



Fourteenth sitting

Thursday, 12 June 2008, 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr Salamin, Mr Tabani, Mr Louh

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR CEREMONY

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

I declare open the 14th sitting of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

The first part of the sitting will be devoted to the celebration of the World Day against Child Labour, as you will see from the flags, which for some days have been adorning this building.

We have been celebrating the World Day against Child Labour since 2002 in order to draw the public's attention to the problems of child labour.

Together with the national authorities, the social partners and other UN organizations, the ILO will today organize, in over 60 countries a number of events highlighting the central theme of this year's celebration.

Education is the best answer to child labour. It is an honour for me, therefore, to give the floor to the Director-General so that he can commence this special celebration.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

The World Day against Child Labour is a day to mobilize for change, strongly mobilize for change. This is the ILO's aim in highlighting this day. Today, as the President said, in some 60 countries around the world, women and men, girls and boys, and a lot of other friends who share in this endeavour, are doing just that. They are all part of the global movement that you have helped to create. After all, it is here that we approved the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); it is here that we approved the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). You have played a fundamental role in ensuring that the world pays attention to child labour problems.

Governments are acknowledging the universal right of all children to be free from child labour. They are taking action in the context of their own realities. I welcome Minister Lupi, and want to thank him for sharing the Brazilian experience, a very good and interesting one, with us.

Employers' and workers' organizations have been champions of the cause. Jan Eastman and Leonard Cerescu, thank you also for being here with us. International organizations have been coming together as one on this cause, Olav Seim from UNESCO symbolizes this, welcome also. The cause is joined by parliamentarians and consumers, students and non-governmental organizations. Today, I would say it is a wide societal reaction that we are seeing.

I want to thank the Mayor of Geneva, the ville and canton of Geneva, *Le Respect* and the children of Geneva, who are joining forces with us for the observance at the Place des Nations later this afternoon. And if some of you have finished your Committee work, and would also like to participate, I would invite you to be part of the ILO presence there.

Today, we unite with a simple message. We must work for every child's right to education so no child has to work for survival. We are putting the emphasis on education because, for many of the world's children, this right remains abstract, far from the realities of daily life.

Let us not forget the crucial connection between a parent with decent work and a child in school.

Today, more than 70 million primary-school-aged children are not enrolled in school. Less than half of the world's children attend secondary school. When families have to make a dramatic choice between sending a girl or a boy to school it is often the girl who loses out. We know that means societies, communities and families lose out.

Many of these children will become trapped in child labour, working for survival, often in the worst conditions. Their ordeal does not end with childhood. Denied an education, without skills, they are likely to face a future of uncertain employment and all too certain poverty, and we begin the cycle over and over again. We have to cut the cycle somewhere, and there is no doubt that education is a key way to make sure that this pattern does not repeat itself in future generations. We are here, today, because we all believe that we must break this cycle, and do so decisively.

Many countries are taking action, boosting access to education. I think that the most important thing that we must all agree on is that free education is an essential element of any stable society. Education is a right. Whether or not you have an education is not something that the market should determine. Whatever the macroeconomic arguments may be, the truth is that you cannot have a macroeconomic policy that stops children going to school, forces them into child labour and destroys their future. Education is crucial. It has to be achieved in the context of the possibilities of each country, but it has to be achieved clearly and objectively. Children have a right to go to school.

Reducing the cost of education for poor families is again a very important element. One way to do this is by providing incentives, such as cash trans-

fers, to keep children in school. Such instruments have proven extremely useful in this regard.

Employers' and workers' organizations are doing what they can, not only to mobilize opinion, but also to involve their own members in activities against child labour.

These are positive steps, and these, and a number of other efforts, are having results.

Our most recent Global Report indicated that the number of child labourers globally fell by 11 per cent over four years, with very strict statistical considerations. That meant 35 million fewer children at work. The sharpest decline was in the area of hazardous work by children, where we saw a 26 per cent reduction.

Much more is needed because, as in so many issues, one child labourer in the world is one child labourer too many. In the same way that we have eradicated other illnesses, we now have to eradicate child labour.

It is good that we are moving forward because that stimulates us to continue. This is about eradicating this phenomenon throughout the world, because that is what children need, that is what families want, and that is what societies have to be about – about the stability of children in their future life. To achieve this goal, greater political leadership is essential, greater consciousness raising is essential, especially now. The global food and fuel crisis threatens millions of families and could put children at risk of child labour.

This Conference has highlighted skills, and a better linking of schools, skills and the needs of enterprises, as being key to economic and social development. Let us not forget that meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals on education and the elimination of gender disparity also means tackling child labour.

Dear friends, let me finalize by saying that less than ten years after the adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), you have helped make it the most rapidly ratified in ILO history.

But change – lasting change – will ultimately come with solidarity and societal engagement: governments, employers, workers, development partners and others joining forces to get results. All of this must lead to change at the community level, where it will make the most difference to the lives of girls and boys and their families.

On this World Day against Child Labour, let us affirm that we will each do our part to give children and their parents hope and belief in progress. It is our responsibility to fight child labour and ensure that every child has a good education – the first crucial step towards decent work. The goal is quality education for all children and decent work for adults. But if we are going to have decent work for adults we need to have development processes and growth patterns that give priority to job creation. There is a direct relationship between getting children out of work and getting parents into work. To achieve this we also need a fair globalization, and a number of things need to happen to this end.

The best way into education for a child is for the Government to have clarity as to what needs to be done on the educational front, and for the parents not to have to depend on child labour. The development process is essential, but it is not a justification for child labour. We can understand it, but we

cannot defend it. We have to make sure that we have policies that go beyond that.

I also call on all the international organizations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the UN bodies, to act in such a way that their policy advice permits each country to have the policies that it needs in order to be able to reduce child labour and eliminate it from our societies.

I thank you all again for being here. This is a very important moment, a very important event. We must persist in our endeavours and we will have the strength and the will to make this happen.

Original Portuguese: Mr LUPÍ (Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Brazil)

On this special day which marks the World Day against Child Labour, I would like, as several speakers have already done, to stress the importance of preventive action which should be at the core of our policies relating to this topic. Education is without a doubt the key to eradicating child labour in the world.

Since 1998 we have seen a meeting of minds and also a pooling of efforts and actions within the international community, centred on the need to end child labour. In fact, in 1998, the Global March against Child Labour culminated here, having crossed over a hundred countries, with quite significant results. One of the main achievements was the commitment of virtually all member States of the Organization to ratify Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, which was adopted a year later.

In the wake of this universal undertaking and the recognition that globalization and trade competition bring with them new challenges in this regard, we have reached the following conclusion: Child labour is a symptom of a process of unequal social and economic development. It is also the outcome of shortcomings in education and social protection systems. Therefore it cannot be dealt with separately from policies relating to education, development, poverty reduction and income distribution.

The Government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva understands that the State must ensure that the necessary conditions are in place so that children and adolescents can fully develop in an environment of freedom and dignity. This means we need to ensure that they are the first to receive help, that they enjoy priority treatment as regards public services, as well as preference as regards formulating, designing and implementing social policies, and finally that they should be prime recipients of public resources via educational and assistance programmes.

Against the background of good legislation, governments, working in partnership with employers' and workers' organizations, and with the assistance of the ILO, must set out social policies, the positive results of which must be visible to society. The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is an excellent example of such a policy.

It is not enough to remove children from the world of labour. We need to establish actions and policies which ensure there is a transfer of income. For instance, in Brazil we have the *Bolsa Família* programme, which is recognized the world over for its effectiveness. It is complemented by awareness-raising actions within society. This programme has been very successful in reaching out to the poorest

areas of Brazil and is providing freedom, real freedom, for our children.

The 90th anniversary of the ILO is just around the corner, as well as the tenth anniversary of the start of the discussions on Convention No. 182. These milestones remind us that we must strive to ensure that children everywhere, regardless of the level of development of their countries, have access to education. Extreme poverty can be one of the causes, but it can never be used as an excuse for the lack of universal action against child labour.

We need to launch a global appeal on the need for full-time universal education for all children, both boys and girls, at the very least until the minimum working age. We must develop educational programmes targeting children who work, so that they have access to quality education, resources, teachers and properly trained careers advisors. Children often have to work because their families do not have resources, but education is a way for them to achieve real freedom.

It is a great honour for me to announce today that, as part of an ILO-supported Brazilian initiative, we are adding the Information System on Centres of Child Labour to the web site of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The official launch will take place later on this afternoon.

Through this system, the public can access detailed information on the greatest levels of child labour in Brazilian municipalities, and the Government actions in different fields aimed at stamping it out. In other words, we want to provide total transparency, so that not only Brazil, but the world knows the bad things that are happening in this regard. The commitment of our institution can be seen. We have constant seminars with partners in the social child and adolescent protection network, involving representatives of the unions and employers' organizations. We also constantly distribute information and guidance material in this regard.

I would like to highlight the importance of the ILO's partnership with member States and the social partners as regards cooperation over collection of proper quantitative and qualitative information relating to child labour. In Brazil, since 1992, the National Council for Children's and Young Persons' Rights (CONANDA) and the National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labour (CONAETI), which was created in 2002, have represented the concerns of Brazilian society in discussions on policies aimed at minors and on the resolution of such pressing matters as child labour.

The role of social dialogue has been absolutely fundamental within CONAETI in achieving consensus on actions that society can take against this practice.

I would like to congratulate the Brazilian people on the fact that our country is no longer receiving but actually donating resources to contribute to campaigns combating child labour in other countries. Although modest, our cooperation, for instance with Haiti and Portuguese-speaking African countries, will give a new boost to South-South cooperation.

We are particularly happy to share with the international community successful experiences that we have had, such as the *Bolsa Família* programme, which has made thousands of low-income families aware of how important it is to keep their children in school.

In conclusion, I would like to recall the vital role of the ILO in strengthening tripartism and multidisciplinary technical cooperation. We must undertake, here and now, to promote development and reduce poverty, opening up the doors wide for education for all children, girls and boys, across the world, so that they may be free of dangerous work, sexual exploitation, trafficking of individuals and slavery, which, of course, must all be eradicated as a matter of priority. I am absolutely convinced that only education, full-time education will free our children absolutely from forced labour.

Mr SEIM (*representative, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)*)

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address this important meeting on behalf of UNESCO. Child labour is a violation of the fundamental right to education and a major obstacle to school participation. It is preventing a generation of children from acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to break the cycle of poverty and gainfully participate in their societies.

A majority of the world's governments have recognized the value of education as a human right and as a development imperative. Despite progress in some countries, we are far from reaching the "education for all" goals that 164 governments agreed to in Dakar in 2000. There are still 75 million children out of primary school worldwide, 55 per cent are girls, and many of them are forced to work because they are poor and because their families cannot afford to send them to school. Seven out of ten are found in sub-Saharan Africa and south and west Asia. Out-of-school children is a result of poverty and marginalization and these children are found in remote areas and slums and include disabled working children. Thirty-seven of out-of-school children live in fragile States.

The face of exclusion from school is different in every country. This underscores the need for governments to identify children unlikely to go to school, but there are big gaps in data that make this task very difficult. There is also a need to identify early dropouts and those not reaching minimum mastery of the curriculum. Data that reflects the different profiles are excluded. An important signal, being counted, makes you visible.

Education is one of the keys to eliminating child labour. Good quality education sets a strong foundation and is a source of social, economic and cultural empowerment. Education creates a potential virtuous circle. An adequate level of education enables social and political participation, leads to improved livelihoods, better health, higher incomes and contributes to socio-economic growth and development. Education is an entry point to reach poor and vulnerable children, both in terms of nutrition, health and social protection. Quality education prepares children for lifelong learning and enables them to enter the job market.

It is vital that appropriate legal and policy frameworks are in place to ensure access to quality education with equal opportunities for all children. Special support must be given to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children to protect them from the need to work.

Unfortunately, many countries still do not have such frameworks and are not able to provide free compulsory primary education. It is difficult to hold governments accountable when many poor coun-

tries simply do not have the resources to offer education to all.

UNESCO's guidelines of inclusion from 2005 identify inclusion as a process of responding to the diversity of all learners by increasing participation and reducing exclusion within and from education. Inclusive education means changes in content, approaches, structures and strategies, and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate our children.

UNESCO affirms that promoting an inclusive education system is the key to reaching out to all those who are excluded within and from education, including children that are kept away from school because they have to work.

With its partners, UNESCO is firmly committed to combating child labour. It is the mandate of the Organization to help member States to formulate policies to increase access to education and improve its quality through both universal and targeted measures.

UNESCO's Director-General, Mr Koïchiro Matsura, has made a statement for this event. You will find copies of this at the green tables by the exit. I hope you will read it. Thank you so much for your attention.

Ms EASTMAN (*representative, Education International*)

Education is the right response. It may be the only response that makes a real difference. Children are people. They too have rights, including the right to equality and the right to education. It has taken the world a very long time to recognize children as people with rights, articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And this is still not the case for 218 million children under the age of 18 involved in child labour, and 72 million children not in school at all, the majority of whom are girls. The fundamental rights of these children are violated. Their childhood is lost, the cycle of poverty and illiteracy is perpetuated. No hope for a better future. I cannot imagine, no, I do not want to imagine, how sexual exploitation or hard labour at a young age affects that person's development; or what using large and dangerous machinery, with no training, does to a child's psyche; being trafficked to an unknown place for an unpalatable purpose; enticed to become a child soldier because it seems a way out, a better option than the poverty and violence of the daily life. Fear, exhaustion, hunger, boredom, pain and entrapment; body-destroying, mind-numbing, spirit-annihilating labour, in fields, factories, mines, sweatshops, streets, other people's houses and elsewhere.

The list is long, but, make no mistake, the worst forms of child labour must be eliminated, but we must do so by eliminating all forms of child labour.

There is a growing global consensus that using children as a form of cheap and expendable labour, the worst jobs at the lowest pay, is wrong and must change. And I have to say there is much consensus on this panel this morning as well. But I ask, do we have the requisite political will?

Poverty, education and child labour are inextricably linked and, while a root cause is poverty, the way out is through education. Free, compulsory, relevant, accessible, child-friendly, quality public education is an effective and sustainable strategy as a preventative and as a rehabilitative measure. It encourages children to go to school and to stay in school.

We know that when quality education is available, parents will choose to send their children to school instead of to the workplace. The converse is also true, that parents may be swayed by child labour recruiters to send their children away, especially girls in rural areas, where the lack of education and training facilities leave them aimless, as well as poor.

The education for all goals of ensuring early childhood education and care, primary education for the hardest to reach and most marginalized, providing quality education for all and removing gender inequality, are the most important steps in eliminating child labour.

A child who is in school full time is more likely not to engage in child labour. Hence, expanding access is necessary, as is the provision of quality education. Not a second-class education, not a mere few hours to make a break from the long workday. Teachers know only too well that tired, hungry, stressed children do not learn.

More and better trained teachers, with a higher proportion of women, are fundamental in promoting real learning and giving girls equality in schools. Attracting and retaining good teachers also means providing resources, in-service training, decent pay and job security. Freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and adequate funding for public education are all essential prerequisites. Large classes, few resources, low pay and no support are conditions that demotivate teachers and cause them to leave.

The current worsening employment conditions for teachers, the need identified by UNESCO for 18 million qualified teachers by 2015, and the dangerous trend of hiring unqualified teachers, pose barriers indeed to the provision of quality education. And in some places – Zambia, for example – a cap on salaries imposed by the World Bank makes it impossible for the Government to hire the available qualified teachers. In other places, qualified teachers are simply not available.

