recommendations of the first ILO Gender Audit, which is considered an important contribution to implementing gender mainstreaming in the ILO.

In March this year also, the Governing Body examined an Office paper concerning the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration). The strategic action plan comprises the intensification of current activities in order to make the MNE Declaration a key instrument in the broader corporate social responsibility debate, as well as new proposals inspired by the suggestion of a Tripartite Forum on Promoting the MNE Declaration. At the same session its Subcommittee on Multinational Enterprises examined options that might serve as a basis for the Eighth Survey on the effect given to the MNE Declaration.

Further to the recommendation of the Working Party on the Review of the Sectoral Activities Programme, the Governing Body adopted in March this year a mix of action programmes and sectoral meetings for 2004-05. These are designed to increase the flexibility and impact of the Programme. It also took note of the various sectoral and technical meetings and endorsed the recommendations adopted by them.

In November 2002, the Governing Body discussed a report on ILO technical cooperation in 2001-02, and commented on developments regarding technical co-

operation activities in the United Nations system. It particularly welcomed the ILO's joining the United Nations Development Group, and the role of the ILO in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and in the PRSP processes, and wished to see the ILO contributing to maintaining the Millennium Development Goals with its Decent Work Agenda.

In March this year the Committee on Technical Cooperation examined a thematic evaluation showing the relevance of employment-intensive investment programmes for the ILO's poverty reduction and employment policies.

Progress has been made in the enhanced programme of technical cooperation for the occupied Arab territories, endorsed by the Governing Body in June of last year. The programme includes a number of projects for capacity building of employers' and workers' organizations and the Ministry of Labour. Importantly, it saw the establishment of a Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection (the Fund), as well as the promotion of social dialogue. Resources have been allocated and the fund has now been set up. A meeting was held in Jerusalem in May 2003 to present the concept to the relevant actors, and special efforts will be made to involve regional donors and development funds.

In March this year, the Governing Body approved proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations and considered the Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05, which represents the continued application of the Strategic Policy Framework for 2002-05. It also took various decisions regarding the construction of the ILO Regional Office in Lima, the acceptance of gifts of land from the Governments of Chile and the United Republic of Tanzania, and the modernization of parts of our headquarters building here in Geneva.

In June 2002, the newly elected Governing Body approved the reconstitution for 2002-05 of all its committees and subcommittees, with the sole exception of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, which was a subcommittee of its Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards. It was also agreed that the possible restructuring of the Governing Body and the mandate of its committees, as well as other aspects of its procedures, should be re-examined at forthcoming sessions.

In November 2002, the Governing Body took decisions concerning the follow-up of the resolutions adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 90th Session, and began discussion on a wide range of issues to improve the functioning of this Conference.

In March 2002, the Governing Body fixed the date and venue for the 93rd Session of the Conference and decided to postpone a decision on the agenda for that Session until November of this year, thus ensuring that we can have the first experience of the general discussion based on an integrated approach in our minds when we make the decision on the agenda.

It further decided that a preparatory technical maritime conference should be held in Geneva in September 2004, prior to the holding in 2005 of the Maritime Session of the International Labour Conference. It was agreed that the agenda of this session would be devoted to the adoption of an instrument to consolidate the ILO's maritime standards.

In March this year, the Director-General was overwhelmingly re-elected for a new mandate of five years, to start on 4 March 2004.

At the same session, the Governing Body adopted the report and conclusions of the Fifteenth American Regional Meeting, held in Lima in December 2002, and requested the Director-General to develop proposals for follow-up action to the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg at the end of August last year. It also examined a report on the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in April last year.

Throughout the reporting period the Governing Body was kept fully informed of the ILO's involvement in major events within the multilateral system and in the most important international development initiatives, particularly in the United Nations Development Group, the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations reform process. The ILO has concentrated its efforts on incorporating the Decent Work Agenda and tripartism into international development policies.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my two fellow officers, Mr. Funes de Rioja, the Employer Vice-Chairperson, and Ambassador Chung of the Republic of Korea, the Government Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Body. Their cooperation and friendship has been invaluable over the past year, and without their support the many tasks that have been undertaken by the Governing Body would have been impossible. I should also like to thank the Director-General and his staff for their constant support. It has been a great honour for me to chair the Governing Body and, as this is my last International Labour Conference, as I am standing down from the Governing Body at its meeting on 20 June, I would like to express my appreciation of the friendship extended by Workers', Employers' and Government delegates to this Conference over the last ten years, and of the support given to me, both in my previous capacity as Vice-Chairperson and Chairperson of the Workers' group and as Chairperson, by ILO staff at all levels here in Geneva and in the field.

Finally, very sincere thanks to the interpreters, who I think have caught up with my speed of speaking but cannot necessarily translate the words and make sense out of them at the same speed as I do. They make the sense – I just make the speed. I would like to thank them particularly for putting up with me for the last ten years.

Finally, my warmest thanks to all of you and best wishes in your task of taking this Organization from strength to strength.

STATEMENT BY MR. SOMAVIA,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT — It is now my honour to give the floor to Mr. Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, so that he can present his Report entitled *Working out of poverty*.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL — Congratulations on your election. It will be a pleasure working with you. Let me say how much I welcome the values that your Government represents in Kenya.

Dear friends, Officers of the Conference, Ministers, representatives of employers and workers, spokespersons for employers and workers, my friends

from the international community in Geneva, thank you all for being here.

We have just heard Bill Brett say goodbye to this Conference, and I would like to initiate my comments by acknowledging the work that, as head of the Workers' group, he has done for ten years for the institution and as Chairperson of the Governing Body. He has represented the commitment that we all express in terms of the values of the ILO, and I would like, before he ends his term of office, for us all to give him a big goodbye applause.

(Applause)

My parents taught me long ago the value of two simple words – thank you! Thank you for my re-election and thank you for your confidence. I could not but begin by thanking you.

Through the years, we have worked together to re-orient the ILO, focus the institution on its core values, and re-energize our operation with a twenty-first century vision we call the Decent Work Agenda.

I take your endorsement as a message to keep moving forward under your direction, and I pledge to work with you to do just that – and to do it based on the accumulated knowledge and experience of the constituents and the Office, and also of the convictions and the ideals that I know I carry with me and that are so much embedded in the Constitution of the ILO.

Indeed, all of that is what this Conference is about. We are discussing the first ever Global Report on discrimination at work. We are engaged in a path-breaking debate about how to rethink training for skills and lifelong learning. We are addressing the nature of the evolving employment relationship.

We are integrating and streamlining our efforts to promote occupational safety and health in a new approach to integrated thinking between standards and technical cooperation, and we are working to develop effective protection against international terrorism while also ensuring the rights and freedoms of the world's seafarers. The Finance Committee has approved a budget for 2004-05 which will be submitted to you. I want to thank all who contributed to this decision, and also to highlight that there is an important shift of resources from headquarters to the regions. I believe that we have to respond to the demands of our constituents where our constituents are living and where the people that we want to serve are living, and I am very happy that this has been done in this budget, and I hope for your support when it comes to decision-making here at the Conference.

Of course, the Committee on the Application of Standards is dealing with a number of complex situations, for example Myanmar. This weekend, the Committee on the Application of Standards had a thorough debate. The detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has created a climate of uncertainty and intimidation. It deplored that situation. In this context, I call on the Government of Myanmar to take immediate measures to release her and other leaders, and to guarantee their freedom. I am convinced that I reflect widespread feelings in this room. We need the appropriate conditions to credibly proceed with real action to end forced labour and to take other steps to benefit the workers of that country.

We are also taking up the appendix to my Report, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*,

in a special sitting. We are continually committed to fully doing our part towards protecting and easing the life of Palestinian workers and their families, and supporting a dialogue for lasting peace. The vicious circle of violence and counter-violence must be broken through our collective resolve to work for peace. The recently unveiled “road map” is a window of opportunity. It provides an economic and political agenda for Palestinians and Israelis – indeed, all the parties concerned. I believe, and I think that we all believe, that it deserves to be given a chance. We nurture that hope, and stand ready to assist in any way.

We began last week with a leading voice for global social change, President Lula de Silva of Brazil. This week, we host the Chairman of the African Union, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, and a leader for peace in the Middle East, King Abdullah II of the Kingdom of Jordan.

This Conference shows who we are and what we can do together. Just look around the hall: diverse countries, colours, creeds, multiple sensitivities, different experiences. I would add, however, that although I see more women, we still have a lot of work to do on the gender equality front, and I call upon you to think about it next time you put together delegations for sessions of the International Labour Conference.

Each of you is at the heart of our tripartite identity, an enormous global network of governments, and workers’ and employers’ organizations that stretches all over the world, with roots in every society that touch people where they live and work, and with friends everywhere.

For us these are difficult, complex times. Around us there is insecurity and fear. And whether it is in politics, business or social institutions, global leadership is crucial today to stem the tide and give rise to hope.

Since we last met, the ILO has reported that official unemployment is at its highest rate ever – 180 million and climbing. As many as 90 per cent of the workers of some countries are working in the back alleys of the marketplace, the informal economy. Income gaps are growing and, over the next ten years, more than 1 billion young people will join the working-age population.

These, of course, are burning questions for all of us. What is the best way to make the global economy more inclusive? How do we ensure open economies and open societies with social pillars and a social floor? How can fairness and equity guide change?

Your predecessors and my predecessors bestowed on us a house built on sound social values and the belief that dialogue and negotiation can lead to practical solutions. Our Convention system and the endurance of the ILO throughout history is built on that trust.

Since 1919, the ILO has found common ground throughout the most divisive periods of tensions and upheaval. This is our biggest institutional strength. In 1969, we won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Today, we are again put to the test in every country – whether it is looming recession or threats of violence, unemployment or the future of social security, lack of trust in public and private authorities or lack of real opportunities for the dispossessed. Uncertainties for workers, enterprises, governments and society at large have grown exponentially. Social conflicts are expanding worldwide, and we do not see on the horizon the policies that will bring peace of mind to families in all societies.

As you well know, I am deeply convinced that tripartism can play a defining role in answering these questions and confronting these threats. But it requires a new level of shared consciousness of opportunity, responsibility and solidarity. If we have the will together, we have an extraordinary opportunity to find solutions together. The Report I present to you today is an invitation to take up the challenge and assume leadership, leadership in the field of poverty eradication, nationally and internationally.

The nightmare of poverty condemns about 3 billion souls, virtually half the world, to a daily struggle for survival on less than US\$2-per-day. Some 1 billion people live on less than \$1-a-day.

Women and girls, of course, are more likely to be caught in the poverty trap. Two-thirds of the female workforce in the developing world are in the informal economy, mostly doing the lowest paid work.

Beyond what statistics can measure, poverty breeds a growing sense of powerlessness and indignity. In an increasingly integrated world this touches us all and in many ways it diminishes us all. Of course, that is something we at the ILO have always known. It is embedded in the very soul of our institution. Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. Amongst so much wealth, it is also a moral indictment of our times.

We had many discussions about the linkage between the Decent Work Agenda and poverty reduction. You have often asked me how can we be most effective in the global poverty eradication cause. The Report I present to you today addresses that question.

It draws on the lessons and insights you have shown us by what we are doing together. The overriding message of the Report is founded on your own experience and it expresses the value added of the ILO. Simply put, work is the way out of poverty. As we begin this discussion I seek your guidance and direction on five key points.

First, let us be clear. If the direction of things does not change, the worldwide goal of halving poverty by 2015 will not be met and it is better that we acknowledge it rather than continue repeating that this is the goal we are going to achieve. If we want different results we must do things differently. The poor do not cause poverty. Poverty is the result of structural failures and ineffective economic and social systems. It is the result of inequitable national and international income distribution patterns, of governance problems from the local to the global level in both the public and the private spheres, and of a model of globalization incapable of preventing the growth of unemployment and the informal economy.

How can we say we have a global economy when half the world lives on less than \$2-a-day? The goal of a stable and prosperous world economy is only possible when we realize the potential and develop the productivity and consumer power of all our citizens.

That is why I say that eradicating poverty is both the biggest social and political challenge and the biggest economic opportunity we face today.

When the international system has been put to the test on classical security issues, we simply cannot fail on the issues of people’s security. We cannot let people living in poverty also be the victims of a poverty of solutions, a poverty of ideas, a poverty of initiatives, a poverty of results.

So, as we begin our discussions, I pose these questions to each of you. How can the global economy do

more and do better in delivering opportunities for people, families and communities living in poverty?

Second, the Decent Work Agenda is a poverty reduction agenda. If you ask someone living in poverty how to overcome it they will say I do not want charity. I want opportunities. I want the dignity to work myself out of poverty. For that, I need to be able to find and keep a job in order to earn a decent living for my family and myself.

The ILO's four strategic objectives are the twenty-first century formulation of our mandate and a development strategy that responds to the most urgent needs of families living in poverty. They also respond to the most urgent political needs in all of our countries because we know that no single politician in the world today can go to the polls without offering something in the areas of job creation, quality of jobs and the security that work brings to families and communities.

Therefore, we are dealing not only with a moral issue but also with one of the fundamental, political questions of our time and, as I say, the ILO's four strategic objectives respond to that. Let me enlarge upon this approach.

Employment: because poverty elimination is impossible unless the economy generates opportunity for investment, entrepreneurship, job creation and sustainable livelihoods. However, employment remains the missing link in the global strategy to eradicate poverty. It seems incredible, but it continues to be so.

The prevailing wisdom seems to be that jobs will simply fall off the production line of finance policies or trade policies. We know that this is not so. It is not happening, and young people know it only too well.

Rights: because people in poverty need organization and voice to obtain recognition of rights and demand respect. They need representation and participation. That, of course, includes access to justice for all, especially for workers. The decent work strategy is based on the full recognition and effectiveness of what, in French, I would call "le droit au Droit": the right to the protection of the law from which people living in poverty are often excluded – as well as the right to change the laws to address their needs.

Protection: because poor people are unprotected people. The meagre incomes of those living in poverty are undermined by marginalization and lack of support systems, particularly for women, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Dialogue: because people in poverty know that dialogue is the way to solve problems peacefully. Their voice needs to be recognized and respected.

One of the things that most worries me when I look at the world today is that we talk about poverty and about poor people, but I do not see the respect that poor people have a right to expect. We always tend to look down on these people and to tell them what is good for them. The capacity to listen to those living in poverty plays very little part in most of the policies being promoted today.

I know there are millions of examples — we at the ILO have seen them — but there has to be a radical change that leads us to show respect for those who are living in conditions of poverty.

You have confirmed this approach. More and more countries are making requests for the Office to cooperate in the formulation and implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes.

You have also told us that the Decent Work Agenda is an invaluable tool in your discussions with

the Bretton Woods institutions because it clearly makes the linkage between work and poverty reduction.

So, as you discuss the Report, I ask: Can Decent Work Country Programmes constitute a key tool for poverty reduction from your point of view, and what is the best way to put work and employment on the international policy agenda?

Third, the ILO is at the frontlines of the struggle to end poverty.

This Report documents what the ILO is doing in the field every day to fight poverty. Taken as a whole, it tells an amazing story of communities rebuilt, lives changed, hope restored. Eliminating child and bonded labour, strengthening micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting HIV/AIDS prevention, training women union officials and entrepreneurs: these and many other activities are highlighted in the Report, which is full of practical examples of things that are happening now and things that have been done in the past.

The important thing that I would like to highlight is that the ILO's experience of working with national and local governments and employers' and workers' organizations has led to the development of a proven and tested comprehensive portfolio of tools, policies and programmes, based on enabling communities to work their way out of poverty.

Now the challenge is to build on these experiences and integrate them fully into national and international policies based on the Decent Work Agenda. Today, scaling up is the name of the game for all international organizations, and tripartism should play a major role in setting priorities. All international organizations and all governments can point to projects that are succeeding. The problem is how to connect these and how to scale them up to international policies.

The Report provides examples of things that have worked very well for the ILO, for example, the initiative of employment in the United Republic of Tanzania for infrastructure and road building, the model of which has been successfully applied in a number of other countries and has now become one of the major World Bank projects in terms of the levels of financing. We need to do much, much more of that. Success at the local level is important, in terms of one's own country. How can we make national policy into international policy?

Fourth, solutions cannot be imposed. They must be people-driven.

Our work has shown that families will only break out of the cycle of poverty when they have the tools and can actually use them to improve their lives. That is why our projects are built on engagement with our constituents. This includes local stakeholders. We reach out, listen, work together, help organize and promote the voices of people living in poverty. We know it takes a combination of economic, social and political empowerment in communities themselves to eradicate poverty.

The poor have enormous reserves of courage, ingenuity, persistence and solidarity that helps them get through each day.

In many ways, people living in poverty are the ultimate entrepreneurs. If they were not, they would probably not be able to survive. The struggle for life and the capacity to imagine how you are going to survive from one day to the next calls for incredible energy, which should not be tapped merely in order to survive, but tapped in all the creative ways that are

possible in society. We need to give these people the means, we need to provide a ladder leading upwards to ever more opportunities, because the energy is there, the capacities are there and the will is there. It is a national and international responsibility to give them the means to be able to use that energy productively within each society.

And so people must be the main drivers. People as workers, consumers, entrepreneurs; people as savers, investors, producers and employers; people as citizens and organizers.

And as the discussion kicks off, I ask: how can we make the decision-making system more accountable, more transparent and more people-centred?

This leads me to my fifth and final point. I am convinced that we need a decisive and sustained tripartite commitment to the eradication of poverty.

The voice of tripartism — of employers, workers and governments collectively — is the single most important development instrument that countries have. Together you can ensure ownership of poverty reduction strategies, stability of national policies, fairness at home and in dealings with international organizations. Your collective voice is a powerful means of addressing the issues that divide societies, diminish security and deny opportunities.

Why do I believe this is so crucial? There is no doubt that of all of the international organizations, the ILO, because of its tripartite identity, is closest to the enterprises and the workplaces of the global economy. You also understand the complexities of local and national development. We are living in a knowledge economy, we are so often told. Well, let me tell you, you have the best knowledge of how the economy works. That knowledge is in this room. You see it every day in enterprises and workplaces. You know what macroeconomic policies do to the realities of investment and of people, and that voice needs to be heard internationally.

You must be heard on the national level; you must be heard by international organizations on economic and social policy. You must be heard when it comes to formulating and implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, debt reduction, adjustment policies, trade negotiations, the whole range of international policies that affect your own country's development.

And to be effective, you need to work together, not just here in Geneva, but back home. The strength of tripartism depends on it.

Of course, there will be differences and conflicts of interest. We know that social struggle is sometimes necessary to make agreement possible. But we have all seen in our own political and social experience what results from the lack of dialogue and the damage that it causes to society.

It is the weak and the needy who suffer the most in situations of civil discord and violence – but it is the country as a whole that loses out.

We can harness the power of governments, employers and workers – the global community of work represented by all of you – in a concerted drive against poverty. We are living in an era of the network society. Well, the ILO and its constituents make up the most developed and pluralistic global network existing today. I believe that we need to activate this in new and innovative ways.

Representatives of employers here today: you know, business is about making and selling goods and services. It requires a creative and entrepreneurial

spirit. It requires an enabling environment for investment. Too often there are obstacles in the way. You know the difficulties and the importance of having, for example, the voice of smaller enterprises influence policy. Enterprise creation is essential to growing decent jobs and getting out of poverty.

Representatives of workers here today: you know the struggle to improve living standards takes productive employment, workers' rights and social protection. The fight for social justice is undermined when a large number of working people are unable to find decent work. Your experience at organizing, voicing your interests, participation, dialogue and negotiation is a key asset.

Representatives of governments here today: you are charged with the laws, policies, institutions that enable employers and workers to organize work and investment. You are the catalysts of initiatives that safeguard social security and protection that ensure access to basic health, education, housing and social services. And you know, only too well, that weak States mean weak development, and that social and labour ministries must have a key voice in government, economic and social policy-making.

As we think together on these challenges, I ask how can we best use the strength of tripartism in the global cause to eradicate poverty?

Dear friends, let me end by saying that attacking poverty is our responsibility. But it is also an opportunity. The Report endeavours to capture that spirit of responsibility and opportunity that runs through our Organization.

We combine the ideals of a values-based institution with practical, real world solutions. At the ILO, we see the world through the eyes of people and through the lens of social justice, and we never give up on a vision of hope.

There is a way out of poverty. It is through leadership. It is through partnership. It is through work – decent work. That is our mandate. Let us make tripartism an agent of change. Let us build a decent world for all.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE GOVERNING BODY
AND THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION

The PRESIDENT — After that masterpiece I am sure everything else must sound like an anticlimax – but we must press on. The floor is now open for discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General.

Mr. MOYO (*Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe*) — I would like to begin by congratulating the President and the Vice-Presidents on their elections.

I also wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate the Organization's Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, on his reappointment, which illustrates the faith which the Organization's constituents have in him. His vision, leadership, ability and technical competence have helped the ILO to play a crucial role among other international organizations, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, employment creation and HIV/AIDS. These subject areas have serious ramifications for the Decent Work Agenda which is the cornerstone of the ILO's activities in the twenty-first century.

Mr. President, my delegation appreciates the Report produced by the Office on *Working out of poverty*, and its implications for the world of work. The conclusions, particularly those which relate to the need for the Organization to work with other international organizations within the United Nations system in the fight against poverty and in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, are a welcome development. In addition, the encouragement by the Office of workers' and employers' organizations to be meaningfully involved in poverty alleviation initiatives is a noble idea.

Employers and workers in southern Africa were challenged at an ILO-sponsored workshop held in February this year in Harare, Zimbabwe, to assist governments in dealing with the food crisis which is facing the subregion as a result of the drought. It is generally known that work productivity is very much affected by food shortages.

We are for the virtues of equity and justice for the poor. But all too often, governments that take bold steps are vilified and demonized. It is in the context of poverty alleviation that the Government of Zimbabwe in 2000 had to accelerate the land redistribution programme. I need not dwell on the history of land appropriation in Zimbabwe under colonial rule; suffice it to say that the protracted war of liberation in Zimbabwe was waged primarily in order to repossess the land. However, although political independence was achieved in 1980, some 95 per cent of the most productive land remained in the hands of about 4,500 persons who constituted less than 1 per cent of the population. The historical struggle and the present political developments in Zimbabwe are about land, a critical sector in poverty reduction. Out of sheer frustration at the lack of a positive response by the commercial farmers to the Government's call for equitable land distribution, poor peasants, the landless and the jobless, spontaneously moved on to commercial farms. Over 15,000 new commercial farmers were created in the process, increasing employment opportunities, while over 300,000 peasant households have been successfully resettled. This is our poverty reduction strategy.

Had it not been for the drought which hit southern Africa during the period 2001-02 and continued into this year, we would have witnessed a tremendous decrease in poverty levels in Zimbabwe. The future is therefore promising for those who have been landless and for those who have been poor for too long.

In the context of social protection, we have a number of programmes that address the needs of vulnerable groups. These include financial assistance for the education of children from vulnerable backgrounds, and assistance for children who have been orphaned through HIV/AIDS. We have also engaged in public works in order to transfer income to vulnerable households. These programmes and other similar initiatives that are being pursued by the Government, including those to revive companies which have been closed owing to the harsh economic environment, reflect our strategies for working out of our poverty.

The Government's efforts and the efforts of other people are complemented by the efforts of our churches and NGOs, in particular those which are community-based. We welcome and applaud these efforts.

It is in recognition of the vital role of social dialogue and tripartism that the Zimbabwe Government

and the social partners, through discussions in the tripartite negotiating forum have managed to craft a national economic recovery programme. This programme has, as its overall objective, the restoration of macroeconomic stability, a critical factor for economic growth and poverty reduction.

It is out of our own will, it is out of our own cooperation that we believe we can get ourselves out of this poverty.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that to work out of poverty in Africa also entails reviewing the original thrust of the Jobs for Africa Programme. A new look "Jobs for Africa", linked to initiatives by other key international agencies, can make a significant contribution to the poverty reduction crusade in Africa. Through eager engagement by all concerned, we should prevail in this noble endeavour, to which we remain committed, and we salute the work of the ILO in promoting the Decent Work Agenda and in helping poor countries, particularly the least developed ones to break the cycle of poverty and despair that has engulfed us.

Original Spanish: Mr. MORALES CARTAYA (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Cuba*) — Four-fifths of the world's population seem to be heading down a dead-end street. In his Report and in the comments just made, the Director-General has spoken of the tragedy affecting millions of people in the world today. Poverty, war and environmental degradation, are threats to the very existence of humankind.