Relevant curricula delivered by qualified caring and committed teachers are also essential, as are classrooms where learning can take place, clean water and food for hungry children, sanitary and private toilets, safety to and from school. School fees are barriers for poor families and, moreover, when a family has to make a choice between sending either a boy or a girl to school, it is often the girl who loses out. Girls do face double, even triple, jeopardy, especially in rural settings. They often labour in the family home long after the day's work and societal attitudes and traditional practices still serve to exclude girls in many places. Special measures are indeed needed.

If education is to be for all, it must be inclusive, it must reach out to poor and disadvantaged groups, the most vulnerable: illiterates, rural, indigenous, migrant communities, those with disabilities, and HIV/AIDS-affected children. The incidence of child labour among these groups is high.

Teachers and their unions contribute in vital and far-reaching ways. Through daily interaction in the lives of children, teachers can and do take on a monitoring role, working with the child, the parent and the community. They are uniquely placed to educate and mobilize, because they understand the linkage between the elimination of child labour and education for all. Workers, governments and em-

ployers have a shared responsibility also, and must continue to work in concert.

The ILO's fair globalization and Decent Work Agenda are also key, and the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), working with unions, with governments, with employers, and with other international agencies, has led the way to achieving the progressive elimination of child labour by strengthening national capacities and by building a worldwide movement to combat child labour. It is an important and valued partner for the trade union movement, and most certainly for Education International and its members.

Global union federations, together with the International Trade Union Confederation and ILO-IPEC, are necessary and willing players in the mobilization necessary to achieve the elimination of child labour.

I reiterate my basic points, colleagues, prior to finishing.

Poverty, education and child labour are inextricably linked. Quality, compulsory until the minimum age of employment, free, relevant, formal education that is inclusive, is the key.

All forms of child labour must be our focus. Primary and secondary education are essential, and at the very least, basic education.

International advocacy, action and predictable aid are mandatory, and stable and adequate funding is crucial. Decent work for parents means a better chance of school for children, independence, respect, dignity and hope for a better future.

Original Moldovan: Mr CERESCU (Employer, Moldova)

The World Day against Child Labour, marked today throughout the world, is a good opportunity for the National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova to repeat before this high assembly our commitment to prevent and combat the worst forms of child labour.

In so doing, I should like to express the hope that the time is not far off when 12 June will become a merely commemorative day for humanity, for the simple reason that the worst forms of child labour will have been eliminated.

To bring this moment closer, we know that we can count on our faithful partner, the ILO. The support given by the ILO in the activities of employers' organizations was extremely important for the drafting and adoption in Moldova in December 2007 of a code of conduct for employers, to help eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

This document was the result of an employer initiative, the employers from all regions of the Republic of Moldova, put forward by the National Federation of Employers of Agriculture and the Food Industry, and supported by the Government and the unions.

In other words, the National Federation of Employers of Agriculture and the Food Industry, which is a member of our National Confederation, has become an important participant in preventing and combating child labour in Moldova, actively making use of social dialogue for the development of special policies and initiating discussions, at the local and the regional levels.

"A child's place is at school, and their work is their books". This is the slogan of our activity since 2005 in the context of a project on the elimination of child labour in agriculture in the Republic of Moldova.

This slogan is perfectly in line with the topic of the World Day against Child Labour, through education, to the elimination of child labour. So that children should succeed in life, all children and young people from Moldova, or any other country, have to receive a high quality of education until they reach working age.

A high-quality education for all serves as the bridge, by means of which children, when they become adults, move forward in life. It is this understanding of child labour that makes it possible for the employers of Moldova to find decent alternatives to help eliminate it where it occurs.

In order to bring closer that bright tomorrow, when we will no longer need a World Day against Child Labour, we need today to consolidate efforts at the local and national levels in order to fight this phenomenon.

To bring about this aim, we need to change the mentality and behaviour of citizens in society, including employers, so that children should not be considered as a cheap workforce, helping to solve their families' poverty problems but as the qualified workers of tomorrow, well-educated and able to make a real contribution to development and progress of their countries. Until that time we must, and we will, repeat that education is the best response to the problem of child labour and we will constantly back up our words with real and visible acts.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

I would like to thank all our distinguished speakers for their eloquence, which testifies to the major effort that is being made to eliminate child labour. A great deal remains to be done, however, to achieve our goal of fully eradicating this scourge.

You have seen from the great variety of our speakers that our commitment to eliminate child labour is global in nature, and it was very opportune to have declared today the World Day against Child Labour. It gives us an opportunity to stop for a moment during our Conference, and to think about one of the fundamental principles underlying work. It enables us to take the pulse of the current situation and to identify the major challenges before us if we are to attain our objective.

However, the effort that all the participants in the Conference are making in this direction, goes far beyond this one special day.

I am convinced that you will all agree with me that ensuring that boys, girls and adolescents in our respective countries can have access to education which will open up to them better employment opportunities and a decent standard of living is a priority objective on our national agendas.

I would like here to make a comment in my capacity as Minister of Labour of Panama, which is also committed to this goal. In my country, for example, in June 2006, we adopted the National Plan to Eradicate Child Labour and to Protect Working Adolescents 2007-11, thereby making good on the promise made by Panama as a signatory to the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). This Plan, however, entails substantial investment in terms of scholarships, with parents being responsible for their children. It provides for direct action to withdraw children from employment; and ensures that we live up to our national

standards by providing protection for working adolescents and preventing child labour.

Thank you very much for having allowed me to speak on this subject.

The responsibility for building a future without child labour rests on all our shoulders, whether governments, workers, employers, community organizations or popular movements of the public in general. We are following this road so as to provide decent work for parents, quality education for the children and genuine opportunities for young people. Let us continue our efforts to achieve our goals and eliminate child labour, and let us commit ourselves to continue investing in the defence of the right of all children to enjoy their childhood.

(Mr Tabani takes the Chair.)

**SECOND REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE:
SUBMISSION AND NOTING, AND APPROVAL OF THE
COMMITTEE'S PROPOSALS**

The PRESIDENT

Our first task is to approve the second report of the Credentials Committee which was published in *Provisional Record* No. 4C.

I invite the Officers of the Committee to join me on the podium: Mr Kirigua, Chairperson and Reporter; Ms Horvatic, Employer Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Edström, Worker Vice-Chairperson.

I call on the Reporter, Mr Kirigua, to present the report.

Mr KIRIGUA (Chairperson of the Credentials Committee)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Conference for the honour and confidence that you have bestowed upon me and my country, Kenya, by electing me as Chairperson of the Credentials Committee during this session of the Conference. For the first time, I have the honour to present to the Conference a short overview of the activities of the Credentials Committee, the full account of which is reflected in the Committee's two reports issued as *Provisional Records* Nos 4B and 4C.

The Credentials Committee continued this year with an extremely heavy workload that has now almost become the rule. At this session of the Conference, the Committee dealt with 16 objections that were submitted to it. These relate to the credentials of delegates and their advisers accredited to the Conference and appearing in the *Provisional list of delegations* or failure to deposit the credentials of Employers' or Workers' delegates. The Committee also dealt with four complaints regarding the non-payment of expenses of Workers' and Employers' delegates and one communication.

The Committee held six hearings with the authors of the objections and the governments concerned when it found that the written information was not sufficient and that there was need for either more information or clarification. Some of the cases that were dealt with were similar to those that the Committee had dealt with in the past. These included the cases of Djibouti, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In the case of Djibouti, the Committee recommends, in accordance with article 26bis, paragraph 7, of the *Interim Provisions of the Conference Standing Orders concerning the verification of credentials*, that the monitoring that the Conference

decided upon last year be extended for one more year. This recommendation is based on the fact that the response by the Government to the previous requests of the Conference was insufficient and also on a new objection reflecting the particularly difficult trade union situation in the country. Our proposal is contained in paragraph 13 of the second report, and we invite you to adopt it.

In the case of Myanmar, the Committee also proposes extending the monitoring that the Conference decided upon last year, in particular, considering that Myanmar did not nominate the Workers' delegate this year in order to avoid an objection concerning such a nomination. This particular case illustrates how the Committee's new mandate to examine objections concerning the failure to nominate the Employers' and Workers' delegates closed the gap. Today, it is no longer possible to escape the Committee's scrutiny by not nominating those particular delegates. I wish to draw the Conference's attention to paragraph 64 of our second report and invite you to adopt our proposal contained in that paragraph.

We also decided to propose monitoring the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the nomination of representatives of the employers' organizations. The Committee finds that the Government did not make any progress in this regard since last year and considers that the objections are based on "serious and credible allegations" that the Employers' delegation was not nominated in accordance with the requirements of the ILO Constitution. The Government failed to adequately take into account last year's recommendations, and the Committee had to reiterate the same. In this regard I draw your attention to paragraph 55 of the report and invite you to adopt our proposal for monitoring.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is the only member State against which objections were lodged by both Employers and Workers. The Committee is concerned by the objections that it keeps receiving every year and made a number of practical suggestions on possible measures the Government could take. In view of this, the Committee encourages the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to take into account our comments and recommendations so as to avoid having to answer the requests for information from the Credentials Committee at next year's session of the Conference.

As regards complaints concerning the non-payment of the travel and subsistence expenses of the Employers' and Workers' delegations of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Committee was informed, after publication of the report, that all members of the delegation were already attending the Conference.

Once again, the Committee invites governments and employers' and workers' organizations to take full advantage of the credentials database on the ILO website for the verification of credentials. The database provides useful historical and current information on the work of the Credentials Committee and also provides useful guidance regarding the constitutional principles governing the nomination of tripartite delegations.

Regarding the participation of women delegates, the Committee noted with concern, in our first report, that women are rarely adequately represented in national delegations. Indeed the United Nations target of at least 30 per cent participation by women delegates still remains far from being achieved as,

during this session of the Conference, women delegates account for only 25.7 per cent. In view of this scenario, we once again appeal, not only to Governments, but also to Employers and Workers, to raise the proportion of women in their delegations.

The Committee wishes to thank the Standing Orders Committee and the Conference itself for having adopted the *Interim Provisions of the Conference Standing Orders concerning the verification of credentials* as an integral part of the Conference Standing Orders. The Committee recalls that it was on its initiative that these provisions were proposed and therefore expresses its appreciation to all those who contributed to their final adoption.

At the end of the report, the Committee made general comments on two issues that have some impact on its work. The first concerns the practice of allowing permanent missions of member States in Geneva to collect Conference badges for their entire tripartite delegations. While the Committee appreciates that this eases the registration process for their delegations, it nevertheless brings about another problem. That is the problem of delegates having been automatically registered as attending the Conference even if they are, in fact, absent. This has tended to distort the basis for calculating the Conference quorum, especially for voting purposes and increases the probability of a vote either failing or having to be postponed because of the lack of a quorum. The Committee therefore recommends that the practice be restricted.

The Committee is also concerned by the fact that a number of governments were late in providing their replies to requests for information. One reply was even received after the end of the Committee's deliberations. The Committee urges governments to endeavour to have representatives available that have full authority to collaborate with the Committee to ensure that government replies are received in good time.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my two colleagues, Ms Lidija Horvatić, Employers' delegate, Croatia; and Mr Ulf Edström, Workers' delegate, Sweden, for their dedication to the spirit of cooperation and consensus which characterized our deliberations this year.

Finally, please allow me to thank the secretariat under the able untiring stewardship of Mr Petrovic, for their commitment, efficiency and excellent technical support.

I thank you all for your confidence and wish you a successful completion of the remaining work of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT

The Credentials Committee has adopted its second report unanimously. The Conference is called upon to note it and to approve the proposals contained in paragraphs 13, 55 and 64, which concern the delegations of Djibouti, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Myanmar.

May I take it that the Conference notes the report and adopts these proposals?

(The report is noted and the proposals contained in paragraphs 13, 55 and 64 are approved.)

I should like to express my gratitude to the Officers of the Credentials Committee for their excellent work. The secretariat has provided valiant and

efficient support to the Committee and also deserves our warm thanks.

We thank the Committee for its excellent work.

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

The PRESIDENT

We shall now continue the discussion of the Reports of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Original German: Ms COTMAN (Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Slovenia)

Allow me to express my thanks to the Director-General, Mr Somavia, for his excellent Report, which covers all the challenges facing the world today. The International Labour Conference is, indeed, an excellent opportunity for an exchange of good practices, ideas and opinions.

In my opinion, the international community has wholeheartedly embraced the concept of decent work. At the same time, it is being implemented successfully at national and regional levels.

The implementation of decent work involves very many aspects. When drafting policies account needs to be taken of the different circumstances of individual countries. An important concept for Slovenia is flexicurity, i.e. a combination of security and flexibility – thereby allowing as many people as possible to cope with globalization. By adopting various measures, we want to create conditions so that people can enjoy reasonable social security, while at the same time increasing labour market flexibility.

In Slovenia, we are trying to encourage the unemployed to start working. Recently, there has been a cut in the number of long-time unemployed, as well as in the number of unemployed as a whole – a group mostly made up of women, older people and the less well-educated.

The measures taken by the Government of Slovenia concentrate particularly on: improving job opportunities for the most vulnerable groups; providing training and continuous training for the unemployed and those with less education; providing financial incentives to employers; creating employment programmes in the public sector; encouraging older workers; and allowing workers to combine their family and professional activities.

Our experience and examples of good practices in a number of areas is something that we, in Slovenia, share with people in other countries. Such projects are often carried out in cooperation with the ILO.

In order to guarantee decent work, we are responsible at the global level. In his Report, the Director-General referred to the world financial crisis, high food costs, the large number of people who live below the poverty level and climate change. In this context, responsibility needs to be borne by individuals but also by groups in civil society and by governments – and the ILO can also play a key role here. It has virtually a universal membership and comparative advantages, such as its tripartite structure and international labour standards.

Much has already been achieved in respect to the Organization's recognition and acceptance of the decent work concept. I am convinced that with projects such as the national programmes for decent work, and into the adoption of the Declaration on

Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, we are going in the right direction. However, it is necessary not just to rest on our laurels but rather to make further progress.

I am pleased that discussions are taking place concerning the strengthening of the ILO's capacities, and I hope that the outcomes will give rise to a more effective Organization in the international arena.

Original Hungarian: Mr VARGA (Worker, Hungary)

On behalf of Hungarian employees, I most respectfully greet all the participants of this Conference. Mr President, may I congratulate you on your election to this post and I wish you every success for this very important work.

As this is the first occasion that I have participated in the annual session of the International Labour Conference, I feel greatly honoured to represent the Hungarian trade unions at this prestigious world Conference. I would like to thank and extend my congratulations to the ILO and especially to the Director-General for presenting us with this year's comprehensive Global Report, which we highly value and consider as very straightforward, because it not only faithfully reflects the ILO's fundamental principles but also tackles key questions relevant to Hungarian employees.

We wholeheartedly agree with the Director-General's observations with regard to the tripartite forum of interest reconciliation in the world of labour relations, that the right to decent jobs and wages are basic human rights, and that social and economic relations with the globalizing world are constant ongoing challenges for the ILO in order to bring about a more humanized world. These conclusions require the active participation of all sides involved and the close cooperation of international, continental and national bodies.

The Report, and I am confident about this, is an excellent example of some of the best work that the ILO can do. Hungarian trade unions in particular highly appreciate the ILO's legislative function and its cooperation with the United Nations Organization and its specialized bodies. They also appreciate the ILO's guiding attitude towards the implementation of the right to freedom of association, the impartiality of its approach and its intention to support the efforts of the ILO members and its social partners.