If the poor are not responsible for poverty, we need to ask who, or what, is? I would single out: the system of exploitation which has reigned for several hundred years; a philosophy of pillage and plunder, and neo-liberal globalization and its current, disastrous model. Where can we find the resources to pay for the 500 million jobs which we need to create? Who is in control of the companies privatized at cut rates? Can small and medium-sized enterprises compete with large corporations? Who controls the international financial institutions? And where is development assistance?

Despite numerous recommendations concerning ways to eradicate poverty, poverty continues to grow at an uncontrollable rate. The three richest people in the world have assets equivalent to the combined GDP of the 48 poorest countries. The 500 largest transnational corporations control 80 per cent of production and world trade. World peace has been hijacked by a doctrine of preventive military action. For those of us who are living in the dark corners of the world, there is more chance of being hit by a smart bomb than of getting a job. An attempt is being made to impose a Nazi-fascist new world order, based upon the immense military power of the greatest super power ever known to man. Today's unjust economic order is unworkable and requires wholesale change. In the fight against poverty, the promotion of equality, decent work, tripartite commitment and development, the International Labour Organization can play a vital new role. We propose that, in its campaign to work out of poverty, the ILO should incorporate the following demands: an end to the arms race and the use of resources currently dedicated to the arms race to create new jobs; writing-off foreign debt and the use of those resources to finance millions of jobs; the use of part of the billions of dollars spent every year to

promote the consumer society for the creation of new jobs; 0.7 per cent of the GDP of rich countries to be used for development assistance; application of the tax suggested by the Nobel Prize winner James Tobin on speculative transactions, which now amount to billions of dollars every day, in order to combat poverty and finance development.

I will make just a few comments on Cuba. By the end of this year we will have brought unemployment down below 3 per cent, to move closer to our target of full employment. We have created more than 100 social programmes in order to create a general integrated culture for our people and to move closer to full social justice. We are still waiting for a response from rich countries in relation to our proposals for programmes to combat AIDS, a disease which threatens the survival of nations and entire regions of sub-Saharan Africa. Today we are faced with the sinister plans of our super power neighbour, designed to destroy our revolution, including military aggression. Today, they are talking about when, where and how they will attack Cuba. Though we are a peace-loving nation, we would choose to be extinguished, rather than to renounce the work we have been carrying out for over half a century. We remain convinced that poverty can be brought under control, and that a better world is possible.

Original Arabic: Mr. EL AMAWY (*Minister of Manpower and Emigration, Egypt*) — It is an honour and a pleasure for me to note that the Vice-President of Kenya has been elected to chair this meeting. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia on his re-election. He has presented to us the Report which we are discussing, the main theme of which is poverty. In this respect, I would like to congratulate the International Labour Office and its Director-General on their efforts, particularly for the Report I have just mentioned, entitled *Working out of poverty*. This will certainly have an impact on workers and on future generations. Decent work is a comprehensive development concept which has obvious economic and social returns. If globalization is one of the main challenges brought by new changes on the international level, the proper response lies in our ability to benefit from its positive aspects while limiting the negative ones. We must improve the performance of our industry, otherwise unemployment will increase in our countries.

I would like to say that I completely agree with the Report that the main problems which we are facing today are slow economic growth rates. While many countries claim to advocate market liberalization those same countries in practice impose protectionist policies in their dealings with the developing countries, with the aim of protecting their markets in certain sectors in which they do not have a comparative advantage. Those countries must realize that these policies result in the continuation of poverty alongside a tremendous increase of inequitably distributed wealth. We look to the developed countries for assistance with the achievement of economic stability by means of development aid and debt relief programmes and by opening their markets to exports from developing countries, as basic tools for the elimination of poverty, to achieve social integration and to guarantee decent work for all. The search for an effective way to create an international partnership to eliminate poverty must be a responsibility of

the industrialized countries and of the international financial institutions. Recent remarks by the President of the Republic of Brazil are undoubtedly a step in this direction.

Now, more than ever, we need the support and assistance of the International Labour Organization to alleviate poverty, and to address the unemployment that has accompanied global changes, in order to create an environment conducive to productive and stable labour and work to stem the increase of poverty, particularly in Africa. We must strengthen social security and the Organization must increase its activities in the informal sector, which plays an important role as an important source of employment and resources, one of the most important in fact, providing jobs for recent graduates and the unemployed. We also hope for a concrete and substantial increase in the Organization's technical cooperation resources, within its regular budget, to reflect the growing membership and including countries in great need of such cooperation.

In the context of the tasks and responsibilities of the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, we have formulated a forward-looking long-term conception embracing all the changes and developments of the time.

A priority of our strategy up to the year 2012 is to reduce unemployment, and create an atmosphere conducive to attracting investment, to create more jobs for young people using vocational and conversion training, to provide the technical manpower required by the labour market and preserve a balanced and stable relationship between the social partners. In Egypt, we have also strengthened our links with the International Labour Organization. We have promulgated a new labour law which embodies the rights and duties of all the parties. The aim is to reinforce peace and social justice in keeping with the provisions of the international Conventions which Egypt has ratified. This law is greatly influenced by the standards set forth in other ILO Conventions which we have not yet ratified. We are also preparing the regulations for the implementation of this law as well as the required mechanisms.

In conclusion, we assert the value of the Organization's effective and active participation, as to the sole standard-setting organization in the field of labour. It should strengthen its cooperation with other specialized agencies of the United Nations, so as to become even more able to respond to the aspirations and hopes of working people everywhere.

Mr. FUNES DE RIOJA (*representative, International Organisation of Employers*) — First of all, I would like to say that it is a pleasure to take the floor while the President of the Conference is in the Chair. Chairperson of the Employers' group of this session of the Conference, and Executive Vice-President of the International Organisation of Employers, I would like to thank the Director-General for his Report, *Working out of poverty*. The issues that arise from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals are now being discussed within the United Nations and it is helpful that the ILO can also consider how it can contribute to this process. This Report is a useful contribution to the stimulation of that debate.

The ILO, due to its tripartite structure, has a unique place within the United Nations. It has a clear mandate and responsibility in the areas of labour and

social policy, and it is through that mandate that the ILO can best provide a contribution. Even if it is tempting at present to look to do more than is possible to work towards our indisputably shared goals.

For us, the creation of enterprises and employment – which is the path to actively contributing to poverty reduction – is an essential component of the Organization's mandate.

In our view the following approach could be helpful:

The ILO needs to look to the positive impact of its programmes on poverty reduction. This means that the ILO's programmes should not become focused on poverty reduction; rather, the impact of its programmes should be considered to assess their effects, as a consequence, on poverty reduction.

The ILO should collaborate with other United Nations agencies, as appropriate, in pursuit of these goals and contribute its expertise. However, in doing so its mandate should be respected, as should the mandates of other agencies.

It is through employment creation and entrepreneurship that the ILO can assist in poverty alleviation. Having a job remains the most sustainable path to work out of poverty – the ILO Director-General can stress this point. The ILO therefore needs to continue to promote the most appropriate labour and social policies that foster job creation. The ILO's Global Employment Agenda can play an important role in this regard, and we would call on governments to work with the ILO and their national social partners in developing the right policy solutions for their domestic realities.

We support the ILO in its calls to governments to remove the barriers that exclude countries from participating in the globalized world. These barriers exist at both the international and national level and are linked to the fundamental issues of good governance and appropriate national policies.

Decent work can act as a framework within which issues of poverty can be addressed. For it to be effective, in our view, decent work requires first of all the creation of employment opportunities, to which I have just referred. It does not mean universal standards. It is a relative concept, a moving target and a goal to be achieved within the capacity and development goals of each country. It does not mean the application of all labour standards in all countries – there is no one-size-fits-all-response.

The challenge of the informal economy persists, but, here again, the ILO has a means of action arising from the conclusions of the general discussion at last year's session of the Conference. Efforts by the ILO need to focus on bringing these enterprises and workers into the formal economy, and the engagement of employers' organizations is important if such integration is to be successful and sustainable. Similar guidance on the use of social security systems in the fight against poverty can be found in the conclusions of the discussions that took place during the 2001 session of the Conference.

The Report underlines the need for dialogue. The role of the social partners, both here in the ILO and at the national level, is a key advantage that the ILO can bring to bear in all of its work. Governments need to recognize that the challenges of policy coherence are best met through social dialogue. This is coupled with a broader need to continue to associate employers' organizations with the work of the ILO. The ILO

needs to focus on strengthening the capacities of its real constituents. This commitment to work with and through national employers' organizations needs to be recognized by all staff in the ILO, both here in Geneva as well as in the field.

Throughout its history the ILO has been doing a lot to meet the challenges of poverty through its programmes and activities. This debate allows us to consider what impact the ILO has made, what lessons have been learned and how successes can be quickly replicated. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work still has a major role to play in the work of the ILO, and employers seek to continue to work more closely with the Organization in the promotion of its principles.

In all of this, there is a need to avoid short-term, quick-fix responses. As I previously mentioned, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the challenges facing the world of work, and there is a need for flexibility and innovation that should be reflected in the ILO's programme design and implementation, including the area of standard setting. Normative action, where appropriate, must be modern in both content and design if it is to make a positive contribution to the needs of constituents. The discussion on health and safety at this session of the Conference is therefore important to ensuring the relevance of future ILO action.

The ILO is able to make a real and positive contribution to the goals of the Millennium Declaration and to poverty reduction, but we believe that this can be done only if the Organization focuses on its strengths and purposes and delivers solutions supported by constituents so as to meet their needs and challenges in the world of work.

Finally, on behalf of the Employers' group, allow me to thank Lord Brett for his work as Chairperson of the Governing Body. Bill, you really did a good job.

Ms. AL-JABI (*Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Syrian Arab Republic*) — First of all I would like to offer our most sincere congratulations. I would like to congratulate the President of the Conference, the Vice-President of the Conference, and the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, on his re-election. This is a significant and eloquent re-election. The objectives of International Labour Organization are based on a basic principle, namely that comprehensive peace can be established only on the basis of social justice, therefore it must be a just peace, and this requires the prevalence of a single set of criteria throughout the world.

There should not be double standards as far as humanitarian law and rights are concerned. These are fundamental principles which are enshrined by international law, and one must take into account countries' sovereignty and independence.

In today's world we are in a situation in which the gap is widening between the rich and the poor, between the hungry and the sated. There are some people who are benefiting from the wealth of this world, but unfortunately we observe that technology and scientific knowledge are today incapable of propagating social justice throughout the world.

On the contrary, the world is marked by disparity, by worsening forms of aggression, by a lack of equity, by the absence of the principles of international law, by pillaging of the wealth of people and by violation of their land with impunity. All this has had a negative

impact on workers and on labour issues. Hence, the importance of the first Report of the Director-General of the ILO, entitled *Working out of poverty*. We highly appreciate its main ideas, which are central to addressing this phenomenon and eliminating it. We also highly appreciate the proposals set forth in the first Report that consider work and employment as being the keys to the fight against discrimination which will enable us to achieve a more equal society.

The Syrian Arab Republic has ratified the latest two international Conventions, Nos. 100 and 111. It goes without saying that most of the peoples of the world hope that globalization and its outcomes will not exacerbate the present disparities. On the contrary, we hope that globalization will guarantee social justice and will protect us from poverty.

In the Syrian Arab Republic we have proceeded in the light of the directives of President Bashar Al-Assad, and we have proceeded to develop and modernize our country. We have promulgated a number of laws and have amended others in order to increase the wages of both government workers and workers in the private sector. We have also enshrined the right to own real estate and we have spread out payment for low-cost housing units in easy instalments over 25 years.

We are also working on the development of human resources in the Syrian Arab Republic. We have implemented a number of laws, namely a social security law, a law on combating unemployment and a rural development project. We are confident that this will create jobs, particularly for young people.

We have also ensured equality between men and women with regard to retirement benefits, and we have also taken measures to curb child labour. The Syrian Arab Republic has ratified international Convention No. 182, on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and we have also ratified all eight basic Conventions.

Given that it is difficult to guarantee peace and stability if the majority of people in a society are marginalized or are not lucky enough to be able to have a share in the world of work, I would like to note that the 2004 session of the Arab Labour Conference will be held in Damascus, under the sponsorship of President Bashar Al-Assad.

I cannot fail to mention what is happening in Palestine, the Syrian Arab Golan and the unliberated parts of Lebanon. The actions carried out by Israel are exacerbating poverty. We affirm our adherence to a just and comprehensive peace, based on international legitimacy and the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and also on the Madrid process. We call for total and unconditional Israeli withdrawal.

We are attached to the territorial integrity and the security of Iraq. We have given the Director-General of the ILO a document containing the remarks of Syria on this subject.

More particularly, we are concerned with the annex to the Report, which is concerned with the occupied Arab territories and which concerns more particularly the Golan. We have received the official response from the Director-General approving our remarks. We will be dealing with these remarks at a subsequent point in time. I wish this Conference every success.

Original Farsi: Mr. HOSSEINI (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran) — It is

with great pleasure that I address this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election. I hope that, through discussion and debate, together we will be able to find appropriate ways to enable the materialization of decent work and the sharing of social partners in sustainable global employment development. I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Director-General on the occasion of his well deserved re-election.

Our major challenge in the eradication of poverty and the creation of productive employment is that of the unequal distribution of the benefits of globalization between developing and developed countries. Statistical indicators of the global economy clearly demonstrate grave, deep-rooted disparities between countries. In order to benefit from globalization, countries are encouraged to enter into great institutional reforms.

Certain realities, such as North-South and South-South interactions, as well as the severe monopoly of effective technologies in industrial development and the lack of accountability in global social justice, lead us to the question of what agreed rules with self-control mechanisms have been formed in order to deal with existing abnormalities in international and geographical domains.

Creating equal opportunities for men and women and the institutionalization of flexibility in production and in the informal economy are important steps in the eradication of poverty. The new industrial relations system and capital-transferring mechanisms provide us with the means to achieve these steps.

Decent work will be practically and strategically validated as an effective approach to poverty eradication only when all countries develop a global employment strategy based on the realities and limited competitive capacities of developing countries in the global labour market.

In order to further increase new and productive employment opportunities for workers and employers, the Islamic Republic of Iran has created effective change in labour administration through enhancing its flexibility in tripartism and social dialogue. In the past year, for example, a successful project with capacity building of 300,000 new jobs was implemented with the collaboration of employers. We hope to be able to bring about an inspiring and targeted acceleration in the absorption of a young labour force, with the active participation of social partners.

During the past two years, one of the most important issues which we have emphasized and followed up is the association of technical cooperation with the supervisory mechanism. Through this, we have been able to develop, in practice, the grounds for non-discrimination, tripartism, the National Tripartite Advisory Council and also collective agreements in the area of labour relations. Also, in order to be more compatible with the core conventions of the ILO, some articles of the Iranian Labour Code have been revisited with contributions made by social partners and also ILO officials. The Government would like to place on record its appreciation of positive efforts and contributions of the ILO in this regard.

The enhanced cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ILO over recent years, which emanates from the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and also the paradigm of decent work represent our determination to advance the ILO strategic objectives.

In conclusion, let me express the hope that an enhanced representation of the ILO in the Islamic Republic of Iran will promote the existing cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ILO and that we will be able to better fulfil our mutual obligations to both workers and employers.

Mr. SINGH (*Minister of Labour, India*) — Let me first of all congratulate the President on his election at this session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to place on record our appreciation for the very comprehensive report by the ILO Director-General, Dr. Juan Somavia, on the theme: *Working out of poverty*. It addresses several issues of contemporary relevance.

Poverty is a curse and we quite agree with Mr. Somavia, that poverty is a complex, deep-rooted, controversial reality with devastating effects at different levels. Poverty is a global problem and the ILO's ongoing efforts to tackle it are commendable.

The Director-General has noted in his Report that skills are essential to improve productivity, incomes and access to employment opportunities. We need to develop new strategies to give the poor access to training opportunities at affordable costs. I would, therefore, suggest the setting up of an international skill development fund, under the umbrella of the ILO, as an essential element of these strategies.

Such a system needs to be evolved on a priority basis so that resources from the developed world may be mobilized to help developing countries in their own efforts of skill development. It would also employ technical assistance to complement the national efforts of developing countries.

If the battle against poverty is to be won, the international economic system must surely be more sensitive to the needs of developing countries. Globalization must bring clear and tangible benefits for poorer countries if we are to "work out of poverty". Increased participation of developing countries in the WTO regime was touted as a means for poor countries to reduce poverty. Unfortunately, the impact so far for most developing countries has been less than encouraging.

One way of "working out of poverty" where ILO can play a useful role, is freer movement of people across national boundaries. The ILO must press for greater liberalization of such movement as an essential component of globalization and market access in the area of services. Trade liberalization would be incomplete unless it is accompanied by freer movement of natural persons, irrespective of creed, colour or religion.

Equally important, such movement of natural persons should not depend on their region of origin, otherwise we could very well end up with a situation like the one we have in the ILO Office, where the vast majority of the staff come from the developed countries of the world. Such an outcome at the global level would be even more regrettable than the staffing situation in the ILO.

In India, following the spirit of tripartism, the Indian Labour Conference, the Standing Labour Committee and other tripartite bodies have shaped and influenced the country's labour policies.

The first endeavour of governments must be to provide at least some gainful activity so that poorer people with earnings below subsistence levels can at least earn a decent income. The decent work concept can be meaningful only if this level of work is made available to the labour force.

India consciously recognized poverty as a major issue when we started our development plans of independence in the early 1950s, with the primary objective of reducing poverty. Our determined efforts have borne fruit and we have succeeded in bringing down the poverty ratio from 55 per cent in 1974 to 26 per cent in 1999-2000, and also we are confident of reducing it further to 19 per cent by 2007. Especially focused programmes aimed at helping vulnerable groups are being implemented for creating additional employment and enhancing income generation.

Concerted efforts are also being made towards the empowerment of women in India. Also, the Constitution has been amended to ensure compulsory and free education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years, so that they become well-trained adults ready for decent employment.

To achieve the goal of decent work for all, as the President has already said, radical changes are required, and for all that, let all of us arise, awake and not stop until we banish the curse of poverty from the face of the earth.

Original French: Mr SARBU (*Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, Romania*) — I have the honour to congratulate Mr. Wamalwa, on behalf of the Romanian delegation, on his election as President of the 91st Session of the Conference. We are convinced that under your guidance the work of the Conference will be a success.

Before I present the social and labour policies promoted by the Romanian Government, allow me now to congratulate His Excellency, Mr. Juan Somavia, both on his renewed mandate, and the Report submitted to the Conference.

According to this Report, poverty is a complex, serious and universal reality in our world. It is a nightmare for each individual and a serious disease for society. The Director-General, however, points out quite rightly that employment is the best way out of poverty.

The Romanian Government strongly supports the historic mandate of the ILO of combating poverty, eliminating discrimination and promoting employment. The Romanian Government has taken on board these principles and adopted a new approach to social problems. In this Conference last year, we said that we were going to draw up a new Labour Code. We have already taken that important step. The Labour Code entered into force on 1 March 2003 and it will play a very important role in establishing a balance between labour and capital, between efficiency and social solidarity.

The new Labour Code was absolutely necessary. This is something that has been underscored by lawyers and social partners. Thanks to this new legislation, Romania has transposed international labour standards into its domestic law whilst adapting them to our particular social reality. The Code sets out new types of contracts, apart from the open-ended contracts, namely fixed-term contracts, part-time work, work at home, promoting workers' fundamental rights. At the same time it regulates information and workers' consultation and their protection in the event of collective redundancies.

Another novelty is the fact that we can now include in labour contracts clauses on non competition, mobility and confidentiality. Convinced that ongoing investment in vocational training is absolutely vital for

increasing labour productivity, we have also regulated the contract on professional or vocational qualifications and, what we call, professional adaptation.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the experts on the multidisciplinary team of the ILO in Budapest and also the Regional Bureau for Europe in Geneva for their ongoing support. With their assistance, in accordance with the ILO Conventions, the Romanian Government has continued its logistic reform and has adopted a new trade union law including the following new elements: first of all, we can associate workers from different units in the unions, given the fact that we have got many small units in factories; secondly, the leader of the union no longer has to be a member of the same unit; thirdly, a high level of protection for union leaders against employer violations and is ensured, as well as access for workers to information relating to the union in the unit.

Last but not least, we have done away with the condition that only a Romanian national can be a union leader. Let me also mention that last year a law came into force on equal opportunities. We are trying to promote elimination of direct and indirect discrimination in employment, education, health, culture, information and participation in the decision-making process.

Another point that stems from what I have just said regards the major steps taken by the Romanian Government as regards social legislation, and there are equally important points here. First of all, we now have ongoing consultation with the social partners at the time of decision-making. In addition, that has all been accompanied by substantial improvements in some of our economic indicators. We have an average economic growth of 5 per cent over the last three years. Our unemployment rates are about 8-9 per cent and, finally, a continued increase in the minimum wage, particularly as of 1 January 2003, which is to the tune of 42 per cent.

I think all this proves that we have true social dialogue and partnership, proper social protection, a proper framework for decent work, which is an aim that the Romanian Government reaffirms, whilst at the same time, continuing to promote the objectives of the ILO.

The approach that we have adopted in the area of employment and solidarity is to make economic and structural policies compatible with employment and social integration policies. I think, largely speaking, we have managed to do this well. It is certainly not straightforward, bearing in mind the complexity of the economic problems, which mean sometimes that we have to adopt less popular measures. That is why, as I move to my close, I would like to say that the irreversible path towards integration continues. The Government will carry on its efforts towards economic development whilst preserving the values of the European social model.

(Mr. Noakes takes the Chair.)

Original Arabic: Mr. AOUN (*Government delegate, Lebanon*) — It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Republic of Lebanon to this important gathering which remains the most important international forum on labour under the flag of the United Nations, and has an international impact through the actions of the social partners.

It is also an honour and pleasure to congratulate the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, and we reiterate the commitment of our country to the values and activities of the Organization, which is a guardian of labour and workers' rights and is a forum for the social partners.

It is also an opportunity which I must take to recall the role of the Organization, in endeavouring to establish a lasting peace, in accordance with its Constitution, and through its endeavours to establish social justice in the world, by providing the appropriate framework for this, drafting and developing relevant international instruments, such as recommendations, conventions and standards. We wish to say, however, that all of those rights and freedoms and technical skills, conventions and standards can bring social justice only if people are free to enjoy sovereignty over their land and their natural resources and human resources.

But the peoples whose land, freedom and independence have been usurped, or those marginalized economically and socially, as described in the Report, are peoples that cannot have prosperity or aspire to well-being in the economic and social spheres for they are occupied, and occupation violates the national rights of such peoples and violates the principles of the International Declaration of Human Rights and inevitably violates the principles and standards of the International Labour Organization.

This situation persists for the workers in the south of Lebanon, in the Golan, and more recently in occupied Iraq, where we have seen the daily violation of international and human rights as a result of occupation, whether it be the Israeli occupation and settlement or American and British occupation.

We would wish to mention this issue because we respect the Constitution of the International Labour Organization which contains the concept of social justice linked to international peace. We have every confidence in international law, particularly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrines the rights of peoples to self-determination, and we also wish the United Nations to remain the bastion of human rights for all peoples and all countries, be they large or small, developed or otherwise.

The ILO, within the United Nations family, has a tripartite structure, and it can discuss many issues and can also discuss failures of the United Nations. In Iraq, workers have been fired, they have lost their jobs, they have received no compensation, no pensions, and this is because of the decision taken by the occupying powers. The ILO must discuss this issue in order to find humane solutions under international law and international legitimacy, and under our standards.

Mr. President, we appreciate the Report of the Director-General. This Report, *Working out of poverty*, is global and comprehensive. We understand that poverty is the result of policies and economic systems which are inadequate.

Finally, we would wish to conclude by saying that we are all responsible for international peace based on lasting social justice.

Mr. KERAVNOS (*Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Cyprus*) — It is a great pleasure to see Mr. Wamalwa presiding over this year's session of the International Labour Conference. We have no doubt that he will guide us to a successful outcome.

The Director-General of the ILO has impressed us with his Report to the Conference. The theme he has chosen could not have been more topical, as poverty is the biggest social problem facing the international community. What is even more admirable is the life-cycle approach to the causes of poverty taken in the Report.

Mr. Somavia has succeeded in demonstrating that the active pursuance of the ILO's full strategic objectives can prove to be a powerful driving force which can break the vicious circle of poverty and lead to decent work. The Government of Cyprus fully endorses the strategy advocated in the Report for working out of poverty. The areas listed under this strategy are all equally important. It is up to each State to shape its own Decent Work Agenda according to its own priorities.