Increasing rural employment and reduction of poverty are equally topical problems in Hungary. The average nationwide employment rate is rather low, about 57 per cent; however, the goal is to achieve a 70 per cent employment rate by 2010, in order to meet the expectations of the European Union Lisbon target. Therefore, we share and endorse the observations of the Report that we need to promote the enhancement of lagging regions and should improve the protection and advancement of disadvantaged groups and social strata by raising the educational level, through the implementation of core programmes. Some of the main ambitions of Hungarian trade unions are to demand the increase of employment, the boosting of work efficiency and the enhancement of employees' skills, because these are key elements with which we will effectively employ the labour force. Implementing such measures will increase the employment rate and wages and therefore lead to improvements in personal health and life expectancy.

We are also convinced that the cornerstone to improving the quality of life is general and high-standard basic education, vocational training (which should be well adjusted to the varied demands of the labour market) and universal lifelong learning. Therefore, it is a cherished endeavour of Hungarian trade unions to bring about a society which is based upon proper knowledge. We are certain that a sustainable society, economy and environment can be achieved only by developing the human workforce; however, we unfortunately have not been able to demonstrate progress towards those goals lately.

In Hungary, social tensions have intensified; the real value of wages has decreased or stagnated because, in order to meet the targets of the European Union convergence programme, the Government has put disproportionately large burdens on the employees' and wage earners' shoulders.

While the national institutions of social dialogue function in Hungary, reconciliation is frequently only formal, because the Government does not provide sufficient time to prepare comprehensive answers to any problems and questions that might arise. Outstanding important questions, like the reform of health insurance in the context of shaping the EU convergence programme, have been decided without taking into account the opinion of social partners, thus also causing social strain. The inconstant circumstances have aggravated the work of the trade unions as regards protecting interests; it is clear that, although the teamwork of the trade union confederations in national institutions of social reconciliation dialogue is sufficient, cooperation must be promoted further. We must improve trade union recruitment activities and strengthen and harmonize the background of our professional functions.

Concluding my remarks, let me render the thanks of the Hungarian trade unions for all the assistance and encouragement that is given to our activity by the staff of the Budapest Regional Office of the ILO. This Office is providing efficient support for the work that is being carried out in our country and in the region to protect the interests of workers. It effectively assists the deepening of democratic activity and fair social partnership.

Honourable Mr President, Mr Director-General, delegates, while thanking you for your honourable attention, may I wish every success for the future work of this Conference.

Original Spanish: Mr GONZÁLEZ (Employer, Dominican Republic)

The delegation of Employers of the Dominican Republic represented by the Employers' Confederation of the Dominican Republic (COPARDOM) would like to reaffirm the importance of the ILO as the only international organization with a mandate focused on the world of work and on tripartism as the best way to seek fair social agreements.

However, the changes that have taken place in the last two decades which have liberalized economies and opened markets, together with technological progress, have changed the productive and industrial sectors, bringing about changes in labour markets and the creation of formal employment. The ILO and multilateral organizations are therefore facing new challenges and objectives.

The employers of the Dominican Republic support the statements made by the International Organisation of Employers and we see the ILO as an effective and fast-moving organization, able to pro-

vide practical assistance to governments, workers and employers. This vision enables the ILO to support various sectors with the aim of creating new and better formal jobs in a globalized world market. This means that, using tripartite consensus, we can all contribute to poverty reduction and to promoting corporate social responsibility, education and training. In order to achieve these objectives, we need an International Labour Organization with the characteristics that I have mentioned.

As socially responsible employers, we must promote and ensure compliance with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as well as the Conventions on freedom of association, collective bargaining, forced labour, child labour and discrimination. At the same time, employers must ask, at this forum, that there be respect for the right of equity in terms of the treatment of the various actors who participate in negotiations and social dialogue. We must have a genuine balance between governments, workers and employers, without conflicts of interest among these parties. Quite often, disputes result from the fact that sometimes one sector is represented by persons employed in another, which creates imbalances and inequity in decision-making, and also exposes the legitimacy of representation to criticism. Such situations are a real threat to tripartism, which is the cornerstone of the ILO.

In order to achieve the situation that I have described, it is essential, in addition to legitimate representation, to have free and continuous access to information. It is not possible to have dialogue and agreement and to define country strategies if information is handled only between those who produce it and receive it, leaving the other sectors uninformed. Moreover this happens in circumstances in which information must be shared with the other social partners.

The Dominican employers would like the ILO, which was created in order to enhance the capacities of its constituents, to reorient its programmes and policies through initiatives that will strengthen sectors and their institutions so that the latter can provide the services required by ILO Members.

In our sector, we are convinced that the eradication of poverty can be achieved, through the creation of wealth, by promoting sustainable and competitive enterprises and, along with this, an enterprise culture based on innovation, development, economic growth and social commitment. The implementation of actions such as this would have a positive impact on economies, such as our own, where the informal sector represents more than half of the jobs created in the country. It is therefore impossible for us to implement decent work standards.

To create decent and quality jobs at the national level, the State must devote more of its income and budget any resources to education, health and equitable productive transformation. A stable investment and legal environment is also required. These are necessary elements in order that the flow of savings and investments moves in virtuous circle, giving impetus to labour markets, and so that democracy and development will expand the real freedoms that people enjoy, as said by Dr Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate in economics and one of the main creators of the human development paradigm.

Finally, if we are going to successfully deal with the challenges that we face today in a very agitated and complex world, we must rethink the way in

which the ILO, and the whole United Nations system, operates.

We will have long-lasting peace only when we work for the well-being of humanity, and this must be anchored in genuine compliance with public and private policies that strengthen and develop institutions, transparency and the creation of decent and sustainable work. To this end it is essential that we strengthen the employer sector as the creator of these jobs.

All of this can be achieved only if we develop a new culture of international cooperation which promotes the development of all sectors that make up tripartism and social dialogue. Such cooperation would help to create programmes that will benefit all sectors individually and society in general. Only in this way will it be possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the comprehensive scope of human development.

Mr SENEVIRATNE (*Minister of Labour Relations and Manpower, Sri Lanka*)

We wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General for presenting to us his Report, which is considered timely in the light of soaring food and fuel prices, environmental factors and many other additional challenges to the achievement of our decent work goals, the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

We are fully aware of the transformative powers of globalization in opening economic opportunities for economic growth through technology, investment and trade. However, surging prices of food and staples – essential commodities – has exposed the clear need for national governments, the international community and all stakeholders to take emergency measures in addressing these issues.

Sri Lanka, like most developing countries, is affected by the present food and fuel crisis and by the consequences of the economic downturn. Our total dependence on imported fuel, the impact on agriculture of changing weather patterns and the recurrence of natural disasters have severely affected our economy.

Before the adoption of open economic policies, the main focus of the economic and social development of Sri Lanka was on the rural sector. With the advent of an open economy, the focus was gradually shifted from rural to urban development. The earlier goal of self-reliance in food – which Sri Lanka had almost reached – was severely affected.

It is our considered position that we need to rethink our lopsided development policies and to develop policy frameworks that can support equitable development throughout the economy. We need to deviate from the development formulas that were applied in the last century and to seek different approaches, as last century's answers cannot be the paradigm to ensure food and energy security and sustainable development.

As rightly underlined by the Director-General in his Report, we need to be deeply committed for a strong social focus in our economic policies and a sound economic foundation to our social policies. In this context, we consider the Decent Work Agenda as one of the effective instruments that would help the member countries of the ILO to ensure the balance between economic and social dimensions.

Currently, Sri Lanka is concentrating on a number of rural development programmes. An integrated national drive to cultivate all arable lands in the

country, named Grow More Food for Prosperity, has been launched. The Village Upliftment Programme is designed to modernize the country by means of micro-growth centres. Village infrastructure development programmes and the creation of electronic knowledge centres are the main rural development initiatives undertaken by the Government.

The National Decent Work Policy and the Action Plan of Sri Lanka, which was launched in 2006, address most of the decent work deficits in the country. The Government of Sri Lanka has expressed its commitment to address these issues by allocating funds from the national budget annually since 2007. The Ten-Year Horizon Development Framework: Mahinda Chinthana, 2006–16, covering both macro and pro-poor social development challenges, recognizes that the major development challenges facing the country are the high level of poverty, regional disparities where growth and poverty are almost inversely related, the need to create employment for the 2.8million new entrants into the workforce in the next ten years, especially for educated youth, the marginalized, vulnerable groups – such as ageing, disabled and internally displaced persons – and the special needs of plantation communities for human resources development and housing and for gender equality.

The country's employment services were reorganized and restructured by the development of an employment sourcing and delivery system entitled "Jobsnet". It is significant that it is the first institution in the labour field to cooperate under a private–public partnership.

To providing career guidance and counselling services, and to promote self-employment and special employment programmes for the unemployed in rural areas, job clubs have been set up at the divisional administration level.

Sri Lanka lacks natural resources and therefore needs to be efficient in use of resources in order to enhance its competitive edge and to meet other development challenges. Sri Lanka is implementing productivity programmes covering the public and private sectors, schools, and the community. To strengthen further the existing productivity programmes, a presidential task force has been appointed.

We believe in the strength of social dialogue and tripartite partnership in seeking solutions to many issues at the national, regional and workplace level.

Programmes are under way to promote social dialogue at the workplace and national levels, in addition to the social dialogue machinery that already exists at the national level. Regional labour advisory councils have been set up to identify and address regional issues, and a national institute of labour studies has been created to empower the social partners and enable them to participate effectively in social dialogue.

Recently, Sri Lanka made a remarkable achievement by launching a process of dispute settlement with public sector trade unions.

Mr HOSEK (*Deputy Minister for Social Policy, Social Services and Family Policy, Czech Republic*)

Allow me to begin my intervention by praising the Director-General for his interesting Report on *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*. I am pleased to see that it reflects the economic and

entrepreneurial realities of the current global environment.

The relevance of the ILO, its international labour standards and the technical cooperation it provides to its constituents, cannot be strengthened without acknowledging the actual challenges that are before us.

As the Director-General has repeatedly stated, there can be no decent work without work itself. Unemployed men and women often find themselves in situations where they are deprived, not only of decent work, but subsequently of decent life, as well.

On the whole, the Report provides positive evidence that globalization plays an important role, not only in the growth of the global economy, but also in the growth of employment and the decline of poverty.

The Report is clear on this, although it also warns against certain aspects which may deepen economic and social imbalances.

It is, therefore, necessary to continue the dialogue with other international organizations in order to bridge different points of view, enhance policy coherence at the international level, and exchange opinions and experience of various actors.

As I noted earlier, decent work is an indispensable condition for decent life. The Director-General, in his Report, calls for the life-cycle approach to decent work that reflects changes in the needs and preferences of, not only an individual worker, but also his or her family.

The Government of the Czech Republic is currently in the process of strengthening the ways to reconcile work and family responsibilities. In order to offer parents the possibility of choice, the Government has been focusing on several objectives:

Firstly, to provide more flexibility in the area of maternity and parental leave and strengthen the role of the father when it comes to caring for children.

Secondly, to provide better options for flexible work schedules and motivate employers to employ parents with children.

Lastly, to support the development of services for families and childcare services for children up to the age of 4, including childcare provided by a non-parent.

When it comes to greater flexibility in terms of parental leave, the Government has introduced a more flexible system for the distribution of parental allowances and, subsequently, the utilization of parental leave. A parent caring for a small child is able to choose from three different options based on the preferred length of parental leave, from two to four years. Such a choice results in differentiated levels of monthly benefits, while the total sum paid during parental leave is comparable. The objective is to help parents to decide what time would be the best for returning to work.

The Government of the Czech Republic believes that changes that have been already introduced, as well as those currently prepared in this area, will significantly contribute to reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, of decent work and decent life, in which child care is an issue of key consideration.

(*Mr Louh takes the Chair.*)

I wish to acknowledge the Reports of the Director-General which are on critical issues and daunting challenges for ILO and the world at large. These Reports come at a time when there is a food crisis. In the pre-colonial days in Lesotho, like all countries in Africa, the main means of subsistence was agriculture, every animal has resulted in crop reduction. Now however, we are part of the market economy, the cash economy. Africa is now experiencing poverty, even though it is endowed with a lot of human, natural and cultural resources.

More than 60 per cent of the able-bodied men in Lesotho have gone to work as migrant workers in the Republic of South Africa. Thus, leaving the country and agricultural management to women and children. Lesotho's land is now degraded, there is a high soil erosion, and the Prime Minister has published a lengthy document through the forestry ministry on this problem.

The current question of rural employment and decent work complements what has been achieved through the Decent Work Agenda and individual country programmes, including in Lesotho. The development of small to medium-sized enterprises, considered at the 96th Session of the International Labour Organization, goes a long way towards creating employment.

It is of prime importance to consider rural employment a priority because, if you create employment in the rural areas the rural to urban drift will be minimized, families will stay together because both partners will be working closer to home. Working away from home can lead to people having multiple sexual partners. The stigma attached to rural employment will also have to be exterminated from history. Foreigners often end up working in the rural areas and while the towns are well resourced with infrastructure and communication links rural areas are often difficult to access.

It is my sincere hope that the ILO, will revive the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and that this model will be replicated in other African Union regions so that together we can deal with the issue of employment.

The question of food production can only be successfully resolved with proper strategies, investment in agricultural skills and participation. Governments and social partners, organizations and labour unions have got to work together to find the means. Governments should be assisted in their responsibility to enable performance, enacting legislation for participation so that people in rural areas can also get employment. Governments will have to invest in infrastructure because most rural areas are difficult to access, including in Lesotho.

I thank the Director-General for having steered this Organization so far and for the support of the ILO, both continental and physical, for the various ongoing programmes, and I look forward to that continuing. We hope that the Director-General's appointment will be extended and that Africa will support a Director-General of his calibre in the future. The ILO should continue to be the voice of the voiceless and the power of the powerless in labour administration. I also wish to express my gratitude for the project, funded by the ILO, on social security for immigrants and training of managerial implementers. That programme will go a long way and

complement the Lesotho country programme and other programmes worldwide.

Original German: Mr BRANDNER (Parliamentary Secretary of State, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany)

Today is the World Day against Child Labour, a day when we can note that the world is still standing at an economic, social and environmental crossroads. Economic globalization opens up new possibilities for growth through technology, investment and trade. On the other hand, the question of the *quality* of economic growth, and its effects on the social content and social stability, is becoming increasingly acute.

We are witnessing an increase in inequalities, not just between States and regions, but within individual States. This development affects virtually every country. This is not new. We have been witnessing this development for years, and at the ILO and in other forums we have been debating it for many years. We have always been discussing the possibilities of fairer models, such as a social model of globalization.

Globalization needs the social dimension. Only a globalization which is complemented by social progress brings sustainable advantages to the industrialized countries as well as developing countries. This fact was recognized this year at the meeting of the G8 Heads of State and Government and the German Presidency of the G8. But we have to be honest here: we are still a long way from our goal.

I share the view of the Director-General that the Decent Work Agenda has made a valuable contribution to orienting the policies of many countries more strongly towards compliance with the fundamental principles and rights at work. For this we need more opportunities for employment through inclusive labour markets. We need effective labour market institutions which ensure security for workers but also the necessary flexibility for enterprises. The basis for this is a comprehensive and efficient system of social protection.

At the European level we have discussed this concept under the slogan "flexicurity". For enterprises, this means greater investment in the qualifications and skills of their workers. This is a topic on our Conference agenda this year as well. For workers it means that as well as security in specific jobs, they are going to need smooth and secure means of transition to new jobs.