The Government of Cyprus takes pride in not having followed the recipe "grow first, distribute later". Our conviction has always been that we need policies that promote growth but which, at the same time, ensure fair working conditions and fair sharing of the proceeds of growth. Only in this way can we build decent societies.

Allow me now to share with you our main policies in relation to the issues of poverty and social exclusion. Being a staunch supporter of the ILO's standard-setting activities, Cyprus has ratified all core Conventions in addition to other important Conventions, bringing the total number to 53.

Within this framework and the European Union harmonization process, we have gradually built an institutional framework which, on the one hand, provides security and protection and, on the other, allows for flexibility in the labour market. Particular emphasis was given to bridging the gap in legislation for the elimination of gender discrimination and to strengthening the infrastructure for its effective implementation.

The overall objective of our employment and labour-market policies in Cyprus is the maintenance of conditions of full employment through policy responses that will lead to a high and sustainable rate of growth of the economy and the prevention of the emergence and intensification of labour market constraints on overall economic growth. Particular emphasis is given to training, modernizing and improving the performance of the public employment services and to promoting active labour market programmes that enhance access to employment of disadvantaged groups such as women, older workers and people with disabilities.

Our participation in the European Employment Strategy and implementation of the new results-oriented Employment Guidelines are expected to strengthen our efforts to integrate the targeted groups into the labour market.

Parallel to our employment policies, we have built, in cooperation with our social partners, a social protection model which compares well with that of European member States. We have universal coverage for pensions through social insurance and social pensions schemes, statutory public assistance, a universal child-benefit scheme, and a series of welfare services which benefit both families and individuals.

Our major challenges in the field of social protection are the ageing of the population and its implications on pension financing and care services and reducing dependency on public assistance by helping

people to be integrated in the labour market. We feel confident that social dialogue and the involvement of all sectors of society in the formulation and implementation of our policies will, once again, act as a catalyst in working out the problems facing us. The recent history of Cyprus has taught us that working in partnership is the only way to promote sustainable growth, maintain social stability and build an inclusive society.

We share the view of the Director-General that poverty is not just a problem of the poor, but a challenge for all defenders of social justice and all seekers of sustainable growth. For this reason, we express our wholehearted support for the ILO's innovative concept for a Global Social Trust. We do hope that the pilot project will be successful so that it can soon be scaled up globally, generating substantial resource transfers for the benefit of millions of people who are currently excluded from effective social protection.

Mr. WINN (*Minister of Labour, Myanmar*) — On behalf of my delegation, and on my own behalf, I extend my warmest congratulations to the President on his unanimous election as President of this Conference. I have full confidence in his experience, wisdom and foresight. Under his able guidance, my delegation is convinced that this august assembly will come to a successful conclusion, bearing fruitful results.

I should also like to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Juan Somavia for his well-deserved re-election for a second term as the Director-General of the International Labour Office. I wish him every success in his new endeavours during his second term.

This is indeed an opportune moment for me to commend the reports of the Governing Body and the Director-General. I would like to express our particular appreciation to the Director-General for his candid Report which calls for renewed tripartite commitment to helping free people and society from the global poverty trap. We are of the same view as the Director-General that poverty is indeed a global challenge. As a long-time Member of the ILO, Myanmar will participate in the works of the Organization and work together with the Organization in overcoming the challenges that lie ahead of us.

Allow me to inform this august Conference on the situation regarding the political implementation of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), ratified by Myanmar. As we had informed the previous session of the International Labour Conference, Myanmar took the necessary legislative, administrative and executive measures on our own initiatives even before the adoption of the emergency resolution on Myanmar at the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference. As for the legislative measures, Order No. 1/99 which has the full force of law was issued prohibiting the use of forced labour throughout the country, supported by public information activities followed by relevant administrative and enforcement measures. Moreover, institutional arrangements have also been made with the formulation of the ILO Affairs Working Committee and ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) Implementation Committee, for the necessary supervision and guidance on matters relating to the elimination of forced labour. With a view to observing forced labour situations throughout the country, seven field observation teams have been formed to make frequent visits to respective assigned areas and to report back their findings to

the above committees. These measures and activities are still in effect and operating according to their own programmes.

May I now apprise you of our endeavours for the eradication of forced labour in close cooperation and collaboration with the ILO. Since May 2000, technical cooperation missions from the ILO have visited Myanmar four times to engage in fruitful bilateral discussions. Thanks to these visits, positive developments have taken place, the most significant of which are the further issuance of Supplementing Order No. 1/99 in October 2000 and the visit of the ILO High-Level Team (HLT) headed by Mr. Ninian Stephen, former Governor-General of Australia, from September to October 2001.

A significant development took place after the visit of the ILO-HLT. The two sides made a breakthrough in reaching an agreement in May 2002 for the appointment of an ILO Liaison Officer. Ms. Hong-Trang Perret-Nguyeu has been performing her duties as ILO Liaison Officer. The Myanmar Government has rendered full cooperation to the Liaison Officer in carrying out her duties. She has been accorded full freedom of travel and is able to meet anyone she deems necessary in the discharge of her responsibilities.

The drafting of a Plan of Action for the elimination of forced labour practices in Myanmar is also an important positive development. Taking into careful consideration the suggestion of the Director-General of the ILO in his communication to us in July 2002, the Minister of Labour promptly began to draw up the Plan of Action in coordination with the ILO Liaison Officer.

The draft Plan of Action was then transmitted to the ILO in late February 2003 for consideration at the 286th Session of the ILO Governing Body. The Governing Body made some recommendations relating to the role and functions of the facilitator and the designation of the pilot region. Taking into full consideration the recommendation made by the Governing Body, we further improved the draft text, working in close consultation with the ILO. This resulted in the emergence of a mutually acceptable Plan of Action. We will soon be implementing the project elements of the Plan of Action.

All these developments clearly demonstrate our goodwill and our commitment to the elimination of forced labour in cooperation with the ILO. The progress and positive developments achieved thus far clearly illustrate our true spirit of cooperation, despite the fact that Myanmar had disassociated itself from the decision of the 277th Session of the ILO Governing Body, held in March 2000, for the reason that it was singled out unjustly for censure and punitive action by the ILO in an arbitrary manner.

In the days to come, we are optimistic of warmer relations between Myanmar and the ILO, hoping that there will not be any further pressure on Myanmar which is politically motivated.

I would like to state that, despite the Government's determined efforts, a few isolated incidents of forced labour may linger on in areas where insurgencies do exist. It is curious, but not a coincidence, to note that allegations of forced labour emanate from those specific areas where armed insurgency and armed conflict prevail and where so-called NGOs supporting these armed insurgents are active. In fact, many allegations of forced labour should have arisen before

1989 when there were numerous armed insurgencies and armed conflict in which many civilian porters were used. However, there had not been any allegations of forced labour in those days.

After 1989, almost all armed insurgent groups returned to the legal fold following the successful efforts of the Government to rebuild union solidarity. Only a handful of quite minor hardliners such as Kayin and Shan remain in the jungle along the border, turning a blind eye to the Government's offer for peace. Some of the aforementioned NGOs are very active in support of these insurgents. They disseminate disinformation and misinformation about forced labour. Whenever we try to relocate civilians out of "harm's way" these NGOs accuse us of forced relocation. There are ceaseless accusations and allegations made by several unscrupulous elements to tarnish the image of the Government. Most of these are fabricated, unfounded and many have been grossly exaggerated, based on sheer political motive and evil.

In conclusion, I would like to take the opportunity to assure this esteemed Conference that Myanmar remains committed to cooperation with the ILO to achieve the desired goals of the Organization. May I once again convey my best wishes to the President for his personal success and for the success of this Conference.

Original Arabic: Mr. DAHLAN (*Employers' delegate, Saudi Arabia*) — In the Name of God the Merciful, Compassionate.

It is a pleasure and honour on my own behalf and that of my colleagues in Saudi Arabia to congratulate the President, on his election to head this Conference. We are all very proud and happy to see an African brother occupying this important position.

The Director-General's Report this year is, in our view, one of the most important reports that we have seen, as it discusses an issue that is of the highest concern to Governments, workers and employers, namely poverty. This is a complex issue rooted in many societies and which brings misery to half of the world's inhabitants who live on less than two dollars-a-day, some with less than one dollar-a-day.

The increase of poverty is a patent proof of the failure of international society, starting with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and also including the economic and social systems of developing countries and the least developed countries.

This is a dilemma of concern to all of us that has become an item on the agenda of conferences, particularly, the recent G8 Summit. That meeting gives hope that we may benefit from assistance from the major industrialized countries, in their humanitarian and social role with regard to the other countries of the world. I must hail the Brazilian President on this occasion and congratulate him on his initiative to create a fund to combat poverty.

Any future projects to combat poverty require tripartite action involving governments, workers and employers. Individual governments cannot plan such projects alone to bring them to fruition without participation by the other social partners. The best of these projects were the ones contained in the recommendations of the 1995 Copenhagen conference, which stressed the links between the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and social servitude, representing the major obstacles to the formulation of a global strategy for international justice.

We would wish to mention in this connection the Millennium Summit of 2000 held by the United Nations which launched a concerted campaign aimed at the elimination of poverty. The development objectives for the elimination of poverty were defined. They included the elimination of extreme poverty, of famine and malnutrition, the provision of primary education for all, reinforcing gender equality, reducing child mortality, mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV, AIDS and malaria, sustainability of the environment, and the creation of a global partnership for development.

In addition to the failure of social and economic plans, we require other reasons to explain poverty, namely natural disasters, wars, the illegal occupation of other people's territories, and confiscation of their right to work and to produce. Some dictatorships dominate their peoples by seizing all the resources of their country in such a way that benefits only by a small minority, to the detriment of the vast majority of the people.

I am particularly proud to mention the positive and practical achievements of the Government of my country in laying down a long-term strategy to combat poverty. It is a strategy to combat poverty characterized by transparency. We have a precedent in Islam, which established a system whereby the rich helped the poor, taking a percentage of their wealth for distribution among the poor. Our system, inspired by Islam, distributes wealth to the poor under the supervision of the competent authorities of our country.

We hope very strongly that the ILO would follow up this issue with the industrialized countries and the developing countries.

As a member of the Governing Body, I must thank Lord Brett, who accomplished his tasks with wisdom, intelligence and justice, I also congratulate and thank all the members of the Governing Body, governments, workers and employers, and the Director-General on his re-election, which demonstrates the trust we have unanimously placed in him.

Finally, I have the honour to thank the President of the Conference and to express to him in our name and on behalf of all, best wishes for every success.

Mr. ZAINAL (*Workers' delegate, Malaysia*) — Since we returned to our respective countries at the conclusion of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference held in this honourable house in June 2002, a lot of water – very hot water I suppose – has flowed under the bridge since we last crossed it. We have had major armed aggression in Iraq, a proposed “road map” to end the protracted dispute between Palestine and Israel, the SARS scare, political uncertainty and civil wars, to name but a few things and, of course, more misery than ever has been experienced by workers and civil society at large. They had to bear it all in mute silence – the pain from armed aggression and torture, job losses, social marginalization, economic dislocation, grinding poverty and last, but certainly not least, social exclusion.

The Director-General, in his Report to this Conference, has emphasized the importance of standard setting as an effective predeterminant for sustainable development in a rapidly globalizing world of work. We agree with him fully on this. Standard setting, particularly through Conventions and Recommendations duly ratified by ILO member States, their effective implementation and enforcement and standards

development, are prerequisites for decent work. As a matter of priority, we would like to see large, industrialized countries that have yet to ratify ILO Convention No. 87 setting a good example for developing economies by ratifying ILO Convention No. 87. At the same time, the developing countries must do likewise, hereby reaffirming their support for the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

We wish to see this happening before we debate the Global Report on freedom of association and collective bargaining next year. Claims about “losing competitive edge” on account of such ratification lack substance and relevance. They are totally inconsistent with the dynamics of growth. We fully support the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, as it is the blueprint for rights-based development in a rapidly globalizing new millennium.

When the world ushered in globalization with the WTO Declaration in 1996, followed by the Doha Declaration and many others, it knew little about the social dimension of globalization. Two economic crises and one armed aggression later, all within a seven-year period, the world has hopefully become wiser about the dire economic consequences and social repercussions of globalization. The deliberate social marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors of society, particularly the poor, women and children has put paid to the widely publicized “marketized” idea that globalization is all about gain-sharing and coordinated development. The socio-economic realities of globalization, characterized by ever-growing income disparities between the rich and the poor are exacting a heavy toll on political stability and national sovereignty. I am beginning to wonder whether humanity will be able to obtain any benefit whatsoever from globalization in its current form.

We notice widening income disparities between top management executives and shop-floor workers in enterprises worldwide. A few top management staff are laying claim to a much larger proportion of organizational resources than that of all other employees put together, thus creating artificial income gaps. In many countries, workers are being paid wages that are way below national poverty line income levels and this has been confirmed by the ILO's *World Employment Report 2001*. We wish to see a narrowing of this income gap to correctly reflect and appropriately recognize the individual contributions of shop-floor workers to organizational development. If globalization can indeed guarantee the high levels of transparency, better corporate governance, equity and increased social accountability, then the workers will certainly be the first people to support it. Workers are still waiting for the promised fruit to be delivered.

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, we have witnessed many events that have influenced the way we think, respond and act. While many leaders have called for lasting global peace, harmony and stability, many peace-loving people have actually been denied fundamental freedom. I would like to propose the following pointers which the ILO and the member States present here might wish to consider, assess and deliberate. What has been our actual level of achievement in standard setting, and promoting standards implementation by ILO member States? Where do we go from here? Do we continue with the conventional system of the previous millennium and make minor changes to existing systems or do we effect a total change in priority, procedure and approach? Have the

issues discussed in previous Conferences been taken up at national policy-making levels for implementation? Have national tripartite systems been responsive to the findings and recommendations of the ILO? Will the globalization process effectively accommodate the ILO's Decent Work Agenda to support rights-based development in developing economies?

Congratulations to you on your election as Vice-President.

Mr. KALLON (*Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations, Sierra Leone*) — It is a great pleasure for me to address the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. Mr. Alpha Timbo, our Minister of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations, deeply regrets that he is unable to be here because of other very urgent commitments, and has asked me to speak on his behalf.

Permit me to start with a couple of quotes from the Director-General's Report. The first is this: "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." The second is: "In many ways, the working poor are the ultimate entrepreneurs."

My submission is that we must make the working poor real entrepreneurs. By so doing, we would be guaranteeing them real decent jobs through self-employment.

For the working poor, support mechanisms for self-employment provide the ultimate ladder of opportunity to which the Director-General's Report refers. These could take the following forms: structures of financial mediation providing financial services for the working poor including microcredit and microfinance schemes; to help people to start their own enterprises and provide them with advice to sustain those enterprises; training in skills and craftsmanship, including an indispensable training in entrepreneurial skills; assistance in organizing skilled and trained people in groups to form companies and thereby promote corporate culture.

This sort of support service will have a multiplier effect in creating decent jobs.

Post-conflict Sierra Leone is confronted with the serious problem of able-bodied people, usually unskilled youths, migrating from rural areas to the towns leaving behind an ageing population with feeble energy to till the land. The result is acute unemployment, pressure on social amenities in the urban centres and hunger. The combination of all of these factors exacerbates the situation of "indecent" work, mass unemployment and poverty.

In order to alleviate the situation, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations has asked the ILO, particularly the InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, to help to salvage the unemployment situation in the country. We note here our appreciation for their timely response.

Funds from the Programme have been used to set up a model, Employment Information Services Centre (EISC) in the capital, Freetown. Since its inception in October 2001, the EISC has made significant strides in resolving employment problems among Sierra Leone youth. Job registration, placement and counselling services have been improved in the Ministry. A series of surveys has been conducted in growth areas in the economy, training options and marketable skills. These have enabled young people to

identify and use their potential in more profitable ways. The need to replicate the EISC in the other three provincial regions is dear but donor funds for other such centres have not been available beyond the initial set-up cost for the first centre, let alone for expansion of this fine initiative. My Government urges the ILO to reinvigorate this project.

Investment in labour-intensive projects helps to reduce the unemployment. The ILO's renewed involvement in this field in Sierra Leone is earnestly requested. Several years ago, the ILO undertook a labour-intensive programme in Sierra Leone, which was highly appreciated by Sierra Leoneans. It was unfortunately discontinued because of the civil conflict. We even had an ILO Office in Sierra Leone with a resident ILO representative. It is the ardent desire of the Government that the ILO Office with a resident representative be restored and the labour-based programmes revived.

The Ministry has put together a labour-intensive project called "Labour Farms" which is to be implemented in all districts of the country. This will provide decent paid jobs to workers employed to produce food and ensure food security. We request the ILO's intervention to support the project which will reverse urban migration and its attendant problems including poverty.

In conclusion, we hope that Sierra Leone will receive the support of the ILO and United Nations Development Programme for the above programmes and projects, which are designed to create employment, alleviate poverty and achieve decent work for Sierra Leoneans, and which should stimulate the abilities of the working poor, especially in rural areas, to ensure the full development of rural communities and mobilization of their resources to combat poverty.

ADMISSION OF VANUATU AS A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

The PRESIDENT (Mr. NOAKES) — As I indicated Mr. Kallon was the last speaker on the list for this morning. Before closing this sitting I would like the Clerk of the Conference to take the floor to make an important announcement.

Original French: The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — By a communication dated 17 April 2003, which was received in Geneva on 22 May 2003, the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu transmitted to the Director-General its formal acceptance of the obligations of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization in accordance with paragraph 3 of article 1 thereof.

By virtue of this provision, the Republic of Vanuatu, as a member of the United Nations, may become a Member of the International Labour Organization by communicating its formal acceptance of the obligations of the Constitution.

In these circumstances, it is my pleasure to inform the Conference that the Republic of Vanuatu became the 176th Member of the International Labour Organization on 22 May 2003, and to welcome it as a new Member.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you all. I declare this sitting closed.

(The Conference adjourned at 1.15 p.m.)

Third sitting

Monday, 9 June 2003, 3 p.m.

Presidents: Mr. Muhaisin and Mr. Wojcik

FIRST REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE: SUBMISSION AND NOTING

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT (Mr. MUHAISIN) — Before we resume our debate on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General, I would like to call on Mr. Oni so that he can introduce the first report of the Credentials Committee, which is published in *Provisional Record* No. 5B. I invite the Conference to take note of the report which has been adopted by the Credentials Committee.

Original French: Mr. ONI (*Government delegate, Benin; Chairperson of the Credentials Committee*) — In *Provisional Record* No. 5B you will find the first report of the Credentials Committee which serves to fix, in accordance with the Standing Orders, the quorum necessary to give validity to the votes taken on the basis of the registered delegates entitled to vote. On Friday, 6 June, which is when this report was established, the quorum was set at 268.

The report contains other information on the composition of the Conference. In particular, it contains information on the number of States represented at the Conference, namely 158, and indicates those not represented by a complete tripartite delegation; these are six in number. The report also contains figures on the number of delegates and technical advisers in each of the three groups. Lastly, it gives the number of women accredited to the Conference which, unfortunately, is very low, at approximately 20 per cent. In future reports the Committee will submit updated figures on the composition of the Conference, as well as its conclusions on the objections and complaints submitted to it.

(The Conference takes note of the report.)

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

Mr. ODOYO (*Assistant Minister for Labour and Human Resource Development, Kenya*) — I congratulate the Vice-President and other officers of the Conference on their well deserved election. We note that the overall theme at this session of the Conference, *Working out of poverty*, through decent work, has been identified as the best route out of poverty, especially for the working poor and those excluded from work. In support of this theme, we in Kenya concur that the proper implementation of the ILO's four

strategic objectives of promoting basic workers' rights, employment promotion, social protection, social dialogue and tripartism, together with the two cross-cutting themes on gender equality and development, go a long way in laying the building blocks for decent work and alleviating poverty.

It is true that decent work is created and sustained by jobs that result in productive, competitive and viable enterprises that are able to survive, expand and grow. Many enterprises in Africa and the developing world face greater challenges in being productive, competitive and viable in the face of globalization. The opportunities to be created by the Decent Work Agenda may be eroded by the effects of globalization. Indeed, the Bretton Woods institutions-led liberalization programmes and other social problems like HIV/AIDS are likely to erode whatever benefits we are likely to have.

Globalization continues to lead to the closure and collapse of firms in countries such as Kenya. The challenges facing us at this session of the Conference include how to come up with resolutions, programmes and projects that will readdress this state of affairs within the larger framework of labour and employment. Kenya believes that in order to achieve the Decent Work Agenda and alleviate poverty, focus should be given to productivity improvement, targeting the large and small enterprises. Improved productivity will, in the long term, create wealth and thereby alleviate poverty through higher incomes which in turn leads to higher savings and investments. Further, we remain committed to the ideals of the ILO, especially the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda, through ratification and implementation of the ILO's labour standards. So far, I am pleased to confirm that Kenya has ratified 49 of the ILO Conventions, including seven of the eight core labour standards. We are reviewing our labour laws to ensure that we domesticate the various international labour standards already ratified. We are particularly pleased to be participating in this year's debate on the Global Report, *Time for equality at work*, which aims at the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. This is particularly timely in view of the fact that work remains a privilege entry-point from which human dignity can be sustained. We wish to acknowledge the excellent work done by the ILO over the years in Kenya and other parts of the world and recall that the elimination of discrimination has been reaffirmed as a principle inherent in the ILO Declaration of 1998. In our efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination at work, the Government of Kenya has ratified both the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100),

and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Our Constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination at work and safeguards equality and equity of workers' rights. Indeed, gender equity remains a sure way of promoting the contribution of various segments of society towards social and economic development. We welcome the discussion on the proposed revision of the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150). The proposed revision is timely since Recommendation No. 150 reflects the planning paradigm of the 1970s. Recommendation No. 150 as it stands provides little or no guidance on many issues that are central to contemporary training policy and does not reflect the technological and global changes in the world economy.

In Kenya, we have invested heavily in education, training and other aspects of human resources development to boost our nation's productive capabilities and we look forward to sharing our experience during the debate. On the item on improved security of seafarers' identification, we note that this has become particularly pertinent after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. We support the development of new instruments to the provisions of the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, 1958 (No. 108), and we hope that, during the session, we will address maritime security and make provisions for facilitating the employment of legitimate seafarers from developing countries.

On the subject of occupational health and safety, we welcome discussions on the new integrated approach that aims at conducting an in-depth study for an elaborate plan of action.

Finally, allow me to mention that this noble Organization has a very special role to play in the promotion of social justice in the world, which has become so interdependent. It is against this background that Kenya's delegation would like to make a special appeal to all peace-loving nations of the world to continue supporting this Organization in its most difficult task of promoting social justice and improving the quality of life of all persons.

Original Arabic: Mr. OULD SIDI (*Minister of the Civil Service, Labour, Youth and Sports, Mauritania*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! It is a great honour for me to take the floor in the name of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on the occasion of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I have the pleasure today of extending my congratulations to the President and to the members of the Bureau who have been elected so strongly at the head of this Conference, while wishing them every success in directing the work of the Conference.

I also have pleasure in congratulating the ILO Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for his efforts to improve the performance of the Organization in all areas in order to strengthen the base of fruitful partnership between the social partners.

In the Islamic Republic of Mauritania we attach special importance to all the issues concerning labour, which constitutes a very important pivot of our general policy, in keeping with the political will which was clearly set out by the President of the Republic, Moawiga Ould Sid Ahmad al-Tayeh. This policy focuses on the legislative area and support for employment and the quality of life and training.

In this regard, freedom of association has led to a climate favourable to the situation of workers and their participation in all areas of national activity.

In the area of development and improvement of labour legislation, the National Labour Council has ratified a bill concerning employment and labour which will shortly be adopted by the Government.

With regard to the improvement of working conditions, national development programmes for the eradication of poverty give priority to combating unemployment and to improving the standard of living of our workers.

Many job opportunities have been created in all sectors, and the Government has enacted a law to reduce income tax. This took effect at the beginning of the year and has had a beneficial effect for many families.

In view of the fact that the workers' situation is greatly affected by the level and quality of training, our programmes attach a special importance to training and retraining, by strengthening existing structures and spreading and improving vocational training so as to cover the entire country and satisfy the requirements of the job market.

In the area of social security, we reiterate our thanks to the ILO for the support it has been giving our country, reflected in particular in its financing of our strategic studies on social security.