Active labour market strategies, lifelong learning and individual guidance and support for jobseekers, reasonable contracts settlements, appropriate social protection, equality of opportunity for all and equal treatment for men and women, are the key elements of this "flexicurity" model.

For the social dimension of globalization, we need, apart from active social partnership, corporate social responsibility (CSR) – the responsibility of small, medium or multinational enterprises committed to the principles of CSR. This means corporate commitment that goes beyond the fulfilment of legal minimum standards and takes account of social, environmental and economic requirements in a balanced way. This can make an important contribution to sustainable and stable development of societies.

The German Government expressly supports CSR at all levels, nationally and internationally. We are in favour of rigorous compliance with this principle, and that means also in the framework of the high-

level dialogue process between the G8 and G5 States.

We must, at the same time increasingly take account of the environmental dimension when talking about the world of work. Growth, productive employment, good industrial relations and environmental matters are increasingly interrelated. The world of work in the context of climate change calls for complex, socially responsible tripartite responses. We therefore welcome the ILO green jobs strategy which received strong support just four weeks ago from the G8 labour and employment ministers under Japanese presidency.

As I said at the outset, our task, in the context of globalization and technical change, is to bring about fair opportunities for all. This should apply, if we want to remain credible, to the informal as well as for the formal sector. For this we need the ILO; we need social dialogue; we must unite all actors and focus them on common interests and economic and social aims.

These aims – and the Director-General rightly referred to this in his Report – are not contradictory. On the contrary, they complement one another. Because this is the case, we need a coherent, consistent policy at the national, international and the multilateral levels. Here the ILO precisely is doing important work as part of its policy coherence initiative, in collaboration with other international organisations.

Political recognition and support for the ILO and its Decent Work Agenda in the relevant international and regional forums is overwhelming. The Decent Work Agenda has found global political acceptance. The most important milestone on this was the decision by this year's session of the Labour Conference to adopt the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

We would like to say to Director-General Somavia that the German Government continues to support him, and supports the policy of decent work, which means strengthening the ILO in the context of globalization. We support his candidacy for a further period of office, and in autumn of this year we will be voting for him again.

Original French: Mr SPIDLA (representative, European Union)

I would like to congratulate Mr Somavia, Director-General, for his excellent Report entitled *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*.

His work clearly shows the challenges before us, puts these challenges in a realistic context and defines the ILO's future action for public authorities, at all levels, and for social partners.

We must all promote decent work. We should do so in a difficult context, marked by crucial changes, often considerable changes. I am thinking about globalization, together with the speeding up of commercial exchanges, but also rapid changes for workers, such as increased competition in terms of labour, increasing flexibility requirements, restructuring and delocalization, demographic change, technological advances, and climate change. In this context, it seems indispensable to strengthen international cooperation to develop a social side to globalization, and we need to reduce the imbalance in the social area.

The European Union has 27 Member countries today, with as many cultures, views and concerns related to workers. In this enlarged Europe, many citizens have gained new opportunities, broader

choice, better living conditions and working conditions, than was the case in the past. But at the same time, this diverse Europe is marked by greater inequality. Too many people live in poverty and in precarious circumstances. We made the choice to act by adopting an ambitious approach based on a number of pillars at the same time.

Our action brings together economic, social and environmental factors, all with the purpose of acting both for our children and for sustainable development. Our societies, more than ever, need effective policies to respond to citizens' needs in terms of employment, equality opportunities for all. The modernization of labour markets in the European Union involves an integrated approach which we call flexicurity, which combines flexibility and security.

I am happy to see that the ILO is interested in this integrated approach with the different aspects of flexicurity and the role of social partners.

The European Union and the ILO are acting to achieve the same goal, which is reflected regularly in our work. An illustration of this community of objectives is to be found in the conclusions of the International Labour Conference on the improvement of professional skills.

I see an excellent basis there to strengthen our co-operation between the European Commission and the ILO, and we should all use this to work together to find and improve the qualifications of workers and the needs of the labour market now and in the future.

I also welcome your conclusions on rural employment. This is a framework of action for commitment to create better prospects for those who could engage in agriculture. We need to make further efforts in favour of employment and decent work in this area in industrialized countries and developing countries. The European Union and the ILO also share a strong commitment with regard to children.

Today is the World Day against Child Labour and I would like to use the opportunity to tell you that the European Commission and the Councils have recently adopted a strategy to promote the rights of children at the external level. Combating child labour forms part of that strategy.

Finally, allow me to tell you about a Commission project, which I set great store by. On 2 July, we will present a renewed social agenda and this new measure will bring together a whole series of new measures to better meet the new social realities based on three axes: opportunities for all, equality for all and strong solidarity on the basis of social cohesion. This major initiative will also have an external dimension. The renewed agenda will look at the follow-up of the implementation of our Commission in 2006 on decent work and will urge member States to ratify the ILO Conventions. In the context of a globalized economy, we can no longer distinguish between internal and external policies. If we want effectiveness, we have to combine these two aspects, and this is particularly true for employment and social issues.

The ILO is a vital instrument to promote the social dimension of globalization. We have seen this with the draft Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and I congratulate the whole Conference on that success. The consensus which you have built is the result of an exemplary dialogue and we can be proud of it.

The European Union has committed itself to this dialogue. We have managed to work under excellent conditions to develop our cooperation and rich political dialogue on employment, social issues and, in particular, on decent work.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the need to work together. We have new means to improve working conditions and to spread decent work, and this is not the moment to lower our guard or to weaken. On the contrary, we should redouble our efforts because the situation of workers cannot just wait for us to be ready to welcome our declarations. The European Union will continue to play an active role in the ILO.

Original Portuguese: Mr FERNANDES SALGUEIRO
(Employer, Portugal)

On the first page of his Report, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, the Director-General of the ILO states that the Decent Work Agenda is the central theme of the Report, which deals with some of the fundamental strategic challenges concerning the ILO.

The Director-General goes on to say that the current Report, together with the previous year's Report, constitutes an effort to identify some important issues which require reflection and debate as we prepare our Strategic Policy Framework for 2010–15. I invite all constituents of the ILO to guide the work of our Organization with their views and vision, both for the immediate future and for the period up to the middle of the next decade.

We note the Director-General's considerable concern regarding the Decent Work Agenda, which is also a major issue for the Employers' group.

However, the Employers also believe it is vital that we attach the utmost importance to other topics, such as the informal economy, flexibility, strengthening conditions favourable to the creation and growth of enterprises. It is true that the Director-General in his Report does talk about this, but in what we believe is an unsatisfactory way. As for the informal economy, the Report states that it is growing and that job creation is in fact growing more in the informal economy than in the formal economy. However, although it identifies the problem, the Report says little or nothing on what should be done specifically to tackle this serious issue. There are some references in the Report to flexibility and it should clearly be a priority within the ILO programme.

Given the current global economic context, whereby companies are under ever increasing and ever varied pressure from the market, businesses have to be able to change rapidly. They need to have a capacity for change, with regards their staffing needs, organization of working hours and professional mobility. These aspects are vital for productivity and competitiveness.

Third, as we said before, it is vital to have favourable conditions for the creation and fostering of enterprises (particularly with regards to taxes and red tape).

We must not forget that businesses create employment and wealth, and therefore they generate economic growth and create the conditions for poverty reduction.

There are two other aspects, which need to have a great deal more attention devoted to them in the Strategic Policy Framework for 2010–15.

On the one hand, the ILO must constantly ensure that their standards are realistic, perfectly adapted to the current times, and that effective compliance is possible. If this is not done, then standards will not be ratified, or if they are, then they may not be applied.

The ILO must have effective and reliable means which will allow it to quantify the economic and social consequence, in terms of growth and employment, of their standards. However, equally importantly, the ILO needs to implement permanent mechanisms for reviewing labour standards as soon as such a review is needed because of the increasingly rapid changes to the social and economic realities.

On the other hand, I think it is vital that the ILO proceeds to set out clearly hierarchies as regards the main themes of action, in other words its priorities.

A constant point made in ILO documents is that they do not have sufficient resources to do everything. I think now, therefore, is an excellent opportunity to refocus the ILO's activities, bearing in mind that the ILO mandate is very clearly the world of work. There are other institutions that deal with, or should deal with, matters which may be related but are not part of the core issues of the ILO.

As to my country, we are currently reviewing the Labour Code in Portugal and of course this is extremely relevant in this context.

Issues such as rationalization of staff, adapting the organization of work and working hours to changes in the labour market, are vital to the competitiveness, and, indeed, the survival of some companies, as well as to ongoing efforts to boost the economy.

These issues are not exclusive to Portugal in terms of their importance.

There is, however, a subject which I think is clearly specific to Portugal: the need to speed up and update the collective bargaining process. Whereas in other EU states, in general, updating of collective labour agreements is seen as desirable by all social partners, although naturally they start from different viewpoints, in Portugal it is still extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to modernize the content of collective agreements, ensuring that they are in line with new requirements and constraints. In a world undergoing such major economic and social change, it is not realistic to defend immobility and levels of benefits and perks dating back to a time when conditions were very different and the situation was much more stable in terms of competitiveness.

Above all, we have to recognize that countries do not live in isolation. The transformations we see in one continent can quickly affect another. Management and labour are scrutinized endlessly according to standards are not limited by national or regional boundaries, and can no longer be based on customs and procedures rendered unjustifiable or unfeasible by the increasingly-rapid pace of development at an international level.

Mr NGATJIZEKO (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare,
Namibia)

The people of Namibia aspire to share in the fruits of what our globalized world has to offer in order to achieve a good standard of living in a peaceful environment. Namibians are fortunate to live in a peaceful country. But the Government of the Republic of Namibia, like so many other governments represented here at this Conference, is grappling with the

challenge of how to overcome poverty, unemployment and inequality in order to secure better lives for the present and future generations.

The excellent Report of the Director-General, and the topics discussed in the committees at this Conference over the past two weeks on rural employment, skills development and strengthening the ILO, provide insight and guidance to the greater challenge facing us.

The current trends in multilateral trade organization, especially the negotiations on the agenda of the WTO, create uncertainty for developing countries. We face the challenge of loss of revenue through reduction of trade tariffs and the arrival of new highly subsidized agricultural products that have the potential to undermine national projects to further develop local agricultural industries. This can impact negatively on rural employment and food prices.

We need to expand local manufacturing in order to achieve economic development, accompanied by sustainable employment creation. The opening-up of markets to foreign manufactured goods challenges the potential of developing countries to industrialize.

We look forward to the ILO playing a stronger role in working with other multilateral institutions for pragmatic and innovative solutions to maximize the benefits of globalization, and to manage and minimize the threats and the attendant instabilities.

The concept of decent work has been accepted widely in Namibia as an expression of our people's desire to be employed productively and to achieve a good standard of living. I would like to describe briefly how the Government of the Republic of Namibia is implementing the Decent Work Agenda.

Namibia is about to put into effect a new Labour Act, which provides for a new system of dispute prevention and resolution designed to strengthen and modernize labour relations, collective bargaining and tripartism; enhanced basic conditions of employment to improve the lives of the most vulnerable workers; and strengthened provisions on child labour, forced labour, discrimination and sexual harassment and freedom of association.

I would like to thank the ILO for the valuable assistance it has rendered, first in the development of the legislation with the support of the Government of Switzerland, and more recently through the United States Department of Labor-funded "Improving Labour Systems in Southern Africa Programme (ILLSA)".

I also express our great appreciation to the ILO and the United States Department of Labor for the assistance given to Namibia to achieve the milestone of a draft action plan on the elimination of child labour through the "Towards the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour" project. We will now implement specific action plans in order to meet the set goals.

I also thank the ILO for the assistance that it is giving to the Namibian Government and its social partners to develop Namibia's Decent Work Country Programme, which we believe will help to further dynamize and strengthen our work to achieve national development priorities in line with the ILO's strategic objectives.

With an overall unemployment rate of 36.7 per cent and one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world, Namibia has placed employment creation and poverty reduction, or eradication, at the centre

of its national development plan. Our Government has recognized that it must optimize policy coherence and programme coordination among Government ministries operating in the economic, social and education sectors in order to achieve economic and employment growth. Namibia's priority strategies focus on rural development, land reform, financing, communication technology, skills development, promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, microcredit and public works projects.

Our Government has also decided to fast-track its plans for a National Employment Creation Commission, a tripartite national productive centre and an Employment Services Bill, to enable Government to match labour market demands with education and vocational educational needs.

In the area of social protection, Parliament has just approved an increase in universal social grants and funeral benefits for elderly and disabled persons, while plans are under way to establish a National Pension Fund and the National Medical Benefit Fund under the Social Security Commission. The Social Security Commission is also working to increase its membership among persons in the informal sector, both employed and self-employed, to enable them to benefit from Social Security's current and affordable maternity, sick leave, death and funeral benefits.

In conclusion, I wish to recall and renew Namibia's commitment with regard to the implementation of resolutions of the meeting of the African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission that took place this year in Addis Ababa, on the plight of the Palestinian workers and the global food crises. I am confident that this Conference and other events under the auspices of the ILO, will retain these issues on the agenda until such time as lasting solutions are found.

Original French: Mr GUIRO (Worker, Senegal)

It is my honour to take the floor at the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference, to speak on behalf of the workers of Senegal. Please allow me, at the beginning of my statement, to congratulate you, Mr President, on your appointment to chair this Conference. I would also like to congratulate the Vice-Presidents and the members of the bureau. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General for the relevance of his Report and the excellent organization of this session and also for the dynamism and the progress which he has brought to the International Labour Organization.

Director-General, you were right to talk about global challenges, as mankind is facing many problems characterized by unjust globalization, with dramatic consequences for peoples in all regions of the world. The global crisis, aggravated by the rising cost of a barrel of oil, has only emphasized the trend towards poverty, despite the many efforts that are being made by our peoples, particularly in Africa.

As the risk that we will not achieve our development goals is linked to the poor redistribution of the fruits of growth, poverty reduction must appear at the top of the Millennium Development Goals and a commitment from the international community is essential to meet this enormous challenge.

The world food crisis is one of the consequences of these imbalances, of which the African people, confronted by social problems of all kinds, are the main victims. This is why it is necessary to make an

abrupt change to create conditions of stability in the global economy, which would make it possible to create jobs and improve production and productivity.

The emergence of the concept of global governance to bring about fair and equitable globalization should promote decent work for all, to bring about sustainable development for the benefit of workers and their families.

In many countries, workers only receive a pittance for their work which does not make it possible for them to live with their families and a vast majority of these workers do not even benefit from a minimum of social coverage.

A fresh outbreak of conflicts resulting from violations of workers' rights can only be settled if States fully play their role in protecting the most vulnerable groups of the population. The lack of job creation and the closure of various production units have forced millions of workers, particularly young people and women, into the informal sector. Despite the intentions expressed by the public authorities to restructure this sector, which is a great provider of labour, informal sector workers, both men and women, still suffer from a total absence of social coverage. Governments are called upon, in the light of this challenge, to take restructuring measures and to take responsibility for this significant portion of the population which is developing in the informal sector.

It is absolutely crucial to make the necessary resources available for labour inspectors to guarantee the observance of the provisions of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). In this respect, the ILO must give specific support and assistance to governments so that labour inspectors are better equipped and better motivated.

Sixty years after the adoption of Convention No. 87, many workers are still not in a position to enjoy freedom of association, since some States still refuse to ratify that Convention and others have many difficulties in making its application effective.

Conventions Nos 87 and 98 are the lifeblood of our tripartite Organization and this is why we have to become even more vigilant to monitor the observance of their provisions, which bring about the strengthening of social dialogue.