My country enjoys freedom unprecedented in its history and major efforts are being made in this regard. We recently suffered an attempted coup against the Government, which failed thanks to our people which values legitimacy and the constitutional system.

Many difficulties lie ahead of our Organization, particularly in the circumstances surrounding globalization, but the partnership adopted by it as a strategic choice is such that it will continue to enable us to attain its noble objectives.

Original Russian: Mr. PAPIEV (*Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Ukraine*) — I would like to congratulate Mr. Wamalwa on his election as President of this session of the Conference. I am sure that under his guidance the Conference will fully be able to accomplish the tasks before it. I would also like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia for the Report he has presented to us, *Working out of poverty*.

The Government of Ukraine shares the basic thesis of the Report, that the fight against poverty and the promotion of social integration is not the job of just one country or one organization acting alone. The actions of governments, social partners and international organizations should all be designed to meet the aspirations and needs of women and men for freedom, decent work, justice and dignity.

Experience shows that the ILO seeks consistently to achieve these aims, and previous Director-General's Reports set out a multifaceted approach to guaranteeing decent work and reducing the decent work deficits; the Report presented to this session gives us a broad programme for the real elimination of poverty.

I would like to draw delegates' and participants' attention to the fact that the current coalition Government of Ukraine has defined its own objectives in terms which broadly correspond to the aims of the International Labour Organization. Ukraine for some years now has experienced economic growth and we have seen the first positive trends in the labour mar-

ket and in wages. As a result of the implementation of our strategy and general complex programme to eradicate poverty, we are experiencing a decrease in poverty indicators. During 2002, real incomes for citizens in the Ukraine went up by 17.8 per cent. Wages are going up in real and relative terms, and we are resolutely tackling the backlog of problems with regard to wage arrears, which we have experienced for some years now.

The Government has stated that sustainable economic growth should ensure a stable improvement in employment levels, wages and living conditions. The Government has set a course to take Ukraine into The European Union, and is acutely aware of its responsibility for social policy. This is why guaranteeing decent work is an essential part of our programme.

We are pleased to see, in this context, the multi-faceted cooperation between Ukraine and the ILO, which has become very dynamic and consistent. Within the framework of technical assistance, Ukraine is receiving tangible support from the ILO with regard to drafting a new labour code, ensuring freedom of association, strengthening tripartism and social dialogue, gender equality, the elimination of child labour and vocational training, particularly for the unemployed.

Active measures are being taken to create conditions that will encourage the direct participation by social partners in devising and implementing social and economic policies. In negotiations on a general agreement between the Government, trade unions and employers, more than 70 national trade unions are taking part. Of course, it is not easy to achieve an agreement between these partners, particularly on questions of standards and guarantees.

The Government of Ukraine fully supports the view expressed in the Director-General's Report, that one of the main ways of combating poverty is to get people into employment. We have established a legal framework for the regulation of the labour market and implementation of employment policy, and we are implementing a state employment programme. One of the priorities of this programme is to protect existing jobs and create new jobs in mining regions, in small, single industry towns and in depressed areas. In the period 2001-02, more than 1 million new jobs were created, and there is already a clear upward hand in the number of people in work and a decline in unemployment. In order to prevent the alienation of the disabled, we are actively introducing vocational rehabilitation and employment programmes.

In all these areas, the social partners place particular hope in the new ILO cooperation programme on "Decent work in the Ukraine", preparatory work on which was agreed during a recent meeting with Mr. Somavia.

I would like to touch on some other very important questions on the agenda of this session of the Conference. In the view of the Government of Ukraine, the discussion on occupational safety and health and is very timely. As we can see from a recent ILO report, health and safety at work is a global problem. The Government of Ukraine is taking this very seriously, and has included in its programme a special section devoted to safety and health. We supported the ILO initiative for a World Safety and Health day, which involved a week long review of the culture of health and safety at work. In supporting the ILO action plan, we hope to see more effective technical cooperation in

this sphere and a strengthening of the role in the tripartite structures.

The Government of Ukraine also agrees that there is a need for a new instrument which would enhance the security of seafarers' identification documents. However, we would like to emphasize that new international standards will be ineffective in enhancing shipping safety. If they are not ratified by the majority of the major seafaring States, including those that have not ratified Convention No. 108.

In supporting the ILO's Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05, which are based on an integrated approach to achieving its strategic objectives, we stress the importance of striking a balance between the various sources of funds for the ILO's activities with a view to preserving the Organization's independence.

In conclusion, I would like to wish this session of the Conference every success in its work.

Original Portuguese: Mr. CARVALHO DA SILVA (Workers' delegate, Portugal) — I congratulate Juan Somavia on his re-election as Director-General. It is currently fashionable to say that the society of the future will be an innovation and knowledge-based society.

Bearing in mind the ideas set out in the Director-General's Report, we believe that the society of the future, in which poverty shall be eradicated, must also be a society of values and, in particular, a society of solidarity, which, as we all know, is not created by market forces.

We have to affirm the value of collectivity, ethics and respect for commitments. It is simply impossible to set up processes of social dialogue and collective bargaining, without seriously supporting and upholding these values. How often have unions been called on to work hard towards reaching agreements, as we have done, for instance, in relation to employment policies, only for those agreements to be used for propaganda purposes once they are passed, either because employers or governments fail to demonstrate the necessary resolve towards their implementation.

Social rights are extremely important in efforts to eliminate poverty. They were acquired, particularly in the twentieth century, through intense social and political struggles. They include: employment rights, health provision, social security, universal justice and education systems, and so on. They have been taken up and supported by the ILO, the United Nations agency dealing with social and labour issues. Yet, despite being presented as lasting rights, protected by democratic regimes and the functioning of the welfare state, these rights are now being called into question as factors which aggravate poverty, while the dominant powers of the neo-liberal and increasingly war-like process of globalization try to convince us that they can be turned into simple market products.

Well, they cannot. We need to protect the role of the State and defend public services to protect social rights. The wave of privatization is gathering speed and the old argument that the private sector guarantees effective management has now been joined by the panacea of tackling the public deficit, as reasons given to undermine social rights.

For example, the European Union Stability Pact asserts the absolute primacy of economic and financial considerations, running counter to the notion of solidarity, and making it impossible to consider the

real needs of the economy of each country, hindering the creation of jobs and formation of structured development policies, which might be able to reduce inequalities, poverty and social exclusion.

At the same time, the discourse of innovation and knowledge, implicitly devalues the practical work carried out by workers every day, which must continue to be carried out, in order for us to have the essential goods that guarantee human survival and the consumer goods inherent in the lifestyle of developed societies.

We have to reaffirm the value of work and the right to work for both the young and the elderly, and to prevent early departure from the labour market. There is no doubt that it would be possible to create millions of jobs and to fight poverty, if we had higher levels of economic growth and fairer tax policies, if governments refused to hand over general employment and social policies, to the absolute diktat of financial and economic power, and looked for the origins of poverty, if there was an alternative use of wealth and a new conception of work in which, above all, it were seen as a socially useful human activity.

Problems relating to employment, productivity and competitiveness will not be resolved by deregulation of the labour market. The subversive and ultra-conservative idea that employers and workers, taken as individuals, are on an equal footing with regard to setting up and controlling the labour relationship, is destroying the essential balance of society.

How often would so many social injustices be resolved by simple respect for ILO standards? We must fight against job insecurity, for the following reasons: it breaks down the structure of the world of work in general; destabilizes the lives of people and disproportionately affects women and young people; it increases the power of employers and leads to increasingly unfair remuneration for work; it prevents the emergence of lifelong learning, which is a decisive factor for the creation of lasting jobs with social rights and for increasing productivity; and it hinders the enjoyment of workers' rights, destroying the basic foundations of a democratic framework for labour relationships. We need not only a community of nations, but a community of equal, fully sovereign States, with functioning supranational structures, such as the United Nations, to pave the way to a more just society, in which development might prosper, jobs might be created, rights and justice might be established and poverty eliminated.

As the Director-General said, we are witnessing complex processes of globalization which we have to analyse and find a suitable response to. But the organization of human societies and responses to the basic problems of individuals are, and will continue to be found, above all, on specific matters at a local level, because it is there that individuals undergo the process of socialization, organize their personal and family lives, find and organize employment, and create opportunities for involvement in civil life and local development processes.

Original French: Mr. OULAYE (*Minister of Public Service and Employment, Côte d'Ivoire*) — I should like, on behalf of His Excellency Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and on my own behalf, to express my gratitude for this opportunity to address the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. I also extend my warm congratu-

lations to Mr. Michael Christopher Wamalwa, Vice-President of Kenya, for his unanimous election to the presidency of this session of the Conference and to the Vice-Presidents. I am also honoured to pay special tribute to Juan Somavia, Director-General of ILO, on his re-election as head of our Organization and for the quality of the Report that he has submitted to us, *Working out of poverty*. I would like to thank the Director-General for everything he is doing for Africa.

We share with the Director-General the belief that poverty is a threat to the prosperity of all, that we must ensure decent work for all because work is the best way out of poverty. Allow me to quote from one paragraph of the Report. "The cost of youth unemployment to economic and social development is extremely high. It perpetuates the inter-generational cycle of poverty and is associated with high levels of crime, violence, substance abuse and the rise of political extremism. In some countries virtually the only paid occupation open to many young men is to join the various armed groups involved in civil conflict."

The recent painful history of my country confirms these words. On the night of 18-19 September, Côte d'Ivoire was attacked by a band of armed rebels. The war, which has been going on now for eight months, has seriously jeopardized the country's economy. It has put paid to the hopes we had of a 3 per cent growth rate by the end of 2002, which would have enabled Côte d'Ivoire once again to venture forth on the path of expansion and economic development.

The consequences of this war on the world of work are manifold. First of all, we have witnessed a drop in activity in the government-controlled productive sector of between 30 and 80 per cent, sometimes even as much as 100 per cent for those businesses that have purely and simply closed or relocated. Second, we have seen the temporary laying off of more than 10,000 workers and permanent lay-offs involving about 3,000 others. We have seen the closure of production units and businesses in rebel-occupied zones, which has put people out of work, and the destruction of farms. Many young people have been conscripted by armed groups and pose a threat to the country's stability and social peace.

If we look at the situation closely, it would appear that this war is nothing but a war of the poor, which was made possible by the fact that many young people were unemployed and provided a ready source of recruits for the fighters. Before the war, about 3 million people were in difficulty with regard to employment. That number has increased today by tens of thousands because of the many people who have lost their employment through the war.

Since conflicts emerge where unemployment and poverty are rampant, Côte d'Ivoire has established an emergency plan for employment. First of all, we want to reintegrate socially people who have joined the ranks of the fighters in order to give them incentives for renouncing arms definitively. The plan also involves social reintegration of those of our citizens who have lost their jobs because of the war, to prevent them from swelling the ranks of the indigent, a potential source of social problems. Another aspect is the integration of young people still waiting to take up a first job.

The implementation of the emergency plan will help not only the populations concerned to work their way out of poverty, but will also enable us to create conditions for lasting peace. Côte d'Ivoire therefore

wishes to thank the ILO and, in particular, the Director-General, for unflagging support they have given us at a difficult time.

Côte d'Ivoire seeks the assistance of the ILO and the international community in implementing the emergency plan, which is intended to create jobs and combat poverty. We also seek assistance for the rest of the subregion which has been destabilized over a period of 20 years by conflicts fostered by rebels without productive work, for whom a genuine programme of social integration at the subregional level must be implemented if peace is to be assured.

Original Portuguese: Mr. WAGNER (*Minister of Labour and Employment, Brazil*) — I am very pleased to be here in my capacity as Minister of Labour of the Government of President Lula da Silva, which, on 1 January this year, began a new phase in the history of our country.

We welcome the Report of the Director-General, *Working out of poverty*, which, like the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which guides the labour policy of our Government, emphasizes that, in the fight against poverty, it is not enough to stimulate job creation, but rather it is essential to generate decent work. This is the focus of labour activities carried out by the Government of Brazil. As well as the emergency activities designed for the neediest sectors of society, we are trying to establish a new pattern of labour relationships and new institutional structures at the national and international levels to provide for economic growth, based on justice and social inclusion.

Therefore we emphasize policies to attract productive investment and to mobilize pension funds on an ethically-sound platform, to create income, decent work and sustainable development. The aim is to ensure the inclusion of large sectors of the population in civic life, and to guarantee work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, dignity, and fair pay. The present Government has reiterated that sustainable development and economic stability have to be pursued simultaneously. As President Lula said himself, on 2 June at a special session of the Conference, there is no economic sustainability without social sustainability. On 1 January of this year, this Government began work on the principle that, while monetary stability cannot be ignored, for it will be necessary in facing up to the severe economic and financial crisis that we have inherited, monetary stability is not an end in itself, but a means for achieving a social development agenda. With regard to the world of work the coordination of initiatives on various fronts will allow for the creation of synergies in the new economic drive. The first initiative involves directing public financing towards sustainable growth and development. To that end, we will endeavour to ensure that public incentives, especially from the Works' Protection Fund, are especially targeted toward sectors with the greatest job creation potential. There is also a comprehensive support scheme for small and medium-sized enterprises, consisting of productive structures designed to support export diversification, dynamism in domestic markets, job creation and income generation.

The second initiative by the new Government of Brazil consists of fostering job creation for young people. The aim is to provide this section of the population — which has suffered more than others from

unemployment and informal labour — with greater access to the labour market. If we can deal with this part of the population, we will be addressing a large proportion of the unemployed people in our country. Besides the policy interventions connected to employment, there are also components linked to culture, education and social welfare. There are a whole series of structural policies, including loans for addressing the needs of new businesses.

The third government initiative consists of an effort to enhance social dialogue through the reform of labour and union laws. This process will be led by the National Labour Forum supported by our Government, on the basis of tripartism, which is so important to this Organization. Within the scope of this programme, we will be working on a technical co-operation programme with the ILO on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding signed here on 2 June. I should also refer to initiatives concerning the promotion of a so-called economy of solidarity. The aim is to coordinate the creation and increased accessibility of jobs and income through autonomous enterprises, organized on a collective, participatory basis. Furthermore, this will be accompanied by the introduction of micro-finance policies, acting as a stimulus for credit cooperatives, together with financing of the so-called popular economy, supported by various areas of the government and social sectors. All of these initiatives would be insufficient without increased support for our basic task of providing workers with protection and assistance. It is important here to mention the work of labour inspectorates in efforts to combat slave labour or degrading labour, child labour and the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

I would like now to refer to the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which highlights the elimination of discrimination in the workplace as a key step towards protecting human dignity and individual liberties, social cohesion and justice, and ensuring that these concepts become more than simple statements of intent. I have to say that the Brazilian Government attaches prime importance to compliance with ILO standards, and Brazil is among the member States which have ratified and applied most Conventions. The Ministry of Labour and Employment, through 74 regional centres for promoting equality and combating discrimination, is working on a specific programme to implement the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), with a view to making society aware of discriminatory practices and how to fight them, in partnership with civil society and other organs of the Government.

In general we can say that in the twenty-first century we are witnessing the exhaustion of a model in which the economy is not seen as a tool for social development. Recession, unemployment, the concentration of income and an unrestricted expansion of non-productive capital have emerged on a frightening scale all over the world. Financial speculation, free of any ethical paradigm, becomes a self-perpetuating discourse, justifying itself through the logic of rapid profits. This is a situation which needs to be turned around, particularly because much of these resources come from pension funds maintained by workers and therefore cannot continue to be used in a socially irre-

sponsible way. Brazil, as President Lula said, does not just come to international forums to complain. We are here to propose a discussion of a new model of relationship and partnership between countries. We are guided by the ethic of decent work and our challenge now, within a stimulating tripartite vision, is to make progress by turning globalization in a new direction, which will depart from a different economic paradigm and be able to promote real prosperity in our societies.

Interpretation from Arabic: Mr. AL-THANI (*Minister of Civil Service Affairs and Housing, Qatar, speaking on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! It is my pleasure to address the President on behalf of the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs of the six countries of the GCC: the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, to congratulate him on his election. We are certain that his wisdom and skill will enable us to come to bring this meeting to a successful conclusion. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Governing Body and to the Director-General, whom I congratulate on the renewal of his mandate. I highly appreciate the basic role that he has played over the past years which have witnessed numerous activities carried out with dynamism, thanks to the expansion of dialogue and the interaction of the constituents, on one hand, and the Organization on the other. The Director-General has always wanted to promote the role of this Organization, to enable it to attain its objectives.

The choice of the subject of the report, *Working out of poverty*, is really most successful. This is an attempt to give support to the vulnerable populations that suffer from poverty and discrimination and are deprived of decent work. The ideas contained in the Report are excellent, especially with regard to the improvement of cooperation between the social partners and in the international community, in order to alleviate human suffering, poverty, social exclusion, and to create jobs, while at the same time implementing national plans for decent work, not forgetting social protection, the promotion of policies aimed at creating equal opportunities in order to guarantee freedom of work in a context of equality, security and dignity. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council have made one of their priorities ensuring a good standard of living, social and medical protection and equal opportunities. They have also worked for the improvement of the situation of women on the job market and for equal opportunities for men and women. They have also exerted great efforts to improve growth rates by putting in place highly ambitious human development plans in which everyone has a role to play and where social dialogue and efficient interaction between the social partners also have their role. Thus the countries of the GCC have tried to establish ambitious programmes in order to guarantee education and high-level effective training for improving standards of living and levels of income.

We welcome the contents of the annual Report, on the follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Report praised achievements and developments noted in the GCC countries with regard to the development of labour legislation, particularly workers' representation mechanisms. It should be noted here that the GCC countries are making huge efforts in order to achieve better results in this regard.

The United Arab Emirates has passed a law permitting the creation of workers' associations. In 2002, Bahrain enacted a law on trade unions, and trade unions have indeed been established. The Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions is represented at this Conference. Saudi Arabia has taken the necessary measures to implement the decisions of the Council of Ministers with regard to the establishment of committees in businesses and enterprises. Some of these are already operating, and the Consultative Council is studying the possibility of adopting a new labour code that is in accordance with labour practices at the international level. The Sultanate of Oman issued a Sultan Decree in 2003 on a new labour law that ensures stability for the social partners. It embodies workers' representation mechanisms in accordance with the relevant international conventions.

A fundamental change has taken place in Qatar, where a permanent constitution has been adopted, following a referendum. The Constitution affirms the need for a balance between workers and employers based on social justice. It established an elected legislative assembly where women enjoy the right to vote and to be elected, on an equal footing with men. The new labour law is in the process of being completed. It includes a chapter on workers' organizations and on arbitration and mediation committees.

I would also like to recall that a woman in Qatar has been appointed Minister for Education, and a new law on the creation of a human rights commission has been enacted in that country and that body has already started to function.

Kuwait has made progress with regard to the implementation of Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), with the adoption of law 11 of 2003 on workers' rights in the public sector and in the petroleum sector, who will enjoy the same rights of association as their counterparts in the private sector. The GCC countries have also developed and updated legislation in other areas such as insurance, social work and pensions, in order to protect the worker throughout his life, not forgetting social security laws, which provide help and assistance to the most disadvantaged segments of the population, thereby improving standards of living and ensuring a dignified life for all.

We are convinced of the importance of improving opportunities for the GCC countries to benefit from the ILO's technical assistance programmes, and to develop the role of the agencies concerned until the follow-up and implementation of those programmes. We wish to pursue our coordination and cooperation with the Organization in order to develop a specific programme for technical assistance responding to the requirements of the GCC countries. At the same time, we appreciate the support given by the Organization to our countries over the last two years in the context of bilateral cooperation and in joint activities between the Organization and the GCC. I also particularly praise the efforts of the ILO Regional Office in Beirut. That Regional Office has played an important role in following up the implementation of technical assistance programmes aimed at improving the labour market in Palestine.

I would also like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia who has prepared a special report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. I also welcome his decision to allocate over \$1 million from the surplus of the previous budget to a Palestinian Labour and Social Protection Fund.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the countries of the GCC are convinced of the need to support the future projects and plans of the ILO. Those projects are in the context of strategic objectives which we are attempting to attain, on the path of justice, equality, progress and the reinforcement of the basic freedoms and right to work and to life.

Original French: Ms. SASSO MAZZUFFERI (*Employers' delegate, Italy*) — Allow me first to congratulate the President very warmly on his election, and to offer him my sincere good wishes for his work at the Conference.

The Director-General's Report has drawn our attention to the link between decent work, poverty reduction, and development. Mr Somavia and his team should be congratulated for having emphasized the three keys required for a substantial improvement in the social situation of our countries.

Allow me to place these elements in a different order. In my opinion development is the factor that should come first. Only with development, will it be possible initially to find a job that might, given appropriate training, become a decent job. This is one of the ways of achieving poverty reduction. In this context, Italian employers, both nationally and internationally, have undertaken initiatives to reaffirm the key role of social responsibility towards job creation.

The social responsibility of enterprises must be seen within the broader context of the United Nations Global Compact. A project has been set up with the cooperation of two minister, social partners from other institutions and companies, including small and medium-sized companies which are numerous and perform well in Italy.

As a result of the activities to implement the Global Compact, carried out, not only within our own country, but also in the countries which enjoy Italian cooperation and development, under the aegis of the ILO which is the executing agency, enterprises will be able to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the importance of respecting the ILO principles and the values of solidarity in social development which can prove to be positive for economic growth as well for the companies concerned.

The second factor, which strengthens the capacity for developing employment in harmony with the fundamental principles of the ILO, is the law which was recently adopted by the Italian Parliament on modernization and flexibility in the labour market. The aim of this reform, which has been long awaited by employers, is to achieve the objective of employability in order, *inter alia*, to promote the integration into the workforce of people who are otherwise at risk of social exclusion by ensuring them a regular job. These new opportunities will be best used by employers and workers.

I would like to make one or two points about the agenda of our Conference. The results expected on health and safety at work and on the development of human resources will allow us to modernize these areas, which are also crucially important for employers. The human resources training centre of the ILO in Turin will be involved in the preparation of the new instrument. It will offer the benefit of its experience, and by accepting competition in open markets, will demonstrate very positive results. I offer my compliments to the Director-General and his team for the success that they have achieved.

In this context the changes that have been made in terms of promoting these activities amongst employers have rapidly started to bear fruit and have contributed towards meeting the most urgent needs. These efforts deserve increased support.

The discussion on discrimination will help tripartite members of the ILO to step up the improvements needed at the national level for the genuine application of the principles of our Organization in this area.

Finally, one last comment concerning the Credentials Committee, which is a fundamental element, not only for the smooth functioning of our Conference, but also for the true respect for the freedom and autonomy of social partners when delegates and technical advisers are appointed to the Conference.

Personally, I attach great value to reaffirming a truly tripartite approach in this field. I sincerely hope that, through the ability, experience and devotion of the ILO officials who are studying the proposals to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their committees, we will quickly arrive at a broadly accepted solution to the problems as they arise and which sometimes make it difficult to implement the ILO principles on which the decisions of the committee are based.

Ms. WILSON (*Minister of Labour, New Zealand*) — I warmly welcome the re-election of our distinguished Director-General. As a deputy member of the Governing Body since the Director-General's appointment, the New Zealand Government has been committed to providing support and guidance to him in his efforts to reform and revitalize the ILO.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the Director-General through his second term as he seeks to further operationalize decent work at national and local levels.

My Government is committed to ensuring that the conditions of decent work that the ILO has articulated over the past three years are available to all New Zealanders. In this context, I am delighted to announce that New Zealand has now ratified the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), which is an ILO core Convention. The relationship with trade unions and employer organizations in New Zealand is a valued partnership and my Government supports the right of workers to achieve decent work outcomes and raise issues of concern through collective activity.

This brings me to the Report that we are here to discuss today, *Working out of poverty*, which provides a practical, operational review of ILO activity in the area of poverty reduction and eradication. The terrible toll that poverty is taking in the modern world is starkly revealed in the Report. I commend the Director-General for showing with such clarity the complexity of issues surrounding poverty and the centrality of decent work to any solutions.

My Government is proactively working with New Zealand communities to combat poverty and has identified decent work as a key means of achieving this goal.

The New Zealand Department of Labour, for example, through its Community Employment Group, works to achieve social and economic prosperity through local employment and enterprise development. Innovative schemes include the community enterprise organization initiative, which has allowed 60 to 70 communities throughout New Zealand to de-

velop community enterprise initiatives during the past three years.