In order to have fruitful social dialogue between representative and credible social partners, we must open up the discussion on Convention No. 87 in view of the findings with regard to certain countries, particularly African countries. Convention No. 87 must help workers to strengthen their organization; it should not, in any way, weaken their representation by means of an excessive proliferation of small trade union organizations. The unification of workers at the global level is an example we should be considering.

My country, Senegal, has a long tradition of social dialogue and it has, in fact, provided itself with an instrument to strengthen consultations. The Government, employers and workers have signed a national social dialogue charter to facilitate tripartite collective negotiations at the national level and bipartite collective bargaining at the sector and enterprise levels. This instrument also makes it possible to settle disputes using a conciliatory approach in a calm atmosphere. But we have to recognize the fact

that, whatever instruments are drafted, application requires commitment and the good will of the contracting parties.

A year before the 90th anniversary of the founding of the ILO, our States must make sure that there is well-balanced globalization and that we see the disappearance of inequalities through the eradication of poverty by well-distributed growth, social justice and the creation of decent work and a decent life for all. The ILO continues to offer us the hope and support which are essential in order to realize this ambition.

Mr SZIRMAI (*Employer, Hungary*)

Twenty years ago, my country Hungary which I represent on the Employers' side, was a pioneer among the Central and East European countries in the transition from a planned to a market economy, from a despotic to a democratic political system. No wonder Hungary is among the first now in experiencing the contradictions inherent in the democratic system as well.

Twenty years ago, gossip in the corridors of the Palais des Nations said that Hungarians were very smart, entering the revolving door behind you, but coming out in front. Nowadays, however, I often read from the emphatic eyes of my colleagues that, though Hungarians went in the revolving door first, they are still waiting for them.

Hungary is struggling with a lot of economic, social and political difficulties these days. The root of the political and social problems, in my opinion, stems from the wrong economic policy. There is a high budget deficit, an exaggerated wage floor which is not in balance with the work done, and consequently, the tension between the increased new European demands and the reduced opportunities of the recession-torn economy.

The misunderstanding of fundamental human rights, the lack of realization of the limits of freedom, the lack of experience in running a democracy, and the spectacular quarrelling of political forces have all contributed to the current state of the economy.

Of course, I am aware that many other European countries face the same challenges. Namely, the question of whether freedom of assembly, which is one most fundamental human rights, means that any group has the right to march on the streets without any preliminary control, and furthermore, to set cars and shops on fire and prevent police action by force. Lengthy and stormy protests arise in other European countries too. In Hungary, after 40 years of communist despotism we protect the right to strike without any sense. Today any tiny group working in the public sector can go on strike even when there is no agreement on the sufficient level of services. Some trade unions call for strike even if they carry out such public services, the disruption of which does not express dissatisfaction with the employee at all, and they use violent and criminal methods such as taking the residents to hostage in the capital.

Hungarian employers all respect, and are aware of, freedom of expression, objection and association as well, which are among the fundamental ILO principles. Every constitutional country must consider these as benchmarks only with one exception when the aim is to destroy the rule of the law itself. Freedom of association must not allow the creation of associations that aim at the demonstrative regulation and intimidation of minorities and the revival

of the symbols of the dark shadows of the past. In a democracy, all opinions are free, except the ones that call for the destruction of democracy itself.

We, employers are not only eager to follow the debates that are on the agenda of the 97th Session of the ILO Conference, but we participate in them with enthusiasm, whether they are on capacity building in the ILO, or on the improvement of productivity and employment. It is in our inner interest to close these debates successfully.

In the course of the several hundred years of Hungarian history, our country has made several attempts to catch up with the European centre and to meet the challenges of economic and social modernization. Now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Hungary has got a historical chance to make these centuries old dreams come true. I hope that the selfish social groups and, in my point of view, the untrustworthy political elite, and the trade unions that misinterpret their roles and flirt with criminal and illegal methods, will not derail Hungary from the track of modernization and will not jeopardize Hungary's historical chance.

Original German: Ms KÜHL (Worker, Germany)

I am taking the floor to speak on behalf of the German Trade Union Confederation. I would like to dwell on some points from the Director-General's Report, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*. The Report emphasizes that the regulation of financial markets for the protection of workers is an important future task. I can only endorse this and call on policy-makers to finally subject financial markets to a valid legal framework so that financial crises as we have in the United States at the moment do not lead to the loss of livelihood and old-age provision for millions of workers.

This brings me directly to the issue of political coherence. The Decent Work Agenda must not just be welcomed in words by international financial institutions and other United Nations organizations, but must be translated into deeds in their own policies.

The "Employing Workers Index" from the Report, *Doing Business*, by the World Bank should not continue to be published in this form. It reduces workers' fundamental rights to an obstacle to investment, and possibly invites governments and enterprises to violate these rights.

Social security must apply to all, not just to the richest 20 per cent in the world. Apart from setting up protection and extending existing social security systems, we require great efforts over the next few years so that the ILO can introduce a global basic social security system.

This year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). Without free and independent trade unions there can be no fair distribution of earned wealth. Without trade unions, an essential component of democracy is lacking. Without trade unions there can be no social face to globalization.

Whoever fails to respect trade union rights infringes the tripartite constitution of the ILO.

A major challenge for our ILO in the near future is the guarantee and protection of rights of workers in the informal economy. I fully welcome the fact that for 2010, the ILO has set itself the task of drafting a Convention on decent work for domestic workers.

Unequal distribution of income between North and South, within societies and also between men and women, is a challenge which has not been fully addressed. In Germany, the discrepancy in wages for work of equal value is 22 per cent – and this is a poor result within the European Union. Decades after the ratification of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), my country has little to be proud of – and this example shows that ILO Conventions are not only very important for the countries of the South. The ruling of the European Court of Justice on the laws of the German Federal State on granting of public contracts, the Rüffert Case, shows the importance of ILO standard-setting, also within the EU States. The excuse cannot be that the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94), is no longer relevant to our times. It would seem that in drafting the public contract legislation in the EU, they forgot the significantly older, but still valid, document in international law.

On this World Day against Child Labour, we cannot be content with what we have already achieved, even though we can pride ourselves on certain successes. As stated in the conclusions of the Committee on Rural Employment, child labour is the result of poverty, but at the same time it serves to embed poverty in society. Whoever wants to reduce poverty in the world has to take this approach.

The strengthening of the ILO and the global implementation of the Decent Work Strategy was at the heart of our Conference work this year. Indeed, an important Declaration on this issue was drafted and adopted. In this context, the sectoral work of the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) takes on considerable significance. Workers and their trade unions need the ILO – and that goes for the employers, and governments who are provided with the necessary orientation on globalization by the ILO.

Social justice must be the guiding principle for good governance, irrespective of political, economic and cultural differences. The Decent Work Strategy has improved the image of the ILO in the eyes of the world and the global institutions. This success has something to do with the Director-General of the ILO, and I would like to express my support for him on behalf of the German Trade Union Confederation.

Original Spanish: Mr RODRÍGUEZ (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Guatemala)

For the State of Guatemala, it is a great pleasure to participate in this 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. Today, the State of Guatemala finds itself at a turning point in its democratic history. In November 2007, a new President and a new Government were elected and this Government has begun a process of restructuring the public administration, noticeably in the case of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, which it is my honour to direct. This strengthening will put in place appropriate institutions and will contribute, inter alia, to development and implementation of policies which will enable social justice to be extended to all sectors in my country.

My country has expended great efforts in order to participate in today's globalized world and a continued key goal of our policies will be to establish a national strategy for sustainable development, with the aim of bridging the divide between those who

today have very little and those who have too much, which we hope to achieve through the generation of a culture of solidarity amongst all the people of Guatemala.

This goal can only be achieved if we maintain and strengthen a culture of peace, making use of social dialogue the tool championed by the ILO, which is a mechanism that the newly elected Government of my country has been seeking to strengthen.

Only through concerted inter-institutional efforts involving participation by workers and employers, along with government representatives, will we be able to obtain the necessary consensus to work for the common good, which is the goal of any State based on democratic principles, such as mine.

I should add that employment generation occupies a key place in the policies of my Government. The creation of sustainable enterprises is necessary, as are entrepreneurial initiatives taken on a voluntary basis, based on corporate social responsibility, which can serve to complement activities based on the Government's social policy.

Worker representatives also have a highly responsible and important role to play. They must ensure, inter alia, the protection, training and advancement of all workers, whether union members or not, fostering an environment of social harmony for all.

An enterprise will develop if it employs trained, able and healthy workers. The Government must act as a mediator between the constituents and be responsive to needs, facilitating access to financial services, markets and setting the scene for necessary changes in legislation, developing policies and strengthening mechanisms for social dialogue, inter alia.

In Guatemala, we are aware that we are facing problems and we are committed to compliance with fundamental labour standards and principles as a point of departure for the creation of an appropriate environment for effective, tripartite dialogue, an environment in which it is possible to promote and strengthen employers' and workers' organizations, in which respect for labour rights and collective bargaining can become a reality at national level.

We fully share the views expounded relating to fair globalization as means of overcoming poverty through decent work based on respect for human rights and international labour standards, particularly those relating to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

We also believe that there is a need for freely chosen work, with gender equality, incorporating young people into the labour market free from any type of discrimination, ensuring safety, health and social protection, as well as the head-on fight against child labour, a problem which has been worked on in recent years.

I am pleased to announce the recent implementation of a system of means-tested payments to the poorest families and the most vulnerable sectors in my country to ensure that their children are not forced to work, in many cases in inhuman conditions, and that they can benefit from the education and improved health conditions to which they are entitled, to enable them to grow as individuals.

Finally, together with the ILO's Subregional Office for Central America, we are working to put in place a national decent work strategy for my country. We hope that this will be implemented shortly. We are sure that, thanks to the experience and sup-

port of other countries and of the International Labour Office, we will be able to achieve this.

Original Spanish: Mr MORALES CARTAYA (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Cuba)

When they analysed the results of the activities carried out last year, the ministers of labour of the Non-Aligned Movement agreed that the Movement was becoming stronger and playing an increasingly significant role in the International Labour Organization.

They praised the modest progress made in the working methods of the Committee on the Application of Standards, inasmuch as the list of countries is released in advance and show a better geographical balance.

However, they recognized that the core problems affecting the Committee have yet to be solved: the lack of transparency in its work and in the criteria for selecting cases, which in some instances point to the Committees selectivity and double standards, as well as an imbalance between fundamental and technical Conventions.

With regard to the Committee on Freedom of Association, even though it has admittedly been engaged in several activities, there is still room for improvement before it achieves the same level of democracy as other bodies within the United Nations system, given that its membership is still unjust, discriminatory and inequitable because it excludes one region of the world.

The Movement reaffirmed the need to pursue the matter until a consensus can be reached in an atmosphere of serenity, political good will and tripartite dialogue.

The Movement also demonstrated that today, more than ever, there is a need for unity, solidarity and struggle in an increasingly complex international scenario, in order to promote and defend our countries' interests against the unfair and unsustainable world economic order, that has been imposed on us, and which so cruelly affects the life, employment, social protection, labour rights and freedom of association of millions of workers, mainly in the Third World.

Cuba will continue to promote cooperation among the non-aligned countries and will make every effort to continue to pursue our common objective and interests within the International Labour Organization.

Mr WALTERS (Minister of Labour and Civil Service, Barbados)

This 97th Session of the International Labour Conference is taking place at a time when the global economy is in a state of flux, characterized by soaring oil and food prices, uncertainty and turmoil in global financial markets, and a situation where people in both developed and developing countries are experiencing problems which challenge their very survival and existence. In short, the world is facing hard times, and hard times which will apparently continue to be experienced for some time to come. The prognosis then is extremely bleak in the short and medium term. The evolving social and economic landscape that now confronts us is not only worrying but presents its own challenges and bleakness for small developing countries, particularly ours in the Caribbean region, as well as the ILO and all its constituents.

Whilst we seek to grapple with the challenges arising from this global economic situation, there is

a great need to safeguard the gains made pertaining to the promotion of decent work for all and, more importantly, to protect fundamental rights at work. This will be our challenge. This statement should not be taken lightly. In situations like these, it would not be surprising if there were structural changes in employment resulting from the restriction of enterprises, extensive privatization, outsourcing and subcontracting arrangements, etc. These situations can lead to behaviours which may be unscrupulous, or exploitative, which may allow for the creation of new types of employment relationships or encourage behaviours that prevent the exercise of the principles and rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, and the fundamental rights at work.

Emerging from this brief but essential focus is the need for vigilance. This vigilance must be heightened especially in light of the fact that 2008 is the tenth anniversary of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). The Report of the Director-General *Freedom of association in practice: Lessons learned*, has provided a useful overview of the international situation since the adoption of the Conventions and is extremely instructive.

The vigilance of which I speak, will undeniably require the strengthening of the capabilities and capacities of labour institutions, whether they be ministries of labour, or labour departments, workers' organizations or employers' organizations; and, in particular the units responsible for labour management, will need to be strengthened. This strengthening will be critical, not only to ensure that the rights of workers and employers and neither minimized or compromised as a consequence of the developments within the global environment, but to ensure industrial democracy, stability, harmony and the enhancement of competitiveness. In addition, such strengthening will be necessary to ensure that the various ILO Conventions are effectively implemented, that labour standards are applied especially within the informal economy, that mechanisms are in place to facilitate collective bargaining and the settlement of disputes, and that social dialogue plays a key part in employment relations.

Although it is recognized that governments will have a crucial role to play in strengthening labour institutions in a new structural context, the role of the social partners will be equally crucial; indeed, social dialogue will be of major importance. The ILO will need to provide technical support in various areas based on the identified and assessed needs of the constituents. This is precisely why we in the Caribbean are requesting that urgent consideration be given to strengthening of the Subregional Office in Trinidad and Tobago, so that it can carry out the technical support the subregion requires, based on identified and assessed needs. We hope that this plea will be heard. In closing let me thank the ILO for its support of the activities in our subregion and I trust that during these hard times this support will continue.

Original Arabic: Mr KARIM (Worker, Sudan)

The Director-General's Report: *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, confirms the magnitude of the challenge before this Organization and indeed before the whole international community.

The Report rightly stresses that the crisis has its roots in unbalanced globalization and observes that the current financial crisis provokes a policy rethink, requiring a serious effort to supplement the strategies of other organizations. Food price increases are going to push millions below the poverty line, as the Report rightly states. The current food crisis, with its constant increase in food prices, threatens then prosperity of all, both rich and poor. But it mostly affects workers.

The Government of my country, together with the social partners, has launched a food production programme. The workers in Sudan are committed to working in this programme to ensure the prosperity of not only the people of Sudan but also those in other countries.

The Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work bears witness to the Organization's determination to ensure that workers have access to various freedoms. Let us hope that the plan of action on freedom of association and collective bargaining for the next four years, due to be adopted by the Governing Body in November 2008, will fulfil workers' aspirations and lay the ground for constructive social dialogue.

During the past year, the workers' movement has remained strong and effective. Its main objective is the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and true social dialogue, as well as the defence of its members' rights. The Federation has organized a number of seminars on trade union rights, with a view to making workers aware of the importance of joining a trade union. At the beginning of this year, we held a congress on women workers and their place in the world of work in Sudan. This congress was attended by 1,000 women representing local trade union executives. In fact, 25 per cent of labour leaders are women, in keeping with the Federation's regulations.

In keeping with trade union solidarity, the Federation also organized working sessions for its neighbouring countries. It gave its support to many regional and international conferences as a gesture of solidarity between workers from Africa, the Arab States and the rest of the world.

Despite the challenges facing Sudan in its pursuit of peace, the signing of the North-South peace agreement and the ensuing peace process in the East and Darfur has had positive repercussions: there has been a cut in inflation and in increase in the national exchange rate; new investments have created jobs. We are hoping that unemployment rates will decline. With peace in Darfur, we are counting on stability in Sudan, so that its population may prosper. We might attain this objective if certain international and regional forces stopped fuelling the flames of discord by providing arms to the various parties.

If foreign countries do not want to help us, they should, at least, stop trying to hurt us, and refrain from meddling in Sudan's affairs.

We have always called upon the ILO to provide the social partners in our country with technical assistance, especially in regions where peace has reigned for several years. The Organization already sent preliminary contact missions last year, and we hope these will be followed up by operational programmes and action plans to strengthen governance in areas where conflicts have ceased.

The Annex to the Director-General's Report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories and in Palestine has reminded us of the lot of workers in that region. The blockade imposed on Gaza is yet another example of a tragic situation in which the principles and values of our Organization are trampled underfoot. We call upon the intervention and good offices of all those who hope to improve the situation of workers, whether they are in Palestine or Iraq.

If poverty is a threat to prosperity, injustice is a threat to stability and human dignity. We appeal to this assembly to make every effort to ensure that justice, equality and respect for women and men prevails – and to put an end to injustice, discrimination and war. We must strive so that men and women are free. We must unite our efforts to create a stable world at peace.

(The Conference adjourned at 13.05 p.m.)

Fifteenth sitting

Thursday, 12 June 2008, 2.50 p.m.

President: Mr Louh, Ms Diallo, Mr Tabani

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

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT

We are going to resume our discussion of the Director-General's and Governing Body Reports.

Mr SYED MOHAMUD (*Worker, Malaysia*)

In this age where we are experiencing global interconnectivity of a kind we have never before been exposed to, an international conference of this nature is very relevant and could help set the architecture for a better world order.

The Decent Work Agenda has been spelt out as a global objective, though the world seems to be slipping away from realizing its intended premise than moving closer towards realizing it. Principally, there are some major common areas of concern which we should be contending with globally.

There is a growing income divide, which has all the makings of structural issues forming within society as a whole. Economic globalization has multiplied the wealth generated through trade and economic activity, and yet the poor are being marginalized even further.

Trade union and employee rights are being eroded, as a result of governments losing their influence to multinational enterprises. The lobby of such MNEs has resulted in a very lopsided development, where the focus is mainly on economic development. The compromise is, therefore, on civil institutions, and minus a balanced approach towards development, we are facing a situation of an unsustainable world order.

It is imperative for there to be a proper balance between the various sectors and aspects of development. Aside from economic growth, there should be equal and sufficient emphasis in establishing and maintaining the independence of civil institutions, such as the judiciary, journalist freedom and freedom of speech and expression. We have seen and experienced the plight of countries where individuals who are later described as dictators hold on to power through various immoral means and in the process dismantle the institution of society, which eventually results in chaos.

The ILO Director-General, in addressing the G8 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting in Niigata, Japan, recently had appropriately pointed out that pro-investment policies result in job creation and displacements and downsides are a corresponding consequence. He urged us to think about the

impact on people and to mobilize policies to ensure a just transition. I would like to urge governments, MNEs and all interested groups in society to ensure that we take care of those who have been marginalized by instituting relevant policies.

The Government has amended the labour legislation recently, which has an unfair bias against trade unions and employees. This is something which is not sustainable and the Malaysian Trade Union Congress will be pursuing this to correct the imbalance. The trade union movement is not asking to be favoured in any way, but to be treated fairly.

The MTUC has long advocated the need for a minimum wage mechanism. This has been resisted by the Government and employers, though the Government has committed itself to studying the matter currently. I am hopeful of a positive outcome.

Migrant work is a concern all over the globe in times of economic liberalization. Unfortunately, migrant work is being used to drive wages downwards artificially. This matter needs global attention as it results in a race to the bottom where the rights of workers and the quality of life are concerned. Migrant workers should be allowed to join and participate in trade union activities freely and not be excluded from any protection for the labour laws of any country.

Any mature or advanced society would allow the existence of free and independent trade unions, and it is about time that every government comes to realize that suppression of civil liberties and denial of trade union rights would not be able to continue for very much longer.

In conclusion, I would like to urge everyone to look towards a genuine tripartite arrangement to achieve the objective of decent work globally.

Original Spanish: Mr JIMÉNEZ AGUILAR (*Employer, Spain*)

The Spanish employers' organizations accord particular importance to the discussions of the annual International Labour Conference, which must respond to the challenges and opportunities provided by a globalized world.

I would like to emphasize the discussions which have taken place on the strengthening of the ILO's capacity. More than ever, we need to bring this Organization closer to the real need of its member States, to improve the coordination of its activities and to use, in a more efficient way, the important human and financial resources at its disposal. The decent work programmes in the various member States should facilitate progress in achieving productive employment as the best guarantee of social well-being.

The traditional inertia in producing ILO standards should move towards cooperation with, and providing assistance to, countries which are most affected by the basic problems of complying with fundamental social rights. It is necessary to strengthen this approach, which has already given visible results, particularly on the tenth anniversary of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up, which has resulted in this new focus on the activity of the Organization.

In this light, I think that we need to emphasize the important activities that the Conference carries out in order to follow up and encourage compliance with the core Conventions and the increasing relevance of the conclusions adopted.

Given the aspirations of the different organizations to set themselves up as defenders of social rights at an international level, it is necessary to emphasize the important role played by the ILO as the only tripartite international organization, which has the legitimacy to respond to the social challenges of a globalized world.

Over the past days, we have been working on conclusions that will act as the basis for a future ILO plan of action to promote rural employment. As the Philadelphia Declaration states, "Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere". It is in the rural sector of many developing countries where we need to act in order to combat the vicious circle generated by the shortage of productive and decent work.

We have also moved towards approaches that enable a better use of vocational training and skills. Human capital is the decisive factor in innovation and competitiveness, and on it depends future employment. It is a very good thing that the conclusions of the Conference have emphasized the responsibilities shared by employers, governments and workers.

The Spanish employers are happy to attend this Conference knowing that, over the past few years, we have achieved visible progress in terms of social dialogue. This is the result of a tradition of consultation based on the acceptance of responsibilities by the social partners and the Government. Our great challenge is to use these tools in order to tackle the important problems caused by growing economic uncertainty.

In any case, none of these results could have been achieved without the full acceptance by the Government and employers' and trade union organizations of the principles of free enterprise and freedom of association as the cornerstone of progress and decent and productive employment.

In this light, allow me to conclude my speech by expressing once again, our concern by the fact that, in many geographic areas, especially Latin America there is a trend towards calling into doubt market regulations and the benefits of better integration at an economic level, and towards restrictive policies in terms of individual and economic freedoms.

Given the threat of improper interference, we can never emphasize enough the importance of respecting individual freedoms, free enterprise and the promotion of an entrepreneurial spirit. Only in this way will we be able to make social and economic progress to eradicate poverty and inequality.

Original Spanish: Mr NAVARRO FERNANDEZ (Worker, Cuba)

We welcome the broad-ranging and detailed report of the Chairperson and the Director-General's

Report on taking the Decent Work Agenda forward. We share the points of view expressed with regard to the critical situation in which humanity finds itself at this time, caused by a deadly combination of economic crisis, energy crisis, food crisis and environmental crisis. Food prices have shot up, due to a lethal cocktail of high oil prices, climate change and increased consumption in certain countries, but they have increased even more as a result of the misjudged trend towards bio fuel production, which only serves three powerful and transnational interests, namely the petrol consortiums, agribusiness and the automotive industry.

We agree with the Report in that, in the midst of this critical situation, the statistics relating to economic growth, as expressed in GDP, are praised without paying due attention to the parallel increase in inequality and the fact that, by 2015, more than 2 billion people across the world will be facing poverty.

Latin America, as a result of the neo-liberal policies imposed on it, has become the region displaying the greatest inequality in terms of wealth. The rich have become richer, whilst 200 million people are poor, 53 million could be classified as hungry and 42 million are illiterate. There is also a disproportionate growth in the frequency of informal and precarious work, whilst the supposed benefits of the market and free trade agreements continue to be vaunted as a panacea to solve all of these serious problems, and it is as if the negative consequences suffered by workers, both in the North and the South, as a result of the application of such policies, have not set any alarm bells at all.

We welcome, moreover, the interest expressed in improving income and working conditions in the informal sector, but sincerely we believe that our struggles should be focused on increasing sources of stable and decent work in order to meet the ILO's decent work objectives. We are pleased to note the approach taken by the Director-General, in terms of the need to achieve unity amongst workers to meet their objectives. In our case, unity represents an unshakeable principle, which we have been able to achieve through the willingness of workers across our 70 years of existence.

We believe, however, that unity should be promoted across all tides of opinion in the international trade union movement, and it is for that reason that we find it to be damaging to the standing and to objectives of the ILO that in their documents and speeches the various constituents tend to favour one way of thinking over another and that this has led to greater disunity and conflict amongst workers.

We, as Cuban workers, for our part, believe that our country is working in line with the integrated vision of decent work. Cuba, as well as being well ahead of Latin America in terms of income distribution, enjoys broader rights to trade union membership and trade union operation, as well as participation by workers in decision-making at various levels, allowing them to engage on a daily basis in permanent social dialogue. We enjoy broad protection of the rights of the child and of mothers and have forward-thinking maternity and paternity legislation, as well as a social security and welfare system with coverage for each and every citizen, along with universal and free education, both general and technical, for all Cubans, with a guarantee of employment for young school leavers as soon as they complete their studies. At the same time, we enjoy a

universal free health system for the entire population, along with legal guarantees for the protection of occupational safety, as well as full employment.

All of this, despite a brutal economic, financial and trade war, which has been waged for almost 50 years, at a cost of almost 90 billion dollars and which has blocked any possibilities for our development but which, above all, has led to a level of human suffering that cannot be measured in financial terms.

Once again, we welcome the Report and we reiterate our commitment to continue to act constructively within this house.

Original Armenian: Mr ASATRYAN (Government, Armenia)

This regular Conference of the ILO is of particular importance for strengthening dialogue. In my view, our work this year has produced a very effective platform for assessing what has been done to tackle problems and for laying the foundations for further cooperation within the context of the ILO's meetings.

When Armenia became a Member of the ILO, it took upon itself the commitment to provide social dialogue within the country and to create the kind of partnership that the ILO supports, using the basic principles, norms, standards and methods that the ILO advocates. At the present moment, the labour code is being adapted and a programme to combat poverty is being implemented. At the very basis of our new laws is the principle of social welfare, social dialogue and decent work for every citizen of the country.

We are also developing a strategy for the stable development of social welfare, in order to provide further for the harmonious development of the system.

In 2007 we signed the programme called "Armenia/ILO: Decent work" and we laid down a very detailed plan to implement it, which is aimed at supporting all the initiatives that have been undertaken by the State and by the social partners. The Republic of Armenia has taken very serious steps to strengthen social dialogue as an institution, and when developing its policy for social welfare it draws all the social partners into the process of hammering out the texts. This includes trade unions and employers' organization, and of course provides full freedom of association and freedom to organize, which are enshrined in the new labour code.

The Republic of Armenia has ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and the associated recommendations from the expert committees. On the basis of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), we have already adapted the language of this in our labour code. Using the opportunity of negotiations between representatives of the social partners, we now have collective contracts at the country level, and this is being discussed throughout the State.

Under this we provide safety and health at work and all the other guarantees and safeguards that are relevant.

On behalf of Armenia and the social partners within Armenia, we would like to say how grateful we are to the ILO for all the support and help which we have had through our process of reform.

The broad-based reforms which we have adopted, would never have been achieved without the support of international organizations, especially when it comes to applying international norms and standards. We are confident that this ongoing work will help to tackle the problems the country faces as we aim to create the kind of society in which inequality, poverty and forced labour are banned for all time.

Original Portuguese: Mr GOMES PROENÇA (Worker, Portugal)

The Report of the Director-General entitled *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, can only be put into practice through economic and social development and by linking job creation to progress made in the area of labour rights, social protection and social dialogue.

At a time when we are faced with increases in the price of food and energy, often with speculation behind them, and the consequences of the financial crisis causing alarming increases in poverty and social exclusion, decent work, as picked up by the Report, is even more important.

The ILO is the world forum for tripartite social dialogue. It is the origin of decent work, which mobilizes workers, employers and governments, and which plays a key role in the construction of a fair globalization, fair world and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. There is no decent work with social exclusion, unfair competition and increasing social inequality. The promotion of decent work is closely linked to the adoption of new standard-setting instruments, the promotion of the ratification of these Conventions and their implementation in national legislation and practice.

The results achieved in these areas in recent years have been positive, but we still regret the fact that for various reasons, there are still countries that have not ratified the ILO's eight fundamental Conventions and that in some countries there are still grave violations of union rights and it is not possible for unions to work freely and independently.

Decent work is an overall objective and it should be a national reality. Each of us has responsibility to work for the attainment of the ILO's objectives, working at an international level by working in solidarity, but also at a national level, with consistent work to defend economic and social progress.

That is why, in Portugal, in the reform and revision of the labour legislation that is under way, we have been working for improved quality of employment to comply with the provisions in the legislation on social and tripartite dialogue.

On World Day Against Child Labour, I would like to stress the work that has been done there at the international tripartite level. I would also like to recall the holding of the first ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization held in Portugal, and the call at that forum for a world campaign for decent work for a decent life, which was then dynamized by the International Trade Union Confederation with the assistance of the ILO and its Director-General.

I would also like to highlight the work done by the ILO offices across the world, such as the Lisbon Office, which is working relentlessly with the social partners.

The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization opens up new opportunities for deepening the work that has been done by this Organiza-

tion. We need a different kind of globalization, with a social dimension that goes hand in hand with the economic dimension and respects the social and environmental issues. A globalization with regional integration and a social dimension, and a globalization which aims to combat poverty and reduce inequalities between countries and within each country.

For this reason, it is indispensable that we have a global governance of this issue, involving the United Nations and with strong participation on the part of the ILO.

We would like to express our clear and unequivocal support for the re-election of Somavía at the head of the ILO. He has already made an impression on this organization and I am sure that in the future he will continue to make an impression on it and lead it towards a more just world characterized by greater solidarity.

Original Arabic: Mr AZOUZ (Worker, Syrian Arab Republic)

The ten years that have passed since the adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work have been very fruitful for Syria. We have witnessed a great deal of development in the relationship between all production partners, and particularly in the matter of ensuring respect for the rights and principles at work as set out in the ILO Declaration.

Syria was one of the first countries to ratify the core ILO Conventions. We have witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of countries that have ratified these Conventions, and we have been able to translate them into reality.

Owing to the close link between freedom of association and collective bargaining, the Syrian unions do not take lightly any violation of these fundamental rights. They have become part and parcel of the lives of our people, and in this regard we rely upon the support and leadership of our President Bashar al-Assad who has given the working class his attention and care. We do not claim to have achieved an ideal society. We still have a long way to go as a result of the many obstacles, the main one being the continued threats made against Syria by aggressive and imperialist powers such as Israel. Israel occupies a very important part of our Syrian lands, the Syrian Golan, in disregard of UN resolutions, especially Security Council Resolutions Nos 242, 338 and 425. These resolutions call upon Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories unconditionally and to go back to the borders of 4 June 1967 including southern Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Palestinian populations in these territories are being subjected to a comprehensive war of annihilation by the Israeli occupation, especially in the Gaza Strip. This burden upon the shoulders of Syria has obstructed the process of economic and human development.