The New Zealand Government is committed to poverty eradication not only at home but also, more broadly, with the particular commitment to working with our neighbours in the Pacific. The mission of the New Zealand Agency for International Development is to eliminate poverty through the effective development partnerships with a vision to achieving a safe and just world free of poverty.

Much of New Zealand's assistance is channelled into education and training programmes aimed at giving individuals the opportunity to achieve decent work, with the ultimate objective of poverty eradication.

It is heartening to note that *Working out of poverty* appears to be building on the initiatives that came out of the Thirteenth Asian Regional Meeting, in which I was involved. One of the outcomes of the Regional Meeting was a proposal for the development of national plans of action for decent work. My Government is currently working on such a plan for New Zealand. This plan overlaps, and is consistent with, our National Plan of Action for Human Rights in New Zealand, which is an outcome of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993.

My Government is also pleased by the support that the 286th Session of the Governing Body has given to these plans, through approving funding for an ILO South-East Asian Subregional Tripartite Forum on Decent Work. The New Zealand Government has agreed to host this Forum in October this year. The Forum is about taking forward the vision of decent work through sharing practical strategies to achieve decent work on a country-by-country basis.

In conclusion, the New Zealand Government endorses the connection drawn in *Working out of poverty* between achieving decent work and the eradication of poverty. We support the Director-General's vision of practical, local and national agendas of activity to eradicate poverty. We commend the Director-General and the ILO for the ongoing global programmes of activity aimed at achieving decent work and poverty eradication.

Original Spanish: Mr. JIMÉNEZ AGUILAR (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, Spain*) — First of all allow me to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their election to conduct the work of this Conference.

This year, the Director-General's Report focuses on the eradication of poverty throughout the world. This is an objective on which there must be resolute commitment from developed nations.

When confronted with those pessimists who regard the rules of the market and economic integration as an obstacle to a country's development, it is necessary to stress the importance of the entrepreneurial spirit if we are to achieve socio-economic progress and eradicate poverty.

Efforts are needed if progress is to be made towards the creation of wealth and well-being, and policies to that end must be adopted.

The ILO can foster changes which remove barriers to this process without departing from its mandate which is closely linked with the world of work, and in coordination with other elements of the UN system.

An important contribution would be to shift from an excessive emphasis on standard setting towards

international support, assistance and cooperation that would promote development more effectively.

Certain countries know the high price that has to be paid for not facing up in time to foreseeable changes. Time waits for no one and a belated response is a bad response.

It is therefore necessary to identify and remove obstacles that hamper a favourable climate for investment and progress. We support the two-pronged Global Employment Agenda aimed at creating and expanding SMEs, as well as generating productive employment.

The Spanish employers' organizations wish to draw attention to the timeliness of the mandate that the Director-General received three years ago to renew this Organization and its activities. We appreciate the efforts made to adapt it to new challenges.

Unavoidably, one of the subjects that is being dealt with this year is working relations. The Report sets out to deal with new elements which are changing these relations. Although grappling with novel situations is praiseworthy, it is of little use unless they are analysed from a realistic perspective that takes due account of the diversity of a labour world which is ill-suited to old unifying rules. If societies are to progress, a sense of perspective is needed when facing the future.

The labour world has two priority issues that are closely connected and which need medium and long-term vision. I am referring to job creation, especially for young people, and social protection. We agree with the Director-General with regard to these objectives and I reiterate the commitment of Spanish companies to this strategy at national level and also through experiments that Spanish companies could carry out in the field of international cooperation programmes.

Possibly, one example of this is a project to promote the employment of young people in Latin America, which the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations along with the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and a number of major Spanish businesses and companies wish to launch in the next few months.

The other subject to which I referred is social protection and this is being dealt with, inter alia, in the framework of social dialogue between the Government and trade union and business organizations. We will have to devote much of our attention to this over the next few months.

Our experience in social dialogue which goes back more than 20 years is an asset which, once again, we place at the disposal of those countries which still do not have an appropriate framework for this.

Lastly, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Director-General for his re-election for a new term of office which will doubtlessly enable him to make the changes which this Organization needs, on the basis of its tripartite structure, the characteristic in which its strength is rooted.

Mr. BEETS (*Government delegate, Netherlands*) — I have the honour of delivering this speech on behalf of the Netherlands Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Mr. De Geus, who is, unfortunately, unable to attend this important meeting because of Cabinet meetings to prepare for the new Government's policy programme in Parliament this week.

On his behalf I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General, Juan Somavia, on his re-election and to wish him every success in his coming term of office, because there is still a lot of work to be done, as his Report *Working out of poverty* concludes.

A number of negative effects of globalization are increasingly manifest. In a great number of countries unemployment is soaring. Many people are threatened with a possible loss of income. This makes this year's Report extremely topical. I read the Report of the Director-General with great interest and fully endorse his analysis and conclusions. The effects of poverty are compellingly conveyed. Very rightly the Report establishes a link between the Decent Work Agenda and the eradication of poverty. The four major themes of decent work — employment, rights, protection and dialogue — are essential requirements which must be met. Social and economic policy must reinforce each other. But more is needed. The ILO stands for a just and social society. This means that the fundamental labour rights as laid down in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work must be the subject of our unfailing attention. Our aim must be the worldwide observance of the fundamental labour Conventions: freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. We, the member States, have committed ourselves to this. It is our obligation to live up to these principles.

These fundamental principles, in conjunction with the concept of decent work, should form the basis for social progress and the eradication of poverty, and this in the context of globalization. It is the exclusive responsibility of the ILO to monitor global compliance with these fundamental labour standards. This, the Netherlands fully endorses. The ILO takes seriously the task of defending fundamental labour rights at all times and in all places. The Organization will have to raise its voice whenever fundamental labour standards are trampled upon. I am thinking of Myanmar, Venezuela and Colombia where, inter alia, trade union rights are violated. The ILO is the sole global-level organization where employers, workers and government are proportionally represented. Because of this, the ILO is in a unique position to give form and content to social dialogue in the world. If we use this position as we should, the ILO will remain an excellent platform, along with the IMF, the World Bank and the OECD, for discussing the international socio-economic order.

Poverty eradication, too, is an issue where cooperation is of paramount importance. The plea in *Working out of poverty* that we need a decisive tripartite commitment to the eradication of poverty is a notion I cannot but fully support.

In short, the strategy to overcome poverty involves more than merely increasing incomes. It is about rights, dignity and a voice. Solidarity is important too. I read with great interest in the Report of the Director-General about the Global Social Trust initiative. The basic idea behind it is to request people in richer countries to contribute on a voluntary basis a modest monthly amount to a Global Social Trust. These resources will then be used to build up basic social protection schemes in developing countries. I am willing

to consider requests to support the further development of this initiative.

In this context of rights, dignity, giving a voice and solidarity, I also eagerly await the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. I trust that the Commission's ideas will challenge us to deal with poverty in the world in a sensible and effective manner. Mahatma Gandhi called poverty the worst form of pollution. Let us, just as he did, try to make the world a little bit cleaner.

Mr. POMERANTS (*Minister for Social Affairs, Estonia*) — I would like to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents on their election at this session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to thank the Director-General for the Report, *Working out of poverty*. However, it is not a new challenge to try to legislate employment in, and poverty out.

The complex view of poverty reflects a new concept. It is certainly not easy to put under one label all the elements that together make up the phenomenon of poverty. I think that the efforts made to pinpoint the key elements of poverty have been very successful. This has led to the creation of a highly operational concept that will form a strong foundation for future work to create the direct link between decent work and poverty eradication for all people, all over the world.

The lack of work is undoubtedly one of the main risks of poverty and social exclusion. The majority of jobs in many countries are in small and medium-sized enterprises that thus thereby contribute to the development of an inclusive society. So we could say that one of the key points in fighting poverty effectively is raising the social awareness of people running small and medium-sized enterprises. Nonetheless, governments have a major role in business development and job creation. Economists who believe strongly in the market often repeat that governments do not really create permanent, sustainable, productive jobs. They claim that in a market economy only the private sector can do that.

Small and medium-sized businesses play an important role in Estonia's balanced development. They can react quickly to economic changes and increase the flexibility of the economy, which in a small state like Estonia is needed for sustainable development. In 2000, 51 per cent of all employed persons were working in SMEs, and this percentage is on the increase. SMEs are also seen as an efficient tool for providing self-fulfilment and thereby increasing local welfare in less-developed regions of Estonia. At the same time, owing to their size, small and medium-sized businesses are more vulnerable to a number of economic problems, for example, the lack of a qualified labour force.

Owing to the potential of SMEs, various different government bodies of Estonia have combined efforts in promoting their activities and a special enterprise policy strategy, "Enterprising Estonia", was worked out in 2002. During the last couple of years many activities have been launched under the strategy for entrepreneurship. Labour market training has been performed with the aim of developing the potential human resources of SMEs. Special start-up subsidies for opening businesses and business-supporting infrastructures are offered by the National Employment Office.

Furthermore, since 2001, unemployed persons interested in becoming self-employed or starting up their own business have had the possibility of applying for a special subsidy and receiving special training on how to start up a business. In upcoming years, more attention needs to be paid to the regional aspect of entrepreneurship promotion.

It should also be admitted that Estonian enterprise associations are still quite small and financially weak. The major systematic tool for social dialogue between the Government and entrepreneurs has been the SME Advisory Council. Currently, the Estonian Association of SMEs (EVEA), with 500 members, is the only organization which represents SMEs exclusively. The challenge is to promote social dialogue between the Government, workers, employers and relevant civic organizations to improve job quality. Many small enterprises are often excluded from participating in such activities.

I believe that achieving the goal of working out of poverty requires hard work from all of us. It will, however, take time and entail tough decisions involving a consensus approach by governments, employers and workers. The Government of Estonia and the social partners reaffirm their commitment to the efforts undertaken in this regard at this forum and look forward to their continued participation and contribution in the fulfilment of this common goal.

Original French: Mr. BRIESCH (representative of the European Economic and Social Committee, European Union) — Like the previous speakers, let me congratulate the President on his election and also thank the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, for the invitation that he addressed to the European Economic and Social Committee and I would also congratulate him for his remarkable leadership of the institution.

It is a great honour for me to be able to speak to you today, as President of the European Economic and Social Committee. I am very familiar with these surroundings, because some years ago I was sitting alongside you as a French trade union representative and a member of the Governing Body of the ILO.

The European Economic and Social Committee was set up by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and it is a consultative body of the European Union. The Treaty of Nice, signed in February 2001, defines it as the forum for representation of the different economic and social components of organized civil society.

In fact, the Committee takes part in the decision-making process of the European Union. Between the European administration, which is the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, it is an assembly of players on the economic and social stage and it is a special place for representation, information and expression of views by the organizations representing civil society in the Member States. The members of the Committee are an integral part of the process of designing policies and drafting decisions at the European level.

Our activities and our involvement in the field and our concerns, mean that we are very close to the ILO. In fact, we have worked, and will continue to work, on many of the subjects that are on the agenda of the Conference — protection of workers in precarious situations, poverty, non-discrimination and all the subjects in which the ILO is involved and on which we have had an in-depth exchange of views with the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, when he visited us in Brussels.

This convergence and complementarity's are very clearly illustrated in the work that we have done on the social dimension of globalization and human rights at work. On this question, at the request of the European Commission, we entered into a discussion with our counterparts and third country partners with whom we have regular links, partner countries in the Mediterranean, in Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and in Asia, the United States, etc. We have carried out this work in association with the ILO and the members of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. My friend, Lord Brett, and various other individuals from the ILO have participated in the Conference that we organized on this topic in December last, in Brussels.

This Conference agreed on the role to be played by the ILO and we have noted progress made with respect to the universality of standards, monitoring and follow-up. A consensus was also reached on the need to continue along these tracks, in particular to give greater weight to the ILO's control mechanism, to set up a public system of recognition for respect of the fundamental Conventions of the ILO and to give increased support to the technical assistance activities of the ILO.

We, and I personally, have stressed this in the Convention which is working on the proposal for a new constitution for the European Union, in order to ensure that it makes reference to the work of the ILO in all these respects. This complementarity's between our two institutions, can also be found in the activities that we carry out in developing countries to promote dialogue between the different representatives of organized civil society and to strengthen the consultative structures of these countries. This move aimed at developing a model for pluralist and participative democracy in our partner countries, is well within the lines of cooperation work carried out by the ILO.

The activities of the European Economic and Social Committee aim to promote sustainable and socially responsible growth. It is through dialogue and exchange and seeking better mutual understanding that we will find a model for socially responsible growth.

This is also your job, as a true international labour parliament. I was talking to the Deputy Director-General, Mr. Kari Tapiola, about this very subject today. In this spirit we need to develop a structured, closer cooperation between our two institutions in the many areas that are of mutual interest.

In particular, we have a common interest in developing our relations with the World Trade Organization. To my mind, the ILO should strengthen its presence, its involvement, and its proposals in the work of the WTO, particularly by acquiring official status as a permanent observer.

The European Economic and Social Committee proposes in this respect, on the basis of relations established with the representatives of organized civil society from all the regions of the world, to make these organizations able to express their views within the WTO.

Ms. NALUMANGO (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Zambia) — I wish to thank the President for according me this momentous opportunity to address this 91st Session of the Conference. On behalf of the Zambian delegation to this great Conference and indeed on my own behalf, I convey warm and hearty

congratulations to the President on his being unanimously elected to preside over the business of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia on his recent re-election for another term of office of five years as Director-General of the International Labour Organization. Following this development, I have no doubt in my mind that the ILO will continue to grow from strength to strength and forge ahead in executing its activities in a most effective manner under his able leadership.

I would like to assure the Director-General that the Zambian Government and people stand ready to cooperate and work in partnership with the ILO to implement the various programmes and projects that have been signed and are currently taking place in the country. We indeed cherish such projects as Jobs in Africa, those on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and HIV/AIDS, and the new project called ILO/SLASA, which is aimed at strengthening labour administration in southern Africa and covers four countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia, from Lusaka.

Please allow me to pay tribute to the ILO for organizing and hosting this important Conference that gives member States the chance to discuss the Director-General's rich Report and a wide range of other significant issues incidental to the Report. No doubt, the member States, when discussing the vexing issues, will focus their attention primarily on finding solutions to the problems at hand.

Admittedly, there are numerous problems affecting the world of work today, in particular, and the development process at global, regional and national levels in general. These problems by far outweigh the capacity of the majority of member States to resolve them using their own resources. It is in such dire need and deserving situations that the assistance of the ILO is genuinely sought.

It is Zambia's desire that the deliberations of the Conference will, as expected, be successful. This is important because we should aim at coming up with tangible results from here on issues of common interest. The people that we represent, particularly in developing countries like mine, are looking forward to seeing some improvement in their living standards.

It is disheartening that quite a number of the ILO member States in the developing world, including Zambia, continues to this day, to wage what appears to be a losing battle against the twin problems of unemployment and poverty. In my country, it is evident that the poor performance of the economy, coupled with the ongoing social and economic reforms such as privatization, has led to a sharp fall in the demand for both skilled and unskilled labour, particularly among the youth and women.

In this regard, I wish to make a passionate appeal that, within the broad framework of the decent work agenda, the ILO should consider directing the best parts of its technical assistance to projects and programmes that are aimed at promoting employment creation. Member States should be encouraged to allocate more resources to the line Ministries of Labour to enhance their capacity building so as to enable them to coordinate effectively all employment-related programmes and activities that are scattered throughout the various ministries.

It is important that there is this coherence, given the gravity of the high levels of unemployment and

poverty in some of the countries represented here. It is rather difficult to reduce poverty while unemployment has reached alarming proportions. The question is: what shall we do from here?

The ILO should act decisively to support the efforts of member States that are determined to embark on serious job creation programmes as an effective means of eradicating poverty. I recall what the Director-General said two years ago at the third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels, Belgium, in May 2001, and I quote: "Employment ... is a route out of poverty for women and men and their families everywhere". On the premise of these wise words of great encouragement, it is my candid prayer that the ILO will continue to play an active role in sensitizing and urging governments of member States to put employment at the top of their development agendas.

I want to inform you that Zambia is among the countries that have shown unquestionable commitment to the vigorous implementation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank economic reforms. This programme has led to a situation whereby there is a shift of over 80 per cent of the country's economic activities reverting to private hands.

Although the move is well intended to resuscitate the economy, the short-term result has been rather discouraging in that the labour market has experienced a lot of job losses and other problems that have made it necessary for a labour law review exercise to be undertaken, to make the legislation compatible with liberalization.

Declining coverage of occupational safety and health services owing to closure of some companies and diminishing respect for workers' fundamental human rights at places of work by private sector employers are some of the challenges that Zambia has experienced as she forges ahead to implement the reform programme. It is therefore my desire and hope that at a forum such as this one delegates can share varied experiences on how to deal with some of the pertinent issues like the one to which I have alluded.

Child labour is a fast growing problem that has reached a very high level of incidence in Zambia, as a result of the many children orphaned because of HIV/AIDS pandemic. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is not only resulting in increased child labour, but it is also seriously and negatively affecting the Zambian labour market. This scourge is killing the most economically active segment of the population, thereby further threatening the collapse of national development programmes.

In order to combat this disease effectively, the Government has established an HIV/AIDS National Council with a full time secretariat to coordinate all intervention measures. A strategic framework which stipulates all activities and budgetary requirements is already in place. It is my expectation that the ILO, as a cooperating partner, will continue to augment my Government's efforts in this regard.

In conclusion, I wish this session of the Conference every success in its deliberation. God bless you all.

Ms. LESKAJ (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Albania*) — I would like to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents who have been elected to guide the workings of this session of the Conference. I also congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia for

his work and achievements as Director-General of the ILO.

I appreciate the importance which this session of the Conferences attributes to decent work and to its human and social dimension. Attempts to provide decent work for every member of society are an aspect of fundamental human rights in the field of labour.

Bringing its legislation into line with international standards is one of the priority goals of the Albanian Government in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration. During the last two years Albania has ratified a number of international instruments, including the European Social Charter (Revised), and ILO Conventions Nos. 182, 183, 26, 95, 131, 173, 174 and 176.

A number of other Conventions are scheduled for ratification in the areas of employment and occupational safety and health.

I would like to emphasize the importance of ratifying the European Social Charter (a revised version) as a fundamental document in the field of social and economic human rights.

The Parliament of Albania is discussing amendments to the Labour Code with the assistance of ILO experts and in collaboration with the social partners. Amendments concern responsibility for the protection of workers' rights, especially those having to do with the working conditions, health and safety at work, prevention of discrimination, gender equality, the freedom and rights of trade unions and social dialogue. Particular attention is paid to the safety and protection of women and children.

In order to guarantee a sustainable economic development and poverty reduction, the Albanian Government has designed and is implementing the National Strategy of Social and Economic Development, as well as several sectoral strategies.

These strategies aim to reduce unemployment and informal employment, raise the quality of employment services, improve educational capacities and vocational training, promote business in order to create new jobs, and increase the quality of social services and client-centred social services. The National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labour, a fruitful example of cooperation between the Government, civil society and the social partners, has raised awareness and directed public attention towards the employment, exploitation and abuse of children, and has helped with national capacity building. We are now shifting attention away from figures towards individuals.

In order to strengthen current initiatives to improve working conditions, safety and health and quality of life, the Government intends to pursue its reforms of the social protection system by giving priority to active policies and services, as opposed to passive ones.

Attempts to guarantee decent work and living conditions to all workers are being made in close cooperation with the social partners. Improvements in labour legislation, social and economic development policies, labour conditions, and health and safety at work, are the priority objectives of this partnership. The social partners have actively participated in the preparation of national strategies, discussions on the issue of the poverty threshold, increases in wages and pensions, and improvements in the Labour Code.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the country's main trade unions is an indicator of the effectiveness of this cooperation. Our

aim is to further consolidate the institutions of partnership, to widen the scope of consultations, and improve the quality of participation.

Given the serious engagement of the ILO, judging by our experience so far and the positive effects that have been noted, continuation and further development of the ILO initiatives is of great interest and an important contribution to its regional and global dimension. I take this opportunity to confirm the will and full commitment of the Albanian Government to develop cooperation with the ILO with a view to improving conditions of work and quality of life of workers.

In conclusion, I wish this session of the Conference every success in its deliberations.

Original Portuguese: Ms. DJAU BALDÉ (Minister of Social Security, Employment, and Poverty Eradication, Guinea-Bissau) — It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this, the 91st Session of the Conference, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. First and foremost, I congratulate the President on his election, as well as the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, for the determination and consistency he has shown in enhancing the work of the Organization, thereby consolidating its position as one of the most valuable components of the United Nations system, and ensuring that issues such as the elimination of discrimination at work, the promotion of decent work, social justice and the elimination of child labour remain clearly in the spotlight of the global stage.

As Minister responsible for the Department dealing with many of these issues, I am also concerned with genuine and effective management, which requires workers' rights to remain in the forefront of our minds, even as we adjust to the needs of globalization throughout the world. This is particularly evident in the policy interventions that have been a constant feature of the new philosophy developed by the Government and steered by His Excellency, Dr. Koumba Yala, President of the Republic, in efforts to create the necessary conditions for maintaining the social peace and creating job opportunities for all in Guinea-Bissau.

Barring unforeseen problems, we do believe that, with the help of ongoing social dialogue, we will be able to achieve the objectives we — the Government and social partners — have set ourselves in our attempt to provide dignified working conditions for the people of Guinea-Bissau.

This type of social justice has enabled us to achieve positive recent results in our country, such as the signing of a joint agreement between the Government and the social partners, requesting emergency aid from our development partners and friends in order to cope with the situation currently facing the country. This is a very positive change, and is seen by the Government as a sign of how each of the partners has fully met their responsibilities in a modern, democratic society, based on the principle of free and unhindered negotiation.

Obviously, there are matters which cannot be resolved by a series of successive changes, for pressing matters may also arise that require immediate action. Therefore our efforts must be reasonably coordinated in order to respond to the challenges thrown up by society.

To this end, the Government and the social partners, in particular trade unions and employers'

organizations, have spent 20 days conducting a review of the general labour law. We believe that the inefficiency of this important instrument has been a major handicap for the development of our country, especially in view of the difficult times of recent years, caused by the politico-military war of 7 June 1998, which destroyed the fragile material foundations that had been built up, thanks to the support of our partners and friends.

Among the most serious problems in the post-conflict scenario, linked to the socio-labour situation, which have hindered efforts to escape from crisis are: the destruction of various public and private infrastructures, the virtual paralysis of our private sector, the contribution of which is essential for building up the public treasury, and so on.

Consequently, Guinea-Bissau can achieve significant results in the short term, provided it receives financial support for the activities such as in the cashew sector, where, according to the data available, the country produces approximately 90,000 tonnes of cashew nuts per year, almost entirely exported raw. If we were able to set up just a few processing plants for this product, we would be able to create significant numbers of jobs, bringing many other benefits.

With regard to the ILO core Conventions signed by our country, I would point out that they have been adopted by the National Assembly. Following this meeting, each of us will undoubtedly go away with the desire to redouble our efforts to ensure that our administrations become increasingly decisive instruments for the promotion and guarantee of full respect for human dignity and serve as firm supports for democracy, helping to achieve progress and welfare in our respective societies.

Before I conclude, I should like to take the opportunity of thanking the ILO, and particularly its Regional Office in Dakar, which has supported us through various activities, such as designing two major instruments, namely the documents concerning employment policy and the cooperative framework in Guinea-Bissau, which have now been approved by our Government. At the initiative of the President, elections shall be carried out in accordance with the law.

Original French: Mr. KASSEY (Minister of Public Services and Labour, Niger) — It is a great pleasure for me to take the floor at this rostrum to make Niger's contribution to the discussion on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General of the ILO.

Indeed, this discussion is of major importance, since it will enable us to assess the progress made by our Organization and the difficulties encountered, and thereby gauge how best to proceed towards the noble objectives of promoting the fundamental principles and rights at work contained in the ILO Declaration.

I am also very pleased to congratulate the President of this session of the International Labour Conference on his election, which is the rightful manifestation of recognition of his many qualities, his wealth of experience and his dedication to achieving the common goals of our Organization. I am certain that under his able guidance the deliberations of this session will be crowned with success.

Before closing this chapter, allow me to extend double congratulations to Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO. First of all for his re-election to the head of this Organization and second for the quality of the work he accomplished during his previous mandate, especially his commitment to the peoples of the third world in general, and African countries in particular. The renewal of his mandate is a reflection of his personal merits and I would like to assure him of my continuing support. Niger feels sure that his new mandate will be an even greater opportunity to push back poverty in the world. In choosing the struggle against poverty as the main theme of his Report, the Director-General has shown that our Organization is focusing directly on our country's development problems.

As far as Niger is concerned, being one of the poorest countries in the world has prompted us to prepare and implement a strategy to reduce poverty, into which we are investing all our energy. It is in this context that for three years now, a programme called the President's Special Programme has been implemented. This programme is mainly focused on the building of school, health, water and road infrastructures, and it is being put into practice in order to ensure better accessibility for the people of Niger to education, health, drinking water and transport. For this reason we find the relevant reflections and analyses contained in the Director-General's Report a source of inspiration to us in our efforts to combat poverty.

Allow me to sketch the social situation in my country, especially with regard to the promotion of fundamental rights, social dialogue and occupational safety and health. With regard to fundamental labour rights, that is to say those that are essentially set forth in the 1998 ILO Declaration, it should be said that a major step in promotion is currently under way with the support of two projects made available by the ILO, namely PAMODEC and IPEC, the latter focusing in particular on the struggle against child labour. It should be noted that Niger, in the context of the promotion of human rights, has just adopted a criminal code which severely punishes slavery and any comparable acts.

With regard to social dialogue, I would like to underscore the major efforts being made in this field by all stakeholders from the point of view of both its promotion and its implementation. It should also be said that from the institutional point of view, besides the National Commission for Social Dialogue, set up in 2000 and now operational, a commission entrusted specifically with the prevention and management of conflicts came into being in 2002.

The sphere of occupational safety and health has not been overlooked in the progress we have been making at the social level. Indeed, we have revolutionized this area with more substantial regulations contained in the new regulatory part of the Labour Code currently before the Government for adoption.

As you can see, Niger is resolutely committed to improving the well-being of its sons and daughters. This is a struggle for which the support of all our partners is earnestly required. Allow me to express my appreciation and gratitude to the ILO for the multifaceted efforts it has made thus far to assist my country and to urge it to redouble its efforts to better ensure our progress towards social progress. Long live international cooperation.

Original French: Mr. DE (Minister of Public Services, Labour, Employment and Professional Organizations, Senegal) — On behalf of the delegation which I lead and on my behalf, I would first of all like to add my voice to those of previous speakers in congratulating the President and the members of the Bureau on their election to the head of this session of the Conference. I am convinced that, under their enlightened leadership, imbued with wisdom, its work will be crowned with success. I should also like to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO for the confidence that has been placed in him by the Governing Body in electing him once again for a second five-year term.

The topic this year adopted by the Director-General in his Report is the fight against poverty, which, I might underline, is a subject of constant concern to the ILO and has been such since its creation in 1919. In this respect I should like to stress the place held by this question in the Declaration of Philadelphia, which states that “poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere”. This, in itself, is enough to demonstrate how important this subject is within the ILO social doctrine. More recently at the Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, Heads of State and Government from the whole world adopted the so-called Millennium Declaration, which makes the eradication of poverty a priority objective for the international community in the years to come.

The fight against poverty is therefore a priority which the ILO shares with all of its constituents. Despite the considerable improvement in the macro economic and macro financial framework, following the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, the conditions for life and work for significant sections of the population in Africa continue to deteriorate. Indicators from the basic social sectors, such as health, education and employment, are showing a negative trend and this is an undoubted source of anxiety. In this context we must see, therefore, the drawing up by many countries of strategies for the reduction of poverty.

In Dakar, December 2002, a tripartite technical workshop was held on a subregional basis organized by the ILO, and this offered governments and social partners the opportunity of carrying out a very fruitful discussion leading to a better understanding of the establishment of decent work in strategies for the reduction of poverty. The four strategic objectives are employment, social protection, fundamental rights at work and social dialogue which are the basis for decent work and occupy their place in Senegal’s document for the strategy and reduction of poverty. The need to address the lack of decent and productive work, since this is a hindrance to progress and development, prompted the Government of Senegal and organizations of employers and trade unions to include a national charter on social dialogue in the November 2002 and, through this instrument, the Government and the social partners wish to give a new impulse to social partnership and to modernize working relations and establish better links between economic progress and social progress. I should like once again to renew the thanks of the Government of Senegal to the ILO for the technical and financial support that it has offered us throughout the process and which has continued with the establishment, in April 2003, of a support project for the implementation of

the PAMODEC declaration in Senegal, whose main objective is the promotion of social dialogue.

Senegal is pleased at the speed with which the Director-General of the ILO responded to its urging with respect to the prevention of major industrial risks following the national disaster which occurred in our country in September 2002, namely the shipwreck of the ferry Le Joola. The Senegalese Government is counting on the ILO’s usual diligence that this cooperation programme will be implemented rapidly and we also wish to see it extended to the sickness insurance sector.

Senegal shares with the ILO the idea that decent work is a solid foundation to allow us to prevent the harmful social consequences of globalization. The national consultations carried out in many countries and regions to feed into the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, have allowed to establish the dialectic link which exists between the reduction of poverty and decent work and I congratulate the Director-General on his timely initiative which strengthens the credibility of the ILO and its ability to respond to different crisis situations, demonstrating the relevance of its mandate.

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) envisages a better adjustment of the economies of the continent to globalization and a reduction in the development gap which separates them from the rich countries and stresses the issue of poverty and social exclusion as a major priority objective.

In conclusion, let me just repeat that I have great faith in the future of the ILO and I would renew the assurance that my country will always support programmes to ensure and guarantee the building of a more open, balanced, democratic and prosperous society.

(Mr. Wojcik takes the Chair.)

Original French: Mr. PIRLER (Employers delegate, Turkey) — On behalf of the delegation of Turkish Employers and on my own behalf, I would like to wish everybody every success for this session and congratulate the President on his election.

The *Working out of poverty* Report by the Director-General is extremely important in today’s world, where unemployment has become a universal problem. It continues to exist as a major socio-economic challenge in many countries of the world despite all national and international efforts.

In the European Union, for example, the European Employment Strategy has still not been as successful as had been hoped. Despite this delay, as the employers of a candidate country we sincerely support such initiatives.

We are all aware that unemployment and poverty are very much interlinked. Furthermore, I am sure that we would all agree that creating jobs is the best way to eradicate poverty. I think we should really move on to discussing the best national and international ways of tackling unemployment. We cannot ignore the fact that the ILO is a very important international platform, given its tripartite structure.

It is true that the ILO is an organization where the three constituents come together to discuss subjects associated with the world of work but, as Turkish employers, we believe that its contribution to the reduction of poverty would be greater if its fundamental mandate were reaffirmed, strengthening this idea of

the tripartite character of the ILO as the best way to produce real results in the world of work.

The ILO can contribute to this objective but this contribution must be made within the framework of programmes and activities which seek to respond to the needs of the constituents. So the ILO should seek to work with the other agencies of the United Nations, where appropriate, in a transparent fashion and contributing its expertise without imposing it on other agencies or interfering with their mandate. In this way the ILO can continue to organize the World Employment Forum, which it organized two years ago, and can be active at the regional level as well.

In Turkey, about 1 million people join the labour market each year, whilst we can only create about half a million jobs even in high-growth years. This means that the number of unemployed increases by half a million a year, which shows the enormity of the challenge Turkey faces. But, at the same time, that means that we have to consider every possible measure to promote employability, stable employment, and the creation of new businesses. We feel the best way to do this is to implement a national employment strategy, designed on the basis of a tripartite dialogue, not only in Turkey but in all countries.

As Turkish employers, we have for a long time been convinced that a new, updated Labour Code was vital. We needed a more flexible law as compared to the existing one, which was based on very rigid, outdated principles. I have the pleasure to announce that we now do have a new Labour Code in Turkey. Our President ratified it very recently. The new law involves several new provisions, such as flexible working hours, new part-time rules, on-call work, fixed-term contracts, temporary work, and so on. It also protects workers against arbitrary dismissals in companies of 30 or more employees. The new labour law allows for the establishment of a wage guarantee fund to protect workers' rights if the employer goes into liquidation. Temporary employment agencies and private employment agencies can join in this system.

The new Labour Code also establishes a tripartite consultative council which will have the task of maintaining peace in industrial relations, improving such relations and contributing to the preparation of the various provisions of the law ensuring that the law is enforced. We believe that this law complies completely with ILO and European Union standards and that it will therefore allay the fears of Turkish and foreign investors who have encountered difficulties in the past because of the rigidities of Turkish legislation on labour.

Finally, I would like to turn to social dialogue. On behalf of Turkish employers, I would like to thank our Minister for Labour and Social Security, Mr. Basetsgioglu, for his valuable efforts which created a climate of dialogue, compromise, common sense and understanding during the negotiations leading to this law. The negotiations were very tough, but I think they are a good example of the application of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). In conclusion, I would like to announce that the Report by the Director-General very much reflects many of our concerns and proposes measures which largely coincide with our own positions.

Original Arabic: Mr. HAMADAH (*Technical adviser and substitute delegate, Lebanon*) — On behalf

of Lebanese employers in general and the Association of Lebanese Industry Representatives in particular, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the ILO for all its efforts aimed at promoting international principles and human rights on the basis of the elimination of all forms of discrimination, with a view to achieving decent work for every individual in our societies. I would also like to congratulate the Organization for its efforts aimed at providing workers with the freedom of choice.

The theme of this year's Conference complements the themes that have already been discussed in the field of achieving justice and equality, and providing decent work, to achieve stability, equality and peace.

You are now giving greater importance to the subject by identifying this problem that has to be faced by our partners to achieve a world freed from poverty. I believe that we agree with you on the policies that you have adopted aimed at the elimination of poverty, by focusing on the issue of supply and demand in the developing countries. What has been stated in the Report provides us with room to hope to achieve the objectives of our Organization, the most important of which is to rid the world of poverty. We therefore have to stress the importance of this issue and include it in all the agendas of future Conferences.

I would like to recall that we cannot achieve any stability or any peace while living in a world that continues to be divided by increasingly rich developed countries and increasingly poor developing ones. What we have to do is the following. First of all, adopt fairer economic terms that would focus on rights and obligations in the world of labour, provide more jobs and more work opportunities; adopt pilot projects that would help us achieve that objective, enhance skills to provide better conditions for sustainable decent work, invest in higher education so that higher education can be more compatible with the needs of the labour market, give priority to economic growth and productivity, to achieve social justice and equality.

I would like to tell you that the objective of the Lebanese employers is to enhance economic performance and to enhance research and development, to build a sounder economic infrastructure and to enhance productivity with a view to enhancing competitiveness. We know that achieving equality and justice and social structure is the objective of all the employers in the Arab world — to achieve justice for our people living under occupation in the Syrian Golan, south Lebanon and in the occupied land of Palestine.

We would like to tell this Conference that the conditions of occupation, repression and aggression with which our region is faced will not deter us from achieving social and economic justice in the Arab world and in the world in general. We would like to pay tribute to our brethren in Palestine, workers and employers, and we would like to tell them that in the final analysis it is human values and principles that will prevail over aggression, barbarianism and repression. We are more hopeful to achieve justice in the Arab world under the patronage of the ILO, to rid the world of poverty and barbarianism, and to achieve peace. We would like to thank the President and congratulate him on his election.

Original Japanese: Mr. SASAMORI (*Workers' delegate, Japan*) — My name is Sasamori, and I serve as President of the Japanese Trade Union Confedera-

tion, the largest national trade union in Japan. First I would like to sincerely congratulate the President on his election.

On behalf of the workers of Japan, I would like to make several points on ILO activities towards poverty reduction proposed by the Director-General, Mr Somavia, and I would also like to take this opportunity to make several suggestions for effective ways of implementation.

The challenges of poverty reduction is a common, urgent and important task for the international community, so much so that the G8 Summit held in Evian just recently took up this issue among its major agenda items. Most poverty is concentrated in specific regions and areas, and the number of people affected is increasing constantly. This situation casts a dark shadow of anxiety and disturbance over the whole international community.

Behind this, there definitely lies an increasing globalization. The reality is, in the good name of free competition, situations contradicting the ILO's objective of decent work are springing up everywhere. As a result, disparities in wealth are increasing, leading to greater social instability. At the origin of terrorism and ethnic and religious conflicts, there always lies serious poverty.

Social regulations and rules must be respected and observed to alleviate the poverty challenging the international community. Stable employment security and social safety nets are difficult to establish, but very crucial and important. Among other points, implementation of the core labour standards is vital. The ILO is a specialized institution in this area, and has accumulated abundant knowledge. An effective way of moving forward lies in the unique feature of the ILO: tripartite social dialogue. I would like to propose the setting up of a special fund, to which all the member States would donate 1 per cent, or 0.5 per cent at least, of their military expenditure. The fund would be utilized as seed money, pooling the efforts of the whole international community with a view to poverty reduction, stable employment security for the realization of decent work, and the establishment of social safety nets.

I mentioned earlier the importance of the implementation of core labour standards. On this point I would like to make a brief statement concerning the situation in Japan. My country, Japan, is the second largest contributor to the ILO budget and one of just a few countries from which all three constituents serve as member of the Governing Body; it also holds an unchallenged seat as an IMEC member country. I am proud of the status given to Japan in the ILO, and our three partners, especially the Government, should make every effort to fulfil their expected roles in ILO activities. However, the Government's attitude towards the implementation of the core labour standards cannot be regarded as a model case, in particular as regards fundamental labour rights for public service employees. The public service system in Japan is currently undergoing its first fundamental reform in 50 years.

The Committee on Freedom of Association issued epoch-making recommendations last November. As you may know the Committee recommended that the Government of Japan reconsider its decision to maintain the current restrictions on the fundamental labour rights of public service employees, and hold full, frank and meaningful consultations with trade

unions, especially concerning specific points that the current system violates under Conventions Nos. 87 and 98. The Government did not take the recommendations seriously and has prepared to submit bills to the Diet that will aggravate the violations, without proper consultations with trade unions. However just before this session of the International Labour Conference opened, on 27 May, I personally met with the Prime Minister, Mr Koizumi, and he promised to hold consultations with the unions. I candidly appreciate his position to continue engaging in dialogue with us, but the whole picture of the reform is still not clear. I consider there should be considerably more efforts made to settle the issue in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Freedom of Association.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that, unless developed and democratic countries like Japan take the initiative to observe the core labour standards, international society cannot be operated fairly.

Concluding my remarks, I pledge my best efforts to achieve poverty alleviation at the earliest possible time, through decent work with stable employment security, as proposed and implemented by the ILO and guided by Mr Somavia, the Director-General of the International Labour Office.

Mr. ALAM (*Employers' delegate, Bangladesh*) — I join the previous speakers in congratulating the President and the Vice-Presidents on their election.

As in the past, the Director-General has presented an erudite and comprehensive Report to the Conference on the challenges of fighting poverty. We fully agree with his remarks that attacking poverty and promoting social integration are not the job of any one country or organization acting alone. They form the inescapable common agenda for today's world.

Poverty remains the most important problem in South Asian countries, where the majority of the world's poor people live. Despite several decades of reasonable-to-rapid rates of economic growth, poverty remains widespread and is an important issue of public concern. There is a socio-political consensus on the urgent need for the alleviation and elimination of poverty, but paucity of resources for development, coupled with other issues, have stood in the way.

We firmly feel that economic growth can help to alleviate poverty. Economic growth may be associated with unequal income distribution, but the growth effect outweighs the distribution effect in most cases. In the South-Asian economies, in order to limit unequal income distribution, the growth policy, in our view, must focus on three main areas: rapid agricultural growth; high employment intensity of manufacturing and service growth; and the introduction of special services to empower the poor to take advantage of the expanding opportunities generated by growth.

Alongside economic growth, there is a strong need for government interventions to ensure that the nature and pattern of growth alleviate poverty, increase productive employment opportunities and improve the living standards of the poor. Such interventions should constitute an important component of the overall growth strategy, and must be integrated with growth policies in consultation with social partners. It is this integration which is perhaps missing in the growth policies of many poor countries.

In Bangladesh, the efforts of the Grameen Bank, which has lent over US\$1 billion to more than 2 million poor people, mostly women, are exemplary.

Along with the Grameen Bank, several other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Government itself have undertaken a wide range of poverty-alleviation programmes. The Government has set up an Employment Bank, the main objective of which is poverty alleviation. The Food for Education Programme is another innovative government initiative to improve literacy among the poor. The Food for Work, Vulnerable Group Development and Test Relief Programmes have already been recognized to be cost effective and hold promise of a better welfare impact on vulnerable groups. In brief, Bangladesh has shown what can be achieved in poverty alleviation, rural health and mass education, through collaboration and partnership between the Government, NGOs and financial institutions.

Regrettably, what has not happened in Bangladesh is the creation of adequate jobs. Empirical studies show that job creation is a major — possibly the major — path out of poverty. The most sustainable job can be created by private enterprises. The success of the private sector in the poorer countries in creating jobs will greatly depend on the opening of the markets of richer countries.

The group of poorest countries accounts for less than 1 per cent of world trade, which, in 2001, was estimated to be around US\$6 trillion. Caught up in the web of such an inequitable process of globalization and largely left out in the distribution of investment flow and transfer of technology, South Asia's poorest countries are finding it difficult to ensure employment opportunities to the teeming millions.

It is relevant to recall the remarks made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations after the Millennium Summit and I quote, “[For the rich countries to] preach the virtues of open markets to developing countries is mere hypocrisy if they do not open their own markets to those countries’ products, or if they continue flooding the world market with subsidized food exports, making it impossible for farmers in poor countries to compete. Nor can they expect developing countries to listen to their pleas to respect the global environment unless they are ready to alter their own irresponsible patterns of production and consumption”.

Mr. BONMATI (*Workers’ delegate, Spain*) — Let me start by congratulating Mr Somavia on his election for a second term in office. The Report that he is presenting to the Conference this time is focused on Working out of poverty, something which takes us right to the heart of the work of this Organization.

It is clear that without work it is not possible to escape poverty but it is no less true that having work does not necessarily mean avoiding poverty. In many countries, including my own, although most poor people are unemployed, many workers do not manage to escape poverty if they have insecure contracts or very low survival-level wages.

It is very difficult for work to give dignity to life when it is in the workplace that dignity is often lost, sometimes to an intolerable degree. The dreadful figures provided by the ILO at this session of the Conference on work-related deaths and disabilities indicate the deterioration in working conditions. Inaction, or even silence, in the face of so much suffering is a symptom and a result of the low status given to work. The weakening of labour law and the institutionalization of insecurity and uncertainty have such high hu-

man, social and even economic costs that it is time to question the new social model that has been spreading around the world and look for new alternatives which will bear in mind the common good.

We completely agree with the Report that the State has a decisive role to play in reducing poverty. After some years — too many years — of hegemony of market fundamentalism we have seen how poverty has increased in many different countries and how wealth is distributed in a more and more unequal way as we can see, as the Report states.

In order to eradicate poverty, full employment has to be the main objective of economic and social strategies, along with a fairer distribution of wealth and a more decisive role for the state. However, this objective, which is supported by many, does not have a single unambiguous sense. In the name of full employment, various abuses have been made, such as making work cheaper, dismantling social and labour rights and cutting social protection, moving, as a result, to what I would call full underemployment. My country is an example of this. Despite the various successive reforms to the labour market, we still have the highest levels of unemployment and poverty in the European Union.

Only through decent, secure work with rights, will workers be able to overcome poverty and regain their social citizenship.

For this it is necessary to have a new social pact leading to predictable, regulated and protected labour relationships; the flexibility that companies require combined with security for the worker; a stronger role for the State as a provider of goods and services on equal terms for all; a fair distribution of the creation of wealth and full recognition of the role of unions and the value of social dialogue.

I would like to conclude by reminding you, as does the Report, that the first words of the ILO’s Constitution talk of the basic task of the Organization being to fight for peace through social justice. The recent conflict in Iraq mobilized millions of citizens in Spain to come out in favour of peace and against the support of our Government for this immoral and illegitimate war. This showed that citizens continue to believe in law and in international institutions, even as they were so lamentably ignored in that conflict.

This reaction by millions of workers and citizens across the whole of the world against war in favour of respect for international legality is something that can encourage us and indicates the need for international organizations committed to peace and social justice. Here, we support the statement by the Director-General and the Governing Body of 28 March 2003 in the sense that this Organization must be actively involved in the reconstruction of Iraq and in the promotion of an environment in which human rights and labour rights are fully respected.

Original Russian: Mr. MIROSHNYCHENKO (*Employers’ delegate, Ukraine*) — It is a great honour for me to greet you today on behalf of the Ukrainian Employers and to express our gratitude to the organizers of the Conference for their warm welcome, the excellent facilities they have provided for the participants and the atmosphere of constructive dialogue which we have encountered every day.

The agenda of the 91st Session covers the most pressing problems of labour relations. The world trends regarding the implementation of the ILO Dec-

laration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as described in the report of Chairperson of the Governing Body, allow us to assess the situation and look at the realities of implementation of the fundamental Conventions Nos. 100 and 111. The Global Report before us covers a system of priorities which we need to take into account when formulating an ILO action plan to combat discrimination in labour and employment over the next four years.

Ukrainian employers are constantly improving their methods for promoting health and safety at work and certifying workplaces. In April 2003, for the first time in our country, under the aegis of the ILO, we organized a "Health and Safety at Work" week inspired by the World Occupational Safety and Health Day. This is now to become a yearly event.

Last year saw the creation of the Ukrainian Employers' Federation, the most representative national association which aims to represent the interests of employers. A week ago we became full members of the International Organisation of Employers.

The range of subjects which we are looking at today is varied and in the foreground are the issues of Ukraine joining the WTO, its integration into Europe and in the global economy, its role in the international division of labour, implementation of national laws, and the need to bring these into line with international standards.

However, the processes of globalization are anything but clear-cut. We understand that the integration of Ukraine in the world economy will entail not only opening up markets but also a whole series of measures to protect our domestic market and create an effective system to prevent unfair competition from imports, as well as measures to protect national producers through anti-dumping procedures under the WTO trade disputes procedures.

Attempts are unfortunately still being made to adopt legislation on collective bargaining that does not conform to ILO Conventions Nos. 98 and 154. Our federation is trying to prevent this and to ensure that Ukrainian legislation is brought into line with international standards.

One of the other main jobs that we have to do is to draw up a new labour code which will balance the rights of workers and employers. By doing so, it will pave the way for effective development of the economy and higher living standards, and will stimulate the development of small businesses and active participation of entrepreneurial structures in social dialogue.

There is currently quite a low-level motivation of workers in the Ukraine, and our workforce does not meet the requirements of the market. We need to respond to this problem by allowing payment of wages in different forms, introducing minimum wage differentials by region and industry, allowing wages to be established by collective agreement and introducing minimum standards for hourly pay. Such measures, I think, would eliminate many of the wage anomalies which exist at the moment.

The measures implemented in the Ukraine under the aegis of the ILO have been very effective. We are particularly interested in the following areas of collaboration in the future: reform of our social legislation in the light of current economic transformations and the integration of Ukraine into the European Union, including ILO assessment of our draft Labour Code; and the development of social partnership and

optimization of social dialogue. We need technical assistance and consultation with ILO experts on the implementation of ILO Conventions and Recommendations in Ukraine, and in investigating employment problems, developing our labour market, eradicating poverty, building democracy, protecting human rights, gender mainstreaming, preventing trafficking in people, and so on. Ukrainian employers place great hope in the new programme of cooperation with the ILO to promote decent work, which was launched during the recent meeting of the Minister of Labour of Ukraine with the Director-General of the ILO. The employers' organizations of Ukraine for their part will always be ready to use their resources to ensure successful implementation of ILO programmes in Ukraine.

Mr. SALIMIAN (*Worker' delegate, Islamic Republic of Iran*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I first wish to congratulate the President of this Conference on his election and the Director-General on his valuable Report. As the Report covers a vast area, I will confine my statement to only a few areas of interest to us.

Poverty has the face of hunger, of cold, of crying, of unemployment and of rage and it demands our immediate attention. Our elders are wont to say that, if poverty enters the house through one door, then faith exits through another. The Director-General's Report itself bears witness to the importance and the timely nature of the theme to be deliberated at this session of the Conference.

We believe that efforts must be made to ensure that the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization achieves its ultimate objective and that globalization should be a means of reducing poverty and unemployment in favour of growth and sustainable development. Working women and men are not business costs. We have always been, and will continue to be, a source of progress in our country and in favour of democracy.

Coming to my country's report, this year we were deprived of the right to hold a May Day demonstration. The main theme of our demonstration was to have been concerned with wages and contract labour. The labour community has postponed the demonstration until 16 July of this year.