This situation is further exacerbated by the American forces in the regions close to our borders. These forces are a threat to the situation in the Middle East as a whole and to the security and stability of Syria in particular. Syria has welcomed more than 1.5 million Iraqi refugees and, as you know, this requires considerable financial resources. The Syria Accountability Act and the embargo imposed by the American Administration have greatly damaged our development and our economic and social reform plans.

We support the efforts of the ILO and its Governing Body and, in particular, the efforts of the Director-General to achieve as much development as possible and to attain the goals of the ILO, that is to say, a fair globalization. We hope to make this globalization more human and less brutal in its impact upon workers and developing nations. In this regard, we would like to commend the efforts of the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States in Beirut. These efforts have been crowned by the Decent Work Agreement signed by the tripartite production partners in Syria last year.

Freedom of association and collective bargaining have become inalienable rights and we call upon the international community to exert more pressure on Israel to protect the rights of workers in the occupied Arab territories, including the Golan, referred to in the Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories.

We should call a spade a spade. We need to be quite honest and frank, and we should not accept double standards, be it in the economic, social or cultural sphere. The double-standards policy adopted by many developed countries in their treatment of developing countries is a stark violation of international law and human morality. With regard to issues of sovereignty, many aggressive policies have been adopted in the name of combating terrorism. We need to define the real and true meaning of this term "terrorism" which is radically different from the legal struggle of peoples who aspire to a brighter future.

Of course, security, stability and peace are inseparable and we must stress the issue of justice. The most dangerous issues faced by humanity today are poverty, unemployment, food scarcity, debts, the struggles and tensions between many countries, and the monopolies of the multinationals who have appropriated the wealth of poor countries. Other dangers arise from military regimes that threaten international security, illiteracy among the populations of poor countries, and the "brain drain" of qualified staff from developing countries. These all have had a very negative impact upon the poor countries.

The world today needs to establish a true and just partnership between countries based upon mutual interests, rather than the law of the jungle. We are all partners in this world, and we must all benefit from the positive results of the technological revolution. The concept of "monopoly" cannot be accepted today, as the world becomes a village and open space for all.

Lastly, on behalf of the Syrian workers, I would like to reiterate our support to the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia and the ILO.

Original Spanish: Mr ESPINAL ESCOBAR (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, El Salvador)

It is a great honour to be able to speak to you today during the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. During this Conference we have been analysing two very important issues on labour ministers' agendas. The first is the promotion of rural employment to reduce poverty and the second is the issue of the skills necessary to improve productivity and employment.

In El Salvador, our agricultural sector has received an enormous amount of support from the central Government. We have been implementing a plan that covers technological support, training and

labour supply, and this has enabled us to achieve the highest level of growth seen in recent decades. This year we are expecting a record production of basic foodstuffs. Our production will be up 15 per cent on last year.

With respect to strengthening the vocational skills of our workers, we have set up a vocational training institute on a tripartite basis and last year we were able to train approximately 170,000 workers through more than 7,000 training activities. We have also trained 700 labour skills trainers under an agreement with the International Training Centre of the ILO.

Concerning other progress made in labour issues as part of the labour agenda of the government of President Elías Antonio Saca, in the sphere of freedom of association, trade unions and labour relations, we have carried out a number of activities to familiarize people with labour rights, including the establishment of tripartite public forums. We recently signed a cooperation agreement with the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure recognition of the principles and objectives of Conventions Nos. 87, 98, 135 and 151 on freedom of association and collective bargaining.

On the issues of gender and discrimination, we have continued to strengthen our prevention activities with specific training programmes and the provision of new IT equipment.

On the subject of combating the worst forms of child labour, we have pursued the implementation of the national plan to prevent and eliminate child labour. We have so far managed to remove from, or prevent 46,000 children and adolescents from going into, child labour.

Regarding the promotion of fundamental labour rights, last October we signed a tripartite agreement for the promotion of decent work in El Salvador, the aim being to ensure effective compliance with and the proper application of labour law.

I think it is also important to point out that El Salvador will be hosting the Ibero-American Meeting of Ministers of Labour in the framework of the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, also to be held in my country, at the end of this year. At this ministerial event we will be talking about the approval and implementation of policies and programmes for the promotion of youth employment, the strengthening of the institutional and regulatory framework, and the protection of young people.

I would also like to tell you that through our national minimum wage council we have recently increased minimum wages so as to improve the income of workers in trade, industry, services and seasonal agriculture.

It is also important to mention the recognition that we received from the ILO, in the framework of the project to monitor compliance with labour standards, following the signature of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, for the sustained increase in the budget of my Ministry over the past three years, leading to a substantial increase in labour inspections, conflict resolution and labour management. The report recognizes the training that has been provided to judges and magistrates, so as to strengthen our labour courts and in turn protect labour rights from a judicial perspective.

Finally, I would like to inform you that I was recently honoured by my colleagues in Central America and the Dominican Republic by being asked to

continue in my role as President *pro tempore* of the Council of Labour Ministers for our subregion. In this position, I will continue to develop a number of programmes to strengthen the labour administration bodies in our subregion, in which the ILO has played an important role.

In this connection, I would like to reiterate the support that my subregion offers to Mr Juan Somavia in his candidacy to continue at the head of this Organization.

We are committed to go on building, and improving each day, a culture in which we can ensure respect for labour rights and social justice. We wish to ensure that everybody benefits from globalization through the creation of more productive and decent jobs, built on the basis of harmonious and productive relations between the main players in the employment relationship.

Original Spanish: Mr DOZ (Worker, Spain)

I would like to start by indicating our agreement with the Report of the Director-General. We can see that there has been progress in some countries and regions on the four strategic objectives: fundamental rights at work, decent work, social protection and social dialogue. We have also seen more consistency in the work of the different organizations of the United Nations system that share those objectives, and the success of the ILO's programmes for technical assistance. Despite these improvements, we cannot be complacent. Decent labour is still something that is far from the lives of hundreds of millions of workers who are living on poverty-level wages, without any social protection and without any labour or union rights. The fundamental rights of the 1998 Declaration are not being taken into account in the Doha round of the negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We can see that forced labour is still being used in Burma and that in Equatorial Guinea, which has the highest per capita income in Africa, more than 70 per cent of the people live in absolute poverty without union or political rights.

We have to continue denouncing the fact that in many developed countries, including my country, many people, most of them immigrants without papers, are working in the informal economy, without rights and in dreadful conditions. Many of the governments sitting here do not recognize or do not respect union freedom, the right to strike or to collective bargaining; they arbitrarily imprison unionists – they even kill some. Sometimes, in places where those rights are formally recognized, dozens of unionists are nonetheless murdered, as happens in Colombia.

In the European Union, something very serious has happened. The European Council has just approved a draft directive which opens the door to the working week being established on the basis of the individual relationship between the worker and the employer, not through legislation or by collective bargaining, with the limits of the individual agreement being no less than 60 to 65 hours a week. This has been approved by most governments, led by the British and German Governments, and is the greatest attack on European labour law since the creation of the European Union.

We have made progress, but, as the Report says, we still have a lot of work to do and there have been setbacks as well.

That is why the Spanish unions, on behalf of whom I am speaking, are going to make a great effort to make sure that the World Day for Decent Work organized by the International Trade Union Confederation for 7 October has a great impact on workers and on public opinion in Spain. The ILO should show its support and solidarity for this union initiative.

We are watching with concern how three crises are developing at the world level, which are related to each other to some extent: the energy, financial and food crises. With regard to the food crises, the conclusions of the recent Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Summit in Rome were particularly disappointing. Why do those governments who have the greatest capacities and responsibilities drag international institutions into ineffective decisions or a lack of decisions, faced with a problem of vital importance for many hundreds of millions of people?

Facing, appropriately, up to the food crisis, which is the result of the huge increase in the price of basic foodstuffs, should be a priority for governments and multilateral institutions. If not, the progress made towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals and promoting decent work will turn into setbacks.

We can see a common feature to the three crises: they are the result of financial speculation. Globalization has not been subject to good and democratic governance. Indeed, the impression is one of misgovernance at the global level. Why are there no international standards to put a stop to financial speculation? Why is it so difficult to get rid of tax havens when we know that their principal activity is to launder money that comes from tax evasion at best, or, at worst, from the criminal economy that globalization has promoted? While financial speculation is not, and indeed is far from being, the only factor that explains the crises, it is one of the contributing factors, which takes advantage of the situation and makes them worse.

While the egotism of nations in an emergency situation can be criticized, the behaviour and status of those that take advantage of them for personal gain are intolerable; for example, the directors of high risk investment funds whose salaries are often thousands of times more than the average wage of workers.

Solidarity and cooperation should be the inspiration for the action of governments, social partners and multilateral institutions. We need international standards and procedures for coordinated action.

Strengthening the capacity of the ILO to act for itself and in relationship with the other agencies of the United Nations is one of the continuing objectives that we, the Spanish workers support.

In conclusion, a few words on the Spanish situation. Since the last Session of the Conference, the programme of tripartite social dialogue which the social partners agreed on with the Government following the elections in March 2004 has come to an end. The result was clearly positive in terms of the number and significance of the agreements reached. There was legislation on caring for dependent people, on the equality at work, on the regularization of the situation of immigrants, on the minimum wage, on pensions, and on the reform of some aspects of the labour market. New areas have opened up for tripartite work, such as policies to reduce CO₂ emissions, under the commitments to the Kyoto Proto-

col; the renewals of national collective bargaining agreements, signed by the representative unions, the Workers Commissions and the General Workers' Union (UGT), and employers' organizations who are involved in collective bargaining.

We have also been promoting social dialogue at the supranational level, in the Ibero-American Community of Nations, for example.

In the last six months, the economic situation has changed drastically, putting an end, we hope temporarily, to a large period of growth for the economy and employment, which started in 1994. The rate of growth has fallen sharply and unemployment has rapidly started to rise, particularly among immigrant workers who have gone from 1 to 10 per cent of the Spanish population in a few short years. If social dialogue, which does not eliminate social conflict, but reduces and channels it, has been a very valuable instrument in the period of plenty and has led to great improvements for workers and companies, it should continue to be of use in facing up to the crisis and its social and labour consequences.

Ms TALIWAKU (*speaking on behalf of Mr Mwesigwa, Minister of Labour, Employment and Labour Relations, Uganda*)

Africa remains the region worst hit by poverty, HIV/AIDS, unemployment and low productivity, child labour, illiteracy, high population growth rate and high debt burden, among other things.

Africa is also affected by armed conflict. The complexities of armed conflict impede on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of association, social dialogue and sustainable employment. This is a challenge that requires innovative strategies to ensure effective implementation of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that the Report of the Director General: *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, is taking us a step further in opening new roads, seeking a more integrated approach, new partnerships and innovative policy frameworks. This will bring on board new experiences and knowledge on addressing the Decent Work Agenda.

In keeping with the goal of the Decent Work Agenda for Africa, the Government of Uganda, through a highly consultative process with all stakeholders, has developed a Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). It is indeed in acknowledgement of the significance of the Decent Work Agenda and employment in particular, as a catalyst in reducing poverty, that the Government of Uganda is reviewing the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) to change it to a five-year National Development Plan with the theme, "Growth, Employment and Prosperity for All".

Allow me to comment on a few items on the agenda for this Conference. Promotion of rural employment is one of the priority areas, given the fact that agriculture is the key sector of Uganda's economy. The main thrust of Government policy has, therefore, been to increase the incomes of the poor through higher agricultural growth and improve non-farm employment, especially, in the rural areas where the majority of the poor live.

It is also acknowledged that skills development is essential for improved productivity, incomes and access to employment opportunities. This needs to be accompanied by an interplay of factors in the labour market. The Government of Uganda further notes that availability of labour market information

is one of the prerequisites for minimizing mismatches between supply and demand and subsequently opening up opportunities for employment.

Some of the measures in place include universal primary and secondary education, vocational training, as well as apprenticeship to harness skills, particularly among the youth. The Government of Uganda will use the recommendations of the Conference to enhance the existing skills development initiatives.

The Government of Uganda recognizes that social dialogue is one of the most powerful tools that can help to bring about consensus, industrial peace, social and economic cohesion and the commitment of all parties to play their rightful role in social economic development. In collaboration with the social partners, new laws and mechanisms, as well as structures for regular consultations have been developed. My delegation welcomes the efforts of the ILO to strengthen both its capacity and that of its Members, to address the challenges of globalization and decent work. My delegation further wishes to support the principle of working together at regional levels. It will enable us to share experiences and a common approach within our respective regions.

Before I conclude, I wish to acknowledge the contribution made by the ILO, together with our other development partners, towards the development efforts of Uganda.

Finally, I wish to reassure you of the commitment and political will of the Government of Uganda regarding the pursuit of social justice and decent work for all.

Original Spanish: Mr GÓMEZ ESGUERRA (Worker, Colombia)

We have taken careful note of the Report presented by the Director-General and we would like to take this opportunity to say, on behalf of the working class in Colombia, that, as is well known, particularly in this house of tripartism, the development of trade union activity in our country becomes more and more difficult every day because of the prevailing climate of violence which is seriously affecting both trade union activism and trade unionism in our country as a whole.

We would like to say to all of you that the Colombian trade union movement feels that the continuing intimidation and actual murder of trade unionists in our country is totally unacceptable. So far this year, 26 of our colleagues have been murdered; so in just five months of this year, more people have been murdered than in the whole of 2007.

Added to this is the very serious fact that hundreds of trade union organizations have disappeared in our country over the last 30 years. This of course seriously affects freedom of association, and added to that, we are seeing that trade unionism, and collective bargaining with it, is being killed off completely.

As far as neo-liberalism is concerned, the best kind of trade union is one that does not exist at all, which is why we are so concerned to see this anti-trade unionist activity. It expresses itself in subcontracting policies that involve low-quality contracts and the setting up of temporary companies, and recently the creation of the very damaging "associated labour cooperatives", whose major objective seems to be to prevent the workers in Colombia and other parts of the world from organizing themselves.

I would like to state before this august assembly that trade unions in Colombia will not give in to

these pressures. We are issuing a call for help to you so that on the basis of the Tripartite Agreement signed on 1 June 2006, we can enjoy the full right to exercise our activities as trade unionists without having to live in fear of our lives, our jobs or our homes.

Workers who have been the victim of this wave of neoliberalism that has affected us over the last 30 years are calling for justice. These are the workers of Adpostal, Intravisión, the radio and TV sector, Telecom, Caja Agraria, universities, local authorities, the textile, processing and various other industries, trade, the health sector, the hotel and catering sector, the chemical sector, the construction and woodworking industry, mining and metallurgy, who have been left without employment and without any possibility to draw a pension or any social security cover. We are asking that the international community makes a greater commitment to ensure that Colombia respects the laws and regulations which enable us to build social justice, the only way to guarantee peace.

We urge the Government and the employers' representatives of Colombia not only to respect the Tripartite Agreement for peace and democracy but also to promote a better climate for freedom of association in Colombia. We wish to see a stop to anti-trade union activities and attitudes which seriously endanger the lives of our members, the existence of the unions, and even the Constitution, which establishes Colombia as being a State based on the rule of law and social rights.

If we, as trade unions, can work in line with the Declarations and standards of the ILO and other international bodies, then we believe that the day will soon come when a delegation of workers, employers and government representatives can tell you that Colombia is a country where freedom of association and human rights do exist and where the fundamental rights of our workers and of the population as a whole are fully respected.