Workers' wages have always remained the main source of fulfilling their needs. Unfortunately, due to the resistance of employers and the Government, they have not fully covered the needs of families. A downward trend has meant that, each year, workers' families have become poorer. Implementations of a single parity rate last year decreased workers' purchasing power tremendously. The price index since the Revolution has risen 102 per cent whereas wages have increased by only 52 per cent. This gap of 50 per cent, which has in fact decreased workers' purchasing power, has played havoc with their economic well-being. It has resulted in the expansion and growth of poverty. The workers' organizations have therefore taken steps to combat poverty by safeguarding workers' purchasing power by reducing the gap between nominal and real wages. If the ILO intends to prevent the growth of poverty worldwide then when putting it on its agenda, it must evaluate the wage situation by comparing nominal and real wages with the price index and publishing an annual report in this connection. Real wages need to be negotiated by tripartite

bodies and the trade unions play a vital role here. In this connection, ACTRAV's role should be strengthened so that workers get real wages.

Unfortunately, at present, there are thousands of workers who have not received wages for between two and 20 months. I, myself, come from a textile factory whose workers' wages are in arrears by about ten months. This non-payment of wages has greatly affected the lives of workers who have always lived hand to mouth. In a number of cases it has destroyed their household. Although the Government has set up a Workers' Support Fund, the funds allocated are quite insignificant in comparison to the crisis that exists.

In Urdu there is a saying that an elephant has two types of teeth, one for showing and another for eating. On the one hand, the Ministry of Labour has set up a National Tripartite Advisory Body and, on the other hand, it has signed a statement with the ILO on the amendment of the Labour Code. After the formation of the National Tripartite Advisory Council in July 2002, we were expecting that labour-related matters would be referred to this Advisory Council, but unfortunately we learned from a newspaper, in May 2003, that a statement has been signed regarding the proposed amendment of the labour code in respect of workers' and employers' organizations. We at least expected from the ILO that its relevant department, before entering into an agreement with the Government, would make sure that the social partners had been duly consulted and informed.

We are of the opinion that if foreign models are implemented, they must take into consideration the culture and historical background of a country. Statistics on the number of trade unions formed in Islamic Republic of Iran, especially at the enterprise level, both under previous and present labour law, indicates their low acceptability in the Iranian labour community. The Islamic labour councils are emerging, self-administered labour organizations and any encroachment on them would jeopardize the structure of organized labour in our country. To further increase their effectiveness, a plan for the reorganization of Islamic labour councils has been drafted by the workers' lobby and presented to Parliament. We hope that it will be duly ratified by Parliament soon.

In conclusion, bearing in mind the adverse economic situation of workers and the negative repercussions of privatization, while thanking the Government for some of its supportive steps, we hope that the silence of workers will not be deemed as acceptance and satisfaction and that the Government will take compensatory measures and steps to improve the lot of the labour community.

Original Arabic: Mr. RASHED (*Workers' delegate, Egypt*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! On behalf of the Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions, I wish to congratulate the Officers of the current session of the International Labour Conference. We particularly welcome the President from our brother country, Kenya, which shares the great Nile Basin, a source of employment for more than 70,000 Egyptian workers. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Somavia on his re-election, and say that we wish to pursue cooperation with him and support his efforts so that we attain the noble and humanitarian objectives of this Organization—I am sure you will agree with me that these objectives can only be at-

tained through a strengthening of the capacities of developing countries to create more jobs and alleviate the consequences of poverty, so that they can grapple with the economic and social challenges of globalization.

We are sure that the International Labour Organization has a very special role to play in this context and within the United Nations family, through efforts designed to give a human face to globalization for the well-being of humanity, without any discrimination, based on genuine sharing of benefits and interests between developed and developing countries, in a context of solidarity and international cooperation.

I commend the high quality technical assistance that has been given to us by the ILO for more than ten years now in order to enable us to prepare a new Labour Code covering all sectors of economic activity and taking account of the changes that have occurred in the economic sector, both nationally and internationally, with a view to supporting the process of reform and restructuring that has been under way in Egypt for the last ten years. The positive results of the negotiations and the debates that took place on this Code, have confirmed the relevance of the approach adopted by the trade union movement in Egypt, which has been based on dialogue, rather than confrontation and force. We believe in sharing of responsibilities for taking decisions in order to balance the interests of all social partners, and especially the most vulnerable partners, the workers.

We are aware of the responsibilities imposed by this legislation and the consequences that ensue from it for our trade union organization. We are proud that the international labour standards have been our reference. This Code enables us to pursue social dialogue on the basis of tripartite consultation. The right to strike, for the very first time, has been clearly and directly recognized. This Code also enshrines the right to collective bargaining on a very broad scale indeed, which is unprecedented, and which is consistent with market mechanisms and economic liberalization.

By a fortunate coincidence, some weeks afterwards, the Euro-Egyptian Agreement was signed. This is an agreement which, in addition to political and cultural aspects fosters the liberalization of external trade and promotes integration in the international market which we hope will raise living standards, growth rates and employment. In this regard, we hope to receive technical assistance from the ILO in order to strengthen the capacities of trade unions in Egypt, thus enabling us to assume our responsibilities and rise to the challenges that follow from this Agreement. We appeal to our friends in the European trade unions to enhance their cooperation with us in this area, for the good of all.

Original Portuguese: Mr. SABBADINI (*Employers' delegate, Brazil*) — It is an honour and a special pleasure for me to be able to address the participants of this meeting on behalf of the employers of Brazil. First and foremost I should like to endorse the words of many previous speakers who congratulated the President on his election, and I would like to wish him every success in his work.

I should also like to congratulate the Director-General on this excellent Report, in which he analyses the benefits which decent work can bring to families and society thanks to a concerted effort to combat poverty. In this document, we find laid before us the prin-

ciples for a greater universality in the promotion of the essential conditions to overcome poverty through work. This reaffirms one of the four strategic objectives of the ILO, employment, the corollary of which is the fact that it is not possible to eradicate poverty if the economy does not generate opportunities for investment, entrepreneurial development and the creation of sustainable jobs.

As the Director-General clearly points out in his Report, "We all know that skills are essential to improve productivity, incomes and access to employment opportunities". This subject of skills is very obvious in the ILO this year, and will be the object of a first discussion as one of the items on the agenda, the aim being to discuss forms in which it can be adjusted to the knowledge age. In Brazil, employers fully understand the significance of skills development as a means of achieving integration in the labour market, having developed over the course of 50 years and more vocational training programmes carried out by specialized institutions, set up and maintained by employers' organizations, funded entirely from the monthly contributions by companies in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy, corresponds to 1-1.5 per cent of the wages bill. Thanks to the strategic vision and sound management of these bodies, they have gained the confidence of the entire Brazilian population. We hope to continue to receive their benefits.

Similar initiatives in the area of trade and services are being implemented through the National Service for Trade Apprenticeships (SENAC), and in the industrial sector we have the National Service for Industrial apprenticeships SENAT in the area of transport, while SENAR covers the agricultural and animal husbandry sector. Their objective is to train individuals with a view to integration in the labour market. SENAC was cited as an example in 1996 in the publication of CINTERFOR, an ILO body based in Montevideo which is devoted to vocational training in the Americas. They pointed out the excellency of this organization and the high quality of its vocational training.

Investment by companies and the creation and maintenance of these institutions which are not for profit, reach into virtually all sectors of the economy, always has a high social return and an impact on the development of the economy of the country.

An example of vocational training provided by SENAT is President Mr. Luis Inacio Lula de Silva himself. It is therefore appropriate that these bodies should have been noted at this meeting, since the ILO is interested in all work done by each member State for the benefit of the workers. We call them the "S" institutions, and they are not restricted only to vocational training programmes.

In parallel with them, there are other institutions which are providing services in social assistance, leisure and health and are also created and managed by employers' associations and maintained by contributions from companies, and they reach millions of citizens annually. These include the Social Service Committee (SESC) which is dedicated to workers in the area of services and tourism; the Industrial Social Service (SESI) and the Transport Social Service (SEST). We think it is a good thing for the ILO and all it stands for that these agencies for Brazilian workers should be able to continue their work, and serve as an example to other countries which, like Brazil, are con-

tinually fighting to improve the living conditions of their people to overcome poverty. We can be a benchmark for the world in the area of social services and work skills.

We also note that in Brazilian society, we have now a programme launched by the new Government to attack poverty, known as "Zero Hunger". It was presented by the President of our Republic at the G8 meeting which took place in Evian.

In Brazil the SESC and SESI, in addition to their fundamental purposes of providing food for workers in trade services and industry, also have dedicated social programmes. These include a particular project which is aimed at feeding the poorest people, and is a partnership between the federal Government and the Brazilian states. All these initiatives are based on the assumption that workers who are adequately fed and have the opportunity to devote themselves to other activities such as the acquisition of new knowledge and skills will obtain decent work and thus become integrated into the labour market at a level above the poverty line.

In these ways, we endorse the excellence of the ILO's work, which must always try to ensure that international labour legislation is maintained within the limits of economic possibilities and, as far as possible, within the reach of developing countries, by establishing standards that are adapted to reality and geared to the conditions and means of signatory States, and consistent with the principle of free enterprise.

Mr. FUCHS (*Government delegate, Czech Republic*) — I would like to congratulate Mr. Somavia for the excellent work done by himself and by the Office in preparing the reports for this Conference. Each item of this Conference agenda is in some way relevant to the efforts of the Czech Government in a national context and therefore the Government appreciates all debates and looks forward to the outcomes of this session.

Let me stress that the Czech Government appreciates the concept of decent work formulated and implemented by the ILO in recent years because this concept demonstrates the possibility of wide cooperation across all sectors and effective enhancement of basic principles and rights at work in close cooperation with the social partners.

Equality and non-discrimination make up one of these important principles, and we thank the Director-General for his Report on the current situation in the world and the achievement related to implementation of this principle. This Report proves again that discrimination at work can take many forms and is not limited to only certain groups of States defined geographically, politically or by economic development.

Equality at work should be universally applicable because it concerns all of us. The fight against discrimination by one group can bring greater security for all other groups, whether we mean equal access to employment, equal pay, gender equality or support for older workers, ethnic minorities or other groups endangered by social exclusion. Each individual measure usually helps to enforce human dignity, democracy, humanity and society in general.

The Czech Republic has ratified both ILO core Conventions on this subject and the Government continues to pay attention to this principle — the most recent example being a new amendment to the Labour Code which has just been discussed in the

Parliament, in preparation for a new comprehensive law on combating all forms of discrimination, strengthening institutional infrastructure for application and enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation and practical employment and social policy measures aimed at social inclusion of disadvantaged individuals.

Let me also express our appreciation that this year's session of the Conference is again devoted to the debate on new forms of employment relationships. Definition of a worker, an employer and employment relationships are central to the world of work. We welcome debate now, as the Czech Republic approaches fundamental reform of existing labour law and the elaboration of a new modern concept of labour law for future decades. This relationship must inevitably cope with all recent developments in work organization, use of modern technology, new demands on productivity and competitiveness of enterprises and new demands on the labour force with regard to flexibility and qualifications.

The more we know about and analyse existing systems of labour relations in Europe and in the world, the more we see how many concepts exist, which of them work and which do not; which of them succeed in combining an acceptable balance of flexibility and security and which do not. Bearing in mind that there are many concepts in the world and that very few of them would be universally applicable and acceptable, we believe that mechanisms for further facilitating the sharing of information, conclusions of general debate containing proposals for the Government, Employers and Workers as to how to address national deficits in protection of dependent workers, or even subsequent compilation of proposals stemming from the debate into a set of practical guidelines or a code of practice would be a successful outcome of this session of the Conference. This would also help the Czech Government in formulating a new Labour Code, prepared in close cooperation with ILO experts, for which I would like to express sincere gratitude.

The Czech Government also welcomes a debate in the ILO on new approaches in fields such as human resource development and occupational safety and health. Regarding human resource development, the Czech Government adopted in February this year its national strategy for the next decade — formulated and implemented with close cooperation with national and social partners. This strategy is oriented towards achieving significant improvement in further vocational and professional education for adult workers and creating a system of lifelong learning for all generations.

A national policy on occupational safety and health was adopted just two weeks ago — a policy aimed at the creation of an effective, functional, integrated and comprehensive system of occupational safety and health management, including a new model of labour inspection, which would create favourable working conditions, guarantee the rights of all participants in work, encourage responsibility for the protection of everyone's health and promote overall work culture.

The Czech Republic and the Czech Government, which was established last year after the parliamentary elections, want to reinforce cooperation with the ILO and wish to promote its principles and support its activities on all appropriate occasions, here at the Conference, as well as at home in my country and with other member States.

Mr. ALI (*Government delegate, Bangladesh*) — First of all, we warmly congratulate the President and other Officers of the Conference on their election. It is also my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Somavia, in whom the membership of the ILO has placed its trust for a second term as Director-General. I wish him all success and assure him of Bangladesh's full support and continued cooperation.

The Director-General has presented us with an excellent Report. *Working out of poverty*, the theme of this year's Report, should be central to the Global Development Agenda.

We fully share the Director-General's view that rights at work and the institutional structure of the labour market, both formal and informal, are closely linked to employment creation, poverty reduction and the forces of globalization. The Director-General has rightly stated and I quote "work is the best route out of poverty. But one cannot legislate employment in and poverty out".

The Government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has placed the highest priority on poverty eradication. Empowerment of the people through ensuring their economic rights has been the focus of the Government's poverty eradication strategy. Our experience has shown that employment can be an effective tool for poverty eradication. The success of the Grameen Bank and microcredit financing schemes in Bangladesh attest to this.

A vital component of this process has been the mainstreaming of women into development through targeted programmes aimed at education for girls, microcredit programmes, special rights for women in local bodies, etc. We must not allow the feminization of poverty.

The ILO has vast expertise in employment generation programmes. In this context, the Decent Work Agenda advocated by the Director-General is of great interest to us. Bangladesh will work closely with the ILO to implement the Decent Work Pilot Programme. The elimination of child labour is an important priority of the Government despite it being a formidable nature of this task. Bangladesh is a signatory to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Our efforts have already yielded positive results in the ready-made garments industry. We have undertaken some innovative approaches such as the "food-for-education" programme and special financing with incentives to increase enrolment and stop children from dropping out of school. Raising awareness among parents and employers, providing non-formal education and skill development training to working children and granting microcredit to the parents of working children to facilitate the withdrawal of such children from hazardous work are important elements of our programmes. A child labour policy is at the drafting stage. With the cooperation of the ILO, preparatory work on a time-bound programme for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour is also under way.

Technical cooperation and technical assistance are the primary means of ILO assistance. It is important that such cooperation or assistance be demand-driven and take into account the needs and priorities of beneficiary countries. We believe that member States should place more resources at the disposal of the Organization to meet the growing demands on its activities. We support the general direction of the

Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05.

Bangladesh is committed to the promotion of the rights of workers everywhere. The plight of the Palestinian workers in the occupied territories remains a matter of grave concern for us. Bangladesh welcomes the new "road map", which envisages an independent sovereign and democratic Palestinian State by 2005. We support the Director-General's efforts to implement the enhanced programme of technical cooperation for the occupied Arab territories, and the establishment of the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection. We hope that the ILO will continue its constructive engagement to address the plight of workers in the occupied territories.

Globalization, particularly trade liberalization, has increased the vulnerability of the least developed countries (LDCs) such as Bangladesh. The World Bank estimates that almost 44 per cent of the more than 1 billion people living on less than one dollar per day live in south Asia. The rules of the game must create a level playing field for all countries if they are to benefit from globalization.

Before concluding, may I state that we believe that the issue of international labour movement is intrinsically linked to poverty eradication and employment rights. While the forces of globalization have liberalized the movement of goods and capital, the rules for the temporary movement of labour on a regular basis remain unattended. The potential advantages, to both industrialized and labour-sending countries, of the temporary movement of unskilled and semi-skilled workers are immense. As a labour-sending State, this issue is of particular interest to us. Last year we underlined the importance of this issue and it had called for urgent global action to develop an orderly labour movement regime. We are heartened to note that the issue will be discussed at next year's session. Bangladesh looks forward to effective dialogue on this issue at the next session of the International Labour Conference.

Original Portuguese: Mr. CAMARÁ (Workers' delegate, Guinea-Bissau) — It is an honour and a privilege for me to address you on behalf of the workers of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau at this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference. Above all I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Government of my country for the invitation and the support they have lent us to enable us to take part in this august event.

We should also like to express our wish that the Chairperson of the Governing Body will continue his good work. Allow us to commend the ILO for the way in which it has organized this session. I am quite sure that it will not merely fulfil the provisions of its Constitution but it will also live up to its economic and social duties. This is a duty which allows the representatives of governments and employers' and workers' organizations here present to analyse and debate with openness, depth and clarity, the most important aspects of social and economic stability and employment in the member countries of the ILO.

I think that the matters to be addressed, namely the fight against poverty, deteriorating labour relations and the implacable struggle against child labour are of undeniable importance to the future of the organization.

The trade union experience of Guinea-Bissau during the national struggle for liberation changed in 1991 with the introduction of new legislation concerning the right to the free exercise of, trade union rights, following the adoption of the Acts Nos. 8 and 9/91, the Act respecting freedom of association and the Act respecting the right to strike, respectively.

In truth, the establishment of a number of sectoral trade unions, the adoption of collective labour agreements and enterprise agreements for some sectors of activity, and the existence of two trade union confederations namely the Association of Independent Trade Unions (CG SI-GB) and the National Workers' Union of Guinea (UNTG) profoundly changed the balance of social power and the participation of workers through the Standing Council for Social Consultation in the economic and social life of the country constitute a great bonus.

Looking back to the years prior to the 1998-99 civil war, the social and economic situation of the country was dramatic. The majority of the population lived below the poverty line, and even today on average the population of Guinea-Bissau lives on less than US \$1 per day per capita.

The country is still dependant on external aid to the tune of 55 per cent of its state budget, which is why successive governments have been unable to honour their commitments and obligations as to the timely payments of public-service salaries or debts due to their main creditors.

This situation has grown steadily worse, with unemployment, and the deterioration of the health and education systems being the most visible signs. The Government and the trade union confederations have together appealed to the international community, through a joint communiqué, to provide emergency aid to help overcome this crisis and move towards early legislative elections in a calm and transparent manner.

But although this would enable us to get out of this stifling situation, it would also help if the Government and employers of Guinea-Bissau would be willing to adopt social dialogue and -consultation as the most effective ways of preventing and resolving labour disputes, among others.

If only the partners in development, namely the European Union and International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, would step up their support and, in particular, release funds, this would help us to develop various sectors. It would enable us to overcome internal backwardness and the picture could look very different.

In its context, since I am speaking to this august assembly, I would like to make an appeal to all the economic partners and friends of Guinea-Bissau to raise the awareness of their respective governments and provide us with the help we need to revive our economy which is so severely hit by the effects of the civil 1998-99 war and poor economic and political management.

If these funds could be released it would help private firms, it would help the economy grow, help job creation — all of which are musts in the development of any State.

The sort of concerns described in the Director-General's Report have to do with the dignity of work as a world challenge and we believe that the humanization of working conditions and the dignity of work and workers, the abolition of child labour, addressing

the degradation of labour relations, combating poverty in all its dimensions, dealing with occupational diseases and in particular AIDS, recognizing skills, merits, and recognizing professional values. These are fundamental things and something that we, as Guinean workers, strive for.

We shall pursue our claims for Guinea's workers to have the right to training and to technological and economic information, because firms and infrastructure will have to adapt constantly to variations in market size and profile, production methods and the consequent changes in the organization and supply of labour. Our trade union confederations also defend the independence of the unions with respect to political parties and the State, as a cornerstone of free and responsible trade-unionism, with improving workers' living conditions as its fundamental aim.

I would like to clear up an error regarding the arrest of the Secretary-General of the UNTG. While participating in union activities. In fact the situation has been overcome and we now have a normal climate of ongoing dialogue between the main players in Guinea Bissau's development.

Mr. President of the Conference, we are confident that this session will provide us with a further opportunity to better address together the problems and labour relations in our countries and we hope to emerge having passed pertinent resolutions on all the matters discussed.

To conclude, we send out our solidarity and our fraternity to all the workers in the world, who because of the violation of their legitimate rights and freedoms as laid down in Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 of the ILO, are unable to be represented at this august tripartite assembly and be represented by their trade unions structures.

Original Russian: Mr. SCHERBAKOV (representative, General Confederation of Trade Unions) — First of all, allow me to congratulate the President on his election to this august and elevated post. We are convinced that under your guidance the Conference will succeed in fulfilling its mandate.

The theme selected by the Director-General of the ILO for discussion at this Conference, *Working out of poverty*, is most topical and extremely important for workers throughout the world. We fully support the Report's conclusion that "the persistence of poverty is a moral indictment of our times".

The world community needs to take urgent measures to radically improve the situation. A particular role in this must be played by the ILO, which is now the undisputed leader among the international institutions in the field of social policy and employment. The adoption and consistent implementation of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Global Forum on Employment, the formation of the World Commission on Globalization, the drawing up of the Global Employment Programme, this is only a partial list of the measures taken by the ILO in pursuit of these goals.

However, we would have liked the Report to devote more attention to the role and importance of the standard-setting activities of the ILO in this field. In our view, it is time to focus on the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122). We feel that the provisions of this Convention should become the basis of ILO activities to ensure full and productive employment globally.

At the same time, it has been ratified only by 93 countries. Perhaps we should include this in the list of core Conventions and take measures to ensure that it is rapidly ratified by all ILO member States.

We should also ensure broader ratification of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), which has been ratified by only 45 countries and not a single country of the Commonwealth of Independent States so far.

The Report makes only a brief mention of the situation in the CIS. Well, the situation in our region requires closer attention. We agree with the opinion expressed in the Report that in transition countries "poverty is most severe" but it is more appropriate to speak of impoverishment of the populations, since this did not use to be the case in our countries. Unemployment in the CIS is now 8 to 9 per cent of the active population, while the minimum wage in most of these countries is no higher than one-quarter of the minimum required for survival. We are also particularly concerned by labour migration in the CIS and we welcome the decision to examine the rights of labour migrants at the 92nd International Labour Conference.

At last year's 4th Congress of the General Confederation of Trade Unions, we proposed specific measures to improve labour and living conditions and show compliance with international labour standards and we hope for ILO assistance with this.

The General Confederation of Trade Unions is the regional organization which brings together most of the CIS trade unions to ensure compliance with ILO fundamental labour standards, improve living standards of workers and protect their basic rights.

At our initiative, a series of measures has been taken to enhance the legal situation of trade unions. A framework employment code has been developed and rules drawn up to govern relations between employers and trade unions within a transnational corporation.

Our confederation, which has regional consultative status with the ILO, intends to continue working with the ILO to assist in its activities to disseminate and strengthen its goals and principles in the CIS. In conclusion, I would like to express our satisfaction at the contact with the ILO Moscow Office, and particularly the ILO workers' relations' representative.

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

Globalization is today a fact that cannot be ignored. The General Workers' Union agrees with the main conclusions of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization that the transfer of benefits to the largest number possible requires local responses that bring about the necessary reforms in employment, labour and social protection policies.

However, the achievement of this objective demands healthy industrial relations between the social partners.

In this context, we believe that the major characteristic of a good industrial relations system is social dialogue. By social dialogue, we understand mutual respect between the parties and the recognition that all social partners have an essential role to play.

In last year's message to this Conference, I made this point and encouraged the other social partners to establish a fruitful dialogue in order to solve the burn-

ing issues that arose with the introduction of new legislation to govern industrial relations in Malta.

It is to our satisfaction that, after a difficult start, the three social actors in Malta together succeeded in resolving most of the difficulties that arose out of the proposed legislation.

One aspect that we emphasize at all times is that social dialogue must be based on social justice. Social justice brings in new dimensions to the concept of social dialogue. Without social justice, social dialogue would be simply lip service or, rather, a management tool to secure consent without any benefits going to the labour side.

Social justice ensures that social partners accept each other and in such a way that respect is built within society. It is also through social justice that we can start to get rid of workers' exploitation and poverty, and that workers will be accepted with full human dignity and given full human rights. Hence labour will not be seen simply as a human resource no different from all other resources — that once it has been used it is finished with.

Social justice guarantees that labour is seen as resourceful humans who are full stakeholders in society.

This is the type of local response that is needed as it brings about deep-rooted reforms in local policies. Otherwise, social dialogue becomes only a superficial exercise which will not resolve the problems that arise. The General Workers' Union feels that there is much to be done on this front in Malta.

I will briefly point to two instances, where social dialogue could have better served its purpose. As I mentioned earlier, the three social partners smoothed out most of the difficulties connected with the new labour legislation which was enacted last year. However, there is still one problem which needs to be addressed.

Government employees are denied the right of seeking redress through arbitration. They can only revert to industrial action if their job is not declared an essential service. We sincerely hope that the Government will see sense and guarantee this right to all its employees in order to facilitate smooth industrial relations in the public interest.

The other instance to which I would like to refer is the issue of pensions. Recently the Government indicated its intention to take unpopular measures in this sector. We appeal to the Government to use the social dialogue process on this issue to find a lasting solution to this problem. The structure for such dialogue already exists.

The General Workers Union, for its part will continue to insist that social dialogue, based on the principles of social justice will provide the essential mechanisms to lead us towards a better future.

Mr. KOSIN (*Employers delegate, Thailand*) — It is a great pleasure for me, on behalf of Thai employers, and in my own capacity as the Chairman of the Employers' Confederation of Thai Trade and Industry, to extend my warmest greetings to all participants in the 91st Session of the Conference of the International Labour Organization.

I am glad that I come from Thailand, a country where labour relations are relatively amicable, with few labour disputes or work stoppages. Employees' confederations and employers' confederations often hold joint meetings and seminars in order to foster good working relations between employees and

employers in various organizations and private enterprises.

In addition, we co-sign and submit suggestions and/or recommendations to the Government with a view to improving labour relations practices throughout the country. In doing so, we indicate the many areas where improvements and satisfactory progress have been made.

I am proud to report to all of you that, earlier this year, the Thai Government published a Royal Order concerning unemployment insurance, which will become effective on 1 January 2004. The rules, regulations and standard operational procedures will be announced by the Ministry of Labour. This is a new trend aimed at upgrading the quality of life of the poor people who are jobless and those who have been employed but who are faced with being laid off owing to the economic recession.

Thai employers have worked closely with the Government in various matters to promote safety at work, occupational health, welfare and a healthy working environment. Our tripartite committees are working well together and collaborate fully. A few ideas and concepts do pose problems which can ultimately be resolved. The majority of private companies and enterprises throughout the country, especially in the industrial zone have set up a welfare committee to supervise safety, occupational health and environmental matters.

Another subject which I would like to talk about is the decent work deficit. In Thailand, employers provide equal employment opportunities for women without any discrimination. Opportunities for promotion are given to all employees at all levels. Thousands of qualified and competent women are appointed as supervisory personnel and managerial personnel as well as CEOs (Our present cabinet includes a female minister and assistant minister.)

Child labour is also avoided. We believe that our children should go to school to be educated and we enforce the Labour Protection Act, 1998. There are, however, some instances of child labour in remote areas or in small home industries, fishery and agriculture which will be eliminated in the very near future.

Recently, on 26-27 May 2003, the Ministry of Labour organized a workshop on the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) In order to prepare the action plan in pursuance of the Convention for the prohibition of an immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The participants included government officials and representatives of employers' confederations, employees' confederations and NGOs. We hope that these action plans will continue in force after the complete report has been submitted to the International Labour Organization.

I would next like to move on to the topic of Thai Labour Standards (Thai Corporate Social Responsibility Specification). The last meeting of the subcommittee on labour standard development considered and agreed on basic principles, including management systems, forced labour, workers' compensation, working hours, discipline and punishment, child labour, female labour, freedom of association, collective bargaining, etc. The Thai labour standards will be implemented this year. I would like to point out that the Thai labour standards are the product of full cooperation between the Government, employers and employees in the form of tripartite as well as public

hearings. Hence, the relationship between the Thai employers' confederations and the Government has been cordial.

Thai labour laws have been constantly reviewed and revised. For example, the Labour Protection Act, 1998, Labour Relations Act, 1975, and Labour Court Act, 1979 are being modified.

Last but not least, my statement would be incomplete if I forget to mention the Report of the Director-General of the ILO. In general, we agree with its observations and suggestions. We concur that every employee has rights and deserves decent work and a decent living. But in fact, a good question to ask is what is a decent standard of living? Who will define it and give us the proper guidelines. And who will it be accepted by the all the countries concerned?

In conclusion, I wish to state that the Thai Employers' Confederation will cooperate fully with the ILO and the Government to make this a fruitful Conference. Finally, on behalf of the Thai people I would like to invite all of you to visit Thailand, the land of smiles, and I guarantee that your visit to our country will be an unforgettable one.

Original Portuguese: Mr. DOS REIS (Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Brazil) — First of all, I congratulate the President on his election and wish him every success in steering the work ahead. The Director-General's Report is a document which needs no improvement. In a very educational way, using statistical data drawn from various international bodies, it addresses the theme of working out of poverty, which is one of great relevance to our country. Our President, a former trade unionist, has launched a programme entitled "zero hunger" and, a few days ago in the French city of Evian, close to Geneva, he requested the G8 governments to set up a worldwide fund to combat poverty. We and all our bodies and leaders support the initiatives of President Lula in fighting hunger in our country and throughout the world. We draw your attention to the equity and feasibility of the Brazilian proposal of setting up a worldwide fund to combat poverty and the structural causes of this inhumane phenomenon, based on the taxation of arms sales and percentages of the external debt repayments of poor and developing countries. With this initiative, the new Government of Brazil, and President Lula in particular, have, in my view, brought up to date and built on the historic campaigns and measures put forward by that great Brazilian, friend of workers and trade unions, the world-famous, Josué de Castro. For years, this great Brazilian embodied the fight against hunger and malnutrition in Brazil and throughout the world. In the various multilateral organizations in which he either participated or led, he tirelessly proposed practical measures for dealing with the scourge of hunger. We support peace amongst peoples and we are against wars. Three months ago, the Brazilian trade union movement and the CGT adopted a unanimous stance on this issue, both in our governing bodies and at the Third World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. We reject all military interventions by powers which arrogate the imperialist notion of might is right. We support the integration of peoples of the Americas, the end of trade and protectionist barriers, the abolition of agricultural subsidies and the strengthening of MERCOSUR, and demand, in line with the unanimous position of the Brazilian trade union bodies, an open and transparent

discussion on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) The CGT opposes the way in which the FTAA has been set up and presented. We have defended our position on every occasion and took an active part in the unofficial plebiscite which overwhelmingly rejected this idea. We extend our solidarity to all workers struggling in the world against unemployment, precarious working conditions and heinous discrimination against trade unions. With regard to the discussion relating to the organization of the Brazilian trade union movement, we believe this falls within the competence of the Brazilian working classes and the National Congress. It is a national issue. Three years ago, the CGT of Brazil at this same rostrum urged parliamentarians from all countries in the world to create the conditions in which job creation could contribute to the fight against poverty, which remains with us today as an indictment on this century. Today, we are still discussing the growth of poverty in the world, and the Director-General of the ILO has told us that "we know that work is the best route out of poverty. But one cannot legislate employment in and poverty out. It is a long and complex process that requires all elements of society to work together". As he highlights in his Report, we must overcome poverty through work without risks. The poorest workers are those with least protection, and it is unacceptable that, in the twenty-first century, the poor should still have to accept unlimited risks to their health and safety, simply because they are poor. Over the next decade, added Ambassador Juan Somavia, over 1 billion young people, aged between 5 and 15 today, will join the adult labour force. The world's labour force is growing at a rate of more than 50 million people each year, a truly frightening figure. Furthermore, almost half of the over 1 billion people living on US\$1 a day or less in developing and transition countries are of working age, that is to say between 15 and 64 years of age. There are 180 million people unemployed worldwide, almost half of which are young people under the age of 24. This is why we firmly support the first job programme announced in Geneva by President Lula.

Finally, the Director-General's Report concludes by urging the world of work to get mobilized in an effort to end poverty. He warns: "the world community is preoccupied with containing risks of a breakdown of stability and security. These risks cannot be ignored. However, overcoming these dangers requires a vision of the potential of increased international cooperation for shared objectives." On the second of this month, and on that same night, we were provided with evidence that society will no longer stand for being sidelined. Geneva saw a popular demonstration of proportions that I believe it has rarely seen before. This was a rising of the people in protest at the G8 meeting with one slogan — "resist, do not give in". We are all people, we are all human beings, made of flesh and blood and bone, whether rich or poor. Let us demand tranquility, calm and safety for all. Let us demand more democracy. Let us protest against these great masses of money that have been built up on the backs of poor workers.

Original Arabic: Mr. IBRAHIM ABDO (Employers' delegate, Egypt) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! On behalf of the Egyptian employers, I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his re-election to head the International

Labour Organization. I would also like to congratulate the President on his election to guide the deliberations of the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference.

May I pay tribute to the Director-General on his very comprehensive Report and make a few remarks on it.

We subscribe to the idea that work is the best route out of poverty. It is necessary that the struggle against poverty, or at least the reduction of the effects of poverty, should have the support of all three social partners: governments, employers and workers. This is a considerable task which will prompt us to create the strategies necessary to meet everybody's needs.

We would like to make an appeal for efforts to continue in a context of tripartism. This is, as you know, the strong point of our Organization, and will enable us to achieve our objectives.

The Director General's Report allows the ILO and its bodies to respond to the aspirations of all those who live in poverty day in, day out. I would like to stress here the link between decent work, viewed as a development programme, on the one hand, and poverty, on the other. It is necessary in this respect to emphasize gender equality. We must therefore focus our efforts on guaranteeing decent work.

We are cooperating with the other international organizations to reduce the effects of poverty and, if possible, to eradicate them, in the context of the Millennium Development Goals in this respect.

For the Federation of Egyptian Industries, it is an honour for us to be able to remind you of what is provided for in the ILO's Constitution which was, of course established, in 1919, and one can read the following words there: "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice".

One of the major objectives is to eradicate poverty. Poverty, wherever it may be, is a threat to prosperity and to security. We know that work is the only way of achieving this objective. Through work, we can create wealth and distribute it better. Through work, we can give individuals and citizens a way of working decently and we can guarantee them dignity. This has to form part and parcel of a development programme, which will create wealth, in order to make the world a better place.

In the context of tripartism, in Egypt, each of the social partners plays a key role in reducing poverty. The Government aims to protect the values that we have in our country and to guarantee the private sector its rightful role in order to create jobs and increase investment and to create new markets. Proof of this is the new law which was promulgated in collaboration with the social partners. This is a law which guarantees the social rights of workers, and we would like to thank the ILO for its valuable assistance in this respect.

The role of our federation is essential in the fight against poverty. We are also aiming to guarantee decent work and to ensure the right to property. We help small and medium-sized artisans, and our efforts transcend the region, because we are trying to put in place a network which will benefit small and medium-sized enterprises, in order to create a favourable climate for their prosperity.

Finally, as the representative of the Federation of Egyptian Industries, I would once again like to thank the Director-General for his excellent Report.

Original Russian: Mr. LEPIK (Workers' delegate, Poland) — I would like to congratulate the President on his election and to wish the Director-General every success in the work of this Organization.

On behalf of the Polish Worker delegates to the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference, I would like to share some concerns regarding the issues of non-compliance in Poland with provisions of labour legislation on the payment of wages and other benefits owed to workers. Increasingly, complaints are being received directly from workers. It is a dramatic situation. Last year, there was a dramatic increase, compared to the previous year, in the number of cases of non-payment of wages. The money is not paid on time, or it is not paid at all. On the basis of the number of complaints received from workers and the results of monitoring by the labour inspectorate and other surveys, we believe that this may affect one-third of all enterprises. In addition, as a result of ignorance by negligence by employers, there are many errors in the calculation of wages, particularly with regard to holiday pay, overtime, or weekend work. This problem particularly affects the construction sector, exporting enterprises, and health sector enterprises. In most cases, the reason for the violation of the labour legislation was given as a decline in the number of orders and, in the case of the health sector, a lack of resources.

An important reason for this phenomenon is the deliberate infringement of rights, particularly through saving at the expense of workers, even when the financial situation of the employers is relatively healthy. One particular example is failure to count the full number of hours worked. Employers also cut costs respecting agreements under civil law.

It is unacceptable that national and medical insurance contributions by workers are withheld by employers. Some employers have no compunction in acting in this way. They realized that, in the current economic situation in Poland, where unemployment is running at an average of 19 per cent, and, in the younger age group up to age 25 years, over 40 per cent, and where wages are low for most of the population, they can afford to reintroduce labour relations reminiscent of the 19th century. Workers are afraid of losing their jobs and do not complain, or are afraid to divulge the full facts to the labour inspectorate. They put up with the conditions that are offered.

The Polish courts also have difficulty in keeping up with this problem. There is a growing backlog of cases. Employers frequently fail to turn up at court, and this delays examination of the cases. Even where they lose a case, they still do not pay the sums owed to the workers.

The Polish trade unions, together with the Labour Protection Council of the Polish Parliament and the state inspection bodies, are consistently opposing this practice. Together with the State Labour Inspectorate, the trade unions are conducting wide-ranging, awareness-raising and publicity activities in connection with payments due to workers under the terms of collective agreements and how to claim them. We feel that employers' organizations should also be involved in these activities, and so we call for the Polish employers' organizations to draw up and enforce a code of conduct for employers.

This code should also implement the principles of the Global Compact, the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. The Global

Compact recommends that companies support, adopt and implement in all areas of their activity nine fundamental rules in the field of human rights, labour standards and environmental protection.

In our view, one of the most important principles of the Global Compact is the principle of eliminating all violations of human rights, including workers' rights by employers. We in the Polish trade union movements have therefore, since April 2000, been disseminating this valuable United Nations initiative.

In view of the seriousness of the issue of non-compliance with labour legislation as regards payments of salaries, we call on the ILO Governing Body to place this issue on the agenda of a future upcoming session.

Original Russian: Mr. KOZIK (Workers' delegate, Belarus) — We would like to express satisfaction at the precise definition of the theme for the Report which focuses on one of the most pressing issues of our time. The workers of Belarus share your concern about the need to establish conditions so that people can work their way out of poverty.

I would also like to support the Report's conclusion that this is a task not only for workers but also for employers and for governments. Our efforts must be focused on consolidating all States in order to eradicate poverty as a social phenomenon. Of course, we must also support the conclusion that to attain this objective we must establish constructive dialogue among the social partners.

In Belarus, as a State with a transition economy, there is still a large number of people whose standard of living needs to be improved. In Belarus, unemployment is only three per cent of the economically active population, and young people have the right to higher education and a guaranteed first job, but the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB), which represents four million people, or 90 per cent of the economically active population, is attempting to raise workers' standard of living, particularly through ensuring that everybody has the right to a job and decent wage.

Over the past ten months the Government has resolved several important issues connected with improving conditions for workers, particularly through a renewed social dialogue among trade unions, the Government and employers.

We thank the ILO and a number of national trade unions which showed solidarity with us and supported our position. The FPB is now a powerful organization in Belarus, financially and organisationally independent of the authorities, the Government and the employers and anyone who believes otherwise is deeply mistaken or deceived.

It is our very independence that irritates the authorities, the Government and the employers but this is normal. I know of no country where the three partners co-exist in total harmony. If there are such countries, it means they do not have freedom of association or partnership.

We are also convinced that only through our unity, that has emerged particularly over the past year, can the workers of Belarus have the opportunity of influencing government decisions when they are being drafted and adopted. We have been able to defend the right of technical and legal labour inspectors to work freely and to reverse the wage freeze in the state sector, along with obtaining the right to collect trade union dues and resolving a number of other matters.

We consider these to be very important factors in the battle to improve workers' living conditions.

We are also convinced that it is only through working together that the Belorussian workers can obtain all their rights. Unfortunately, there are some who attempt to undermine the position of the trade unions in Belarus. At a time when we need to be fighting poverty, as mentioned, quite correctly, in the Report, some people attempt to avoid resolving important social and economic issues.

We adopted as the cornerstone of our work, the Report's statement that "the absence of social cohesion is a severe brake on development and in extreme circumstances can undermine the capacity of states to govern". These are very powerful and profound words, since hostility and mistrust among the social partners, and a lack of unity in the trade union movement, can never form a strong foundation for a socially developed society.

I would like, once more, to thank the Director-General on behalf of the Belorussian workers for the Report. I hope that its conclusion that everybody is entitled to work, without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, previous posts held or jobs done, and the right to a decent wage, social security, freedom of association and a life without poverty will serve to guide not only ourselves but all who in their work are connected with the activities of the ILO.

Original French: Ms. RUIZ (representative, Social Alert) — Social Alert is an international coalition comprising workers' organizations, trade unions and peace movements. The social, economic and cultural rights of workers, which are widely flouted all over the world, are the main subject of our concerns.

Promoting the organization of civil society, particularly of the world's workers, is a key weapon in the struggle to defend their rights and against the social injustices which affect a growing number of them all over the world.

The creation of decent jobs is of paramount importance, and that is why all possible means must be used to counteract the rising tide of poverty within the international neo-liberal context.

The ILO has to wage its struggle on two fronts. First of all, the prime objective has to be the establishment of economic, legal, social and political structures at the national and international levels to ensure that poverty does not become established in the first place. On another level, in regions where, poverty is unfortunately, already a reality, the urgency of the problem should not make us lose sight of the search for sustainable long-term solutions.

It is beyond dispute that poverty cannot be attacked in the world without taking account of one of its main causes, the growing informalization of labour relations. The informal economy constitutes an enormous wasteland in which absence of rights is commonplace and in which violence against workers goes unpunished. The fight against the informal economy cannot therefore be decoupled from the fight against poverty.

Today, we are witnessing growing insecurity in the world of work, as the world of work is moving towards social breakdown among the peoples of the world, towards poverty and destitution.

The ILO must therefore re-align its policy on the fight against poverty, not only within the context of decent work, but also in the context of an

equitable economy and the re distribution of collective wealth.

In less than 100 days' time, the WTO negotiations at Cancun will give the go ahead to the progressive liberalization of international trade in services thus paving the way for new forms of exploitation of labour. In the context of these neo-liberal policies of deregulation, we think it essential to strengthen the role of the ILO within the international organizations so that it may assert itself as a strong institution which protects workers' interests. In this respect, we welcome the creation of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, a very positive initiative which should be promoted and publicized more at the international level and in civil society.

We also welcome the participation of the ILO in civil society forums, such as the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre in recent years, because this has laid the foundations for an international social dialogue and a new and fairer form of global governance. We therefore encourage the strengthening of the participation of the ILO in public debates.

In conclusion, we would like to draw your attention to the importance of stepping up the ILO's efforts to improve statistical data. This will enable us to analyse the different situations in the world in order to make progress in the promotion of decent work for everybody.

Ms. HAGEN (*representative of the International Federation of University Women*) — We are pleased and honoured to participate in the debate on the theme that the Director-General has chosen this year for his Report, *Working out of poverty*. We believe that this theme is especially relevant because of its direct link to the theme of the Global Report, *Time for equality at work*.

As the Director-General stated in his Report, "We need a decisive tripartite commitment to the eradication of poverty." He called for a new approach to working out of poverty that emphasizes the empowerment of the poor themselves. With particular attention to the fact that most people living below the poverty line are in the informal economy, the Report notes that empowerment of the poor necessarily means finding new ways to organize workers in the informal economy. This is a challenge for the ILO because of the inherent dilemma of how people working in the informal economy might be linked up to workers and employers in the formal economy through organizations that are primarily representing workers and employers in the formal economy.

We believe that the key to this is a gender mainstreaming strategy. The Director-General has noted that particular attention should be directed to the feminization of poverty. Women suffer what the Report describes as "more intensified forms of poverty" than men. The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) believes that the Conference urgently needs to focus on this issue and to identify a plan of action for specific and comprehensive outreach to women in community organizing and empowerment of the poor.

Such a plan of action should go beyond the questions of discrimination and overcoming inequalities to a broadened appreciation of the linkages between poverty eradication, social exclusion and employment.

These three issues were tied together at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen

in 1995, where a global and national plan of action identified ways to move forward on all three. This Summit, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in the same year, produced the new concept of "gender mainstreaming". The ILO action plan this year should integrate this broadened understanding of what it ultimately takes to overcome diverse patterns of discrimination and poverty.

In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted the following definition: "mainstreaming a gender perspective is ... a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality". We at the IFUW believe that this ultimate goal of gender equality can only happen when all aspects of policies and programmes integrate a gender dimension. ILO constituents need to pursue this goal within their own organizations and in their outreach to men and women in poverty, and especially in the informal sector. At the ILO Conference itself, reforms are needed to integrate a gender perspective more definitively into its deliberations.

As article 3 of the ILO Constitution provides, "When questions specially affecting women are to be considered by the Conference, one at least of the advisers should be a woman". We believe that all questions affect women when the objective is to ensure gender equality through a mainstreaming strategy. We urge the Conference to move beyond a narrow view of what constitutes a question affecting women. A proactive and integrated view is appropriate today and requires a comprehensive constitutional requirement that all delegations should ensure the representation of both men and women in all circumstances.

Only through the active participation of both women and men in processes of dialogue and negotiation at all levels can we achieve the kind of empowerment that is needed to take us beyond poverty. This must be done at the community level, but it also should apply to the very Organization that is calling for a plan of action and global partnerships to support the fight against poverty. We urge serious consideration to reform of the ILO Constitution.

Original French: Mr. TRENCHÉV (Workers' delegate, Bulgaria) — Allow me first of all to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents, on behalf of Bulgarian Workers and wage earners, for having been elected to preside over this session. Allow me as well to express our firm conviction that, under their guidance, this 91st Session of the International Labour Conference will conclude in a tripartite agreement and will thereby set us off on the road to poverty reduction through the efforts of the social partners to ensure the right to decent work in their countries.

We are aware that, in order to create the working conditions that will allow everyone in Bulgaria to engage in freely chosen and dignified work we will have to support our Government's efforts to reduce unemployment through the enhancement of employment potential and the development of human capital.

Likewise, we would like to encourage efforts to eradicate the marginalization which arises from poverty, especially for minorities and disadvantaged social classes. To this end, we participate actively as social partners and by putting pressure on governmental authorities in our difficult fight against the informal ("grey") economy, by trying to find legislative solutions and by using the National Tripartite Cooperation Council as a forum for genuine consultation to amend labour legislation and social security. At our request, a mandatory registration system of work contracts has been established; at the same time, the Government has set, after consultation, minimum social security thresholds for different sectors and different categories of personnel. All of this will be useful to us when we renegotiate minimum wages in the new round of collective bargaining with employers. Because of this policy, hiring trends have moved from the grey economy towards the formal economy and, at present, this is providing increased revenue for our social security institutions.

The Government is also seeking urgent solutions in the area of employment, backed by the social partners, and based on encouragement of state-financed recruitment and the creation of temporary employment, especially in the services sector. Nevertheless, the only real recourse for stable and flexible employment is the considerable lowering of taxes and social contributions while at the same time encouraging investment through the creation of a favourable economic and legislative environment. All of these measures are yet to be taken. Much of the Government's thinking in terms of economics has proved to be unrealistic and inappropriate, especially with regard to privatization and the bringing in of foreign investment, and has failed to meet the expectations of Bulgarian workers in terms of better conditions and better pay.

Bulgaria is the country with the lowest standard of living and the lowest income levels of all the transition countries in Eastern Europe. Despite all of our efforts and goodwill, the country is in the second wave of candidates for admission to the European Union. We are forced to observe that, according to a study of the current situation carried out by renowned institutions and researchers, it will take us about 30 years to reach the average level of productivity and revenue of the European Union.

Undeniably, a parallel economy or "grey areas" exist everywhere. According to some estimates, 40 to 50 per cent of GDP is produced by the grey economy. The main reason for which an informal sector of such considerable proportions exists in Bulgaria is the high level of state-imposed income tax for tax purposes and social security systems.

Nevertheless, I would like to highlight the fact that Bulgarian trade unions are targeting their efforts at the protection of the basic principles in the area of work, in broadening the scope of work, adequate social protection and improving the standard of living of citizens in order to create decent work conditions in a context of a global economy.

In our view, the Government is preaching in favour of abandoning policy-making on salary earners' wages, and this is unacceptable. It is also trying to make certain amendments to the existing Labour Code which are in conflict with the spirit of the resolution adopted at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I wish every success to the International Labour Conference which will no doubt strengthen the role of labour and employment relations, not only as a means for survival in poverty but also as a stimulus for development throughout the world.

(The Conference adjourned at 7.30 p.m.)

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