The incredible level of impunity with which the enemies of trade unionism are acting must be the biggest enemy that we have to overcome because, if the current situation continues, then we will doubtlessly end up in a situation where trade unions in our country are simply a thing of the past. So we place ourselves in the hands of the ILO and the international community in asking you to ensure that the Tripartite Agreement and the ILO Conventions and Recommendations are fully respected, so that peace and democracy can persist in our country.

Finally, on behalf of the CGT, we would like to express our solidarity with others who suffer similar situations, including workers from Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador – a country where Convention No. 87 has been declared impossible to implement, by the way – and we would also like to thank the Government of Spain for its support in achieving the release of our colleague, Pedro Alvarez, from Cuba, and we are asking for assistance in having our other colleagues freed from Cuba, at the same time condemning the embargo on it maintained by the United States.

Mr EDSTRÖM (Worker, Sweden)

The Director-General's Report on Decent Work summarizes the important matters lying ahead for the promotion of decent work, but I nevertheless could not ignore the inconsistency in the Report with regard to employment security. In paragraph

52, there is a description of the priorities set by people in 79 countries, where seven out of ten argue that employment security is of major importance.

We are all also aware that the major concern of the ILO is the increase in precarious employment conditions, in addition to the growth of the informal sector, but paragraph 104, surprisingly, states that employment protection may imply less employment creation. For us as workers, a minimum requirement of decent work is, of course, that no worker should be dismissed without a valid reason. This rights-based approach to workers as human beings should not be allowed to be challenged by any dubious argumentation that workers and their families, on aggregate, are better off if they find themselves in insecure and precarious employment conditions. But maybe this is not actually what is advocated here.

The Report raises the question of the types of knowledge the ILO requires. Although five areas are suggested, there are additional urgent gaps in knowledge in the Office in relation to the following areas:

First, what constitutes sound industrial relations between the social partners and how to promote them, including through voluntary collective bargaining.

Second, how to promote effectively, in all ILO activities, a recognition in law and practice in member States of freedom of association and the rights enshrined in Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Third, how to become a centre of excellence in mediation services and the development of an ILO tribunal, capable of making interpretations, as a type of labour court, at the international level, in the cases where constituents dispute recommendations made by the ILO supervisory bodies.

Fourth, how to raise the profile of the ILO as the superior centre of expertise and standard setting organization in labour matters. This is central to a globalized world of work, and the ILO should have the courage to not allow itself to be challenged or replaced by standard-setting agencies or activities at international, regional or subregional levels that goes against, or does not take into account, what is agreed at the global tripartite level within the ILO.

I welcome the excellent General Survey on labour clauses in public procurement that the Committee of Experts provided to the Committee on the Application of Standards, and where they emphasized the importance of the Convention. We were given both a thorough description of developments taking place in other regional and international organizations and a number of suggestions on how to make public procurement a strong vehicle for promoting decent work, both nationally and internationally.

The Employers' totally negative view on Convention No. 94 indeed came as a big surprise. In my view, serious and decent employers who recognize trade unions and are prepared to bargain collectively would rather benefit from not being excluded due to unfair competition. Apparently, employers in the public sector have a different view, at least in the European context, as they recognize the value of this Convention.

Of equal disappointment is the statement made in the discussion of Convention No. 94 by the Swedish Government. Its unwillingness to ratify this Convention is well known in Sweden, but the preferred official position is to blame the rules of the free internal market in the European Union. In addition,

suddenly, a new argument has been put forward. Now the Government states that they agree with the position taken by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO Sweden) 58 years ago, in 1950. They have failed to mention that the two major trade union confederations in Sweden, the LO, which I represent and the TCO, due to globalization, for more than 15 years had been advocating a Swedish ratification of this Convention. Had Sweden ratified this Convention, the European Court of Justice would probably not have been able to submit its most surprising and deploring judgement on the so-called Laval case, a judgement which, in my view, is not compatible with the ILO's jurisprudence on freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Let me finally state my appreciation that the Conference gave its approval to adopt agenda-neutral language in our Constitution and validated, on a permanent basis, the interim provisions with regard to the work of the Credentials Committee.

Ms PILLAI (Government, India)

At the outset, let me place on record my sincere appreciation to the Director-General for bringing out such comprehensive documents.

The Report *Decent work: Some strategic challenges ahead* appears against the backdrop of tremendous economic turbulence and volatility. The ILO has an important role in the global policy response to such a situation and can cooperate in policy coherence with other multilateral institutions to make fair globalization possible. It is very important to consolidate and fully employ the ILO's unique core competence so as make possible a decent and meaningful life for workers and their families.

The Report highlights many important issues that confront all of us, and pose challenges in realizing the commonly agreed global targets, such as the Global Employment Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategies. We agree with the Report that growing inequality, poor social security coverage, discrimination at work, child labour, the problems of the informal economy, the challenges to sustainable development and violations of rights at work are major obstacles in realizing the goal of decent work.

These obstacles have to be overcome because decent work provides a holistic framework for shaping policies and action, and also a paradigm for addressing these challenges. Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working life and the Director-General, Mr Somavia, in his Report gives this real meaning by putting decent work into the life cycle perspective.

India visualizes the ILO concept of decent work in terms of the broad-based inclusive growth strategy that it is pursuing through flagship schemes to upgrade infrastructure for the poor, to attack, as it were, the very geography of poverty by providing social security to workers in the unorganized sector and income security for the poor. These schemes create a social floor and seek to prevent and address destitution and poverty.

I would also like to express my appreciation of the Director-General's Report on *ILO programme implementation 2006-07*. The progress made by the ILO in realizing the strategic objectives is truly commendable.

The overwhelming political and economic priority today is to implement policies that expand opportunity, reduce inequalities and answer people's de-

mands for a fair globalization. Special attention has to be paid to policy areas such as strengthening education, skills training and enhancing employability, upgrading the informal economy, managing labour migration, expanding social security and addressing the issue of policy coherence in the international system. The future programmes of the ILO should take care of these issues.

As Director-General Somavia said in his address, we must all listen and learn and work together to give momentum to the decent work movement and uphold the dignity of work.

The Director-General has spoken of four strategic objectives, that is, building a global social floor, nurturing sustainable enterprises, rights at work and strengthening tripartism.

These are inspiring words and the ILO certainly has, as the Director-General said, a strong foundation of norms and policies. The ILO can help move the world in a direction of job-intensive and sustainable growth, which consolidates respect for rights and dialogue.

The commitment, confidence and capacity of ILO staff, which the Director-General has referred to, will be required to translate these inspiring words into action and effective implementation. We have to travel a long way and the journey must begin without delay.

Mr FARRUGIA (*Employer, Malta*)

In many ways, the Report of the Director-General for this session of the ILO Conference builds upon the reports of last year which dealt with decent work for sustainable development.

On behalf of the Maltese employers, I congratulate the Director-General on the manner in which the Report manages to single out the strategic challenges that face all countries in the promotion of decent work within the context of an international, economic and social environment that, in recent years, has become more turbulent, and which presents the social partners with fresh challenges in their efforts to improve the world of work.

The Director-General's Report rightly refers to the fact that there is growing worldwide acceptance of decent work programmes but, it is equally important to move from the awareness and acceptance stages, to the more concrete implementation of such programmes, in particular, to report on any measured positive outcomes.

It is interesting to note that the concept of flexicurity, which originated from the European Union, is also being discussed in ILO forums and policies that promote employability, rather than job security, can be integrated into customized Decent Work Country Programmes for enhanced job creation, increased participation in the labour force, and a shift from informal to a formal economic activity.

The Report mentions that the informal sector is increasing worldwide and the ILO needs to formulate a concrete response to curtail this phenomenon.

In Malta, there has been considerable interaction between education institutions and employers, commensurate with the emerging and changing needs of industry.

For example, in the field of airline maintenance, dialogue between employers and education institutions has resulted in tailor-made courses that will ensure a steady supply of qualified human resources in this sector in the coming years.

There are also many other instances of collaboration between employers and government institutions, most notably the employment and training corporation to design targeted apprenticeships and employment schemes that are channelling students and unemployed persons towards productive job opportunities.

Since its entry into the European Union, Malta has access to European social funds to invest in its human resources. A recent illustration is the utilization of the European Globalization Fund to provide training and reskilling to employees facing redundancies due to international outsourcing.

Other similar initiatives between government and employers, included the diffusion of IT skills among the labour force.

One of the results of these combined efforts, sustained by constructive social dialogue, is that Malta has its lowest rate of unemployment in the last 15 years, and which also stands among the lowest in the European Union.

Another outcome is that in spite of a continuous process of creative destruction in the last years, particularly in the manufacturing industry, Malta has managed to attract a healthy influx of foreign direct investment and to divert redundant labour and new entrants into emerging sectors, amongst which are information technology, pharmaceutical manufacturing and financial services.

In this context I must state that the contents of the discussions in this year's Conference on skills and improved further activity, employment growth and development are very relevant to Malta.

It is the employers' ambition for this momentum to be sustained and such an objective can only be achieved if there is acceptance of global realities by all social partners.

Governments should take note of the criticism contained in the IMF report which was published last week, that wage increases should be productivity based, and that the system that is practised the most, of granting annual national automatic cost-of-living increases, can threaten competitiveness and jobs in many sectors of the economy that are still vulnerable to international competition.

The current system carries the threat of fuelling a wage price spiral in response to inflationary pressures that will drive many businesses out of the market.

There is also the need to address environmental challenges and Malta's heavy dependency on fossil fuels and susceptibility to basic food prices calls for pressing action to generate green jobs, with full realization that this may imply a decline in some areas of economic activity and expansion in others.

The Director-General's Report refers to the importance of expanding the middle class and the reduction of income inequalities. As stated in the Report, such an economic transformation, can result in rising inequality.

In Malta, the GNI coefficient stands at 0.32 and although this implies a low-to-moderate income inequality, it is true to say that these inequalities may increase as conditions of employment vary between mature and declining areas, and emerging ones, which are significant to higher value added per capita. This raises the challenge of guaranteeing opportunities for all, through investment in education for young people and employees, to avail themselves of better prospects for career improvement.

The current high rate of job and occupational mobility points more towards that direction.

The ILO should opt for depth rather than range in order to focus on its core areas of activities and make those activities more relevant to its constituents through tangibility and intervention rather than debates.

A key segment that needs to be given prominence is that of SMEs as in many cases these enterprises are the main drivers of job creation. Given that, as with any other organization, the ILO has to work with limited its resources, the best way would be to prioritize the issues rather than attempt to exerts its influence beyond its core mandate. That is, the world of work and social dialogue.

Original Spanish: Mr PALMA CAICEDO (Vice-Minister of Labour, Ecuador)

I represent a small country in which, a little less than a year ago, we began a process of transformation, one of the most important and interesting of this century, adding to the course of events in Latin America whereby our countries are writing their own history, having spent decades marginalized from progress and development.

In Ecuador, labour conditions had been eroded. Now to correct that injustice that had gone on for so many years, the Government has been promoting structural reform with decent work as one of the main components.

Any true revolution in the world has friends and enemies, allies and detractors, loyal supporters and traitors. This is the dialectic contradiction that moves the wheel of history.

The Constituent National Assembly has been given full powers by the Ecuadorian people to draft a new Constitution which will include the concept of a dignified or decent wage, which puts an end to this legal fiction which made the salary just a transaction and not a means to making a living. Work is and should be a moral good which the State must protect.

Through the constituents, we have got rid of forms of labour subcontracting which were exploitative and flouted employers' obligations, turning workers into tradable goods which could just be hired or used at will.

Now to question the legitimacy of the constituents is an act of audacity or ignorance, given that the aim of the latter is to get rid of the privileges and inequalities which have worked to the detriment of the vast majority.

We have been carrying out very important work promoting social dialogue through the National Labour Council, a tripartite body that seeks agreements and consensus on various labour issues. For the first time, we have a programme called "My first job" which is promoting youth employment in my country. Through labour inspections also, we are monitoring the implementation of the law whereby the disabled are given work. Vocational training has been extended to vulnerable groups. We now have a child labour eradication programme which is successful. It promotes joint actions that are coordinated with public and private institutions, as in the case of the eradication of child labour in rubbish dumps. Inspection of child labour in collaboration with the business world and trade unions has achieved good results with regard to eradication of child labour, especially in the horticulture and banana sectors.

Raising the issue of rural development cannot be more timely in this economic environment dominated by the food crisis, climate change and the indiscriminate opening of the agricultural sector in many developing countries. We used to be self-sufficient in the production of grain, but now we are forced to import it at ever-increasing cost.

In Ecuador, the agricultural sector represents 17 per cent of GDP and, in occupying 30 per cent of the population, it is the largest employer in the country. Despite being a very diverse and privileged country in terms of goods we can export, including commodities such as oil, bananas and cocoa, Ecuador is one of the countries which has the most backward wealth distribution in the world, with high levels of social exclusion and inequality.

Very recently, during the FAO food summit in Rome, the general way agriculture was managed in the world was criticized because it has given rise to a food crisis for over 800 million people, causing social discontent and political instability, and threatening worldwide economic and social development.

The surge in basic food product prices is also linked to climate change, reduction of stocks, the rise in fuel prices and growing demand for raw materials for bio fuel production. In such a difficult situation it is important that our countries recover their productive capacities in agriculture through policies that promote rural development and support small producers, given that it is these, and not the major transnationals, who can resolve these issues of food shortages in our countries.

To promote sustainable development and decent work, we must implement a viable agricultural policy which will bear fruit in the medium and long term, not in the short term. We must supply our population with what they need and protect them from the swings in the international food markets. We must uphold the principles of food sovereignty and the right to food. As the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano said, the priority is to give food to people, not provide fuel for cars.

We are living in a systemic crisis and it is essential that we combine the efforts of governments, employers and workers. In this respect, the Government of Ecuador is guaranteeing the implementation of the ILO Conventions in the context of social dialogue and decent work as a means and objective to achieve participatory, fair and transparent development in Ecuadorian society.

Original Afghan: Mr QARQUEEN (Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Afghanistan)

First of all I would like to sincerely wish for success in achieving the goals envisaged for this Conference. I am sure that the wise leadership of the President of the Conference will play an important and effective role in reaching the goals that the Conference has set. I express the willingness of my country to work for the achievement of valuable results at this session and the implementation of the declarations that come out of it.

I am pleased to announce that a new Labour Code has been developed for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with the cooperation of workers and employers in their respective organizations. This Code has been approved and ratified by the Afghan National Assembly. There is no doubt that the Code will play an important role in all relevant aspects of labour affairs and issues related to workers, and will

provide a basis for social dialogue and mutual co-operation.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that, in accordance with the Afghan National Development Strategy, poverty reduction is one of the main priorities for the Government in 2008. One of the main tools for reducing poverty is the creation of employment opportunities for all vulnerable groups. This can also play an important role in ensuring security in the country.

Obviously, unemployment and poverty, not only in Afghanistan, but also in many other countries in the world, are among the main causes of insecurity. One of the main factors of unemployment in our country, which has led to serious security challenges, was the devastation of infrastructure and manufacturing capacity during the war that was imposed on us. Other factors include the slow growth of the private sector and the lack of investment in agriculture, energy, mining and industries. However, there are opportunities to invest in Afghanistan and reasons to invest there, and I would like to take this opportunity to attract the attention of all countries that are friendly to us and the attention of the international community to Afghanistan, encouraging them to invest in order to help in addressing the unemployment problem in our country.

For this reason, using existing resources, the initial draft of a national employment strategy has been drawn up with the cooperation of the ILO, and a local commission has been in place to work in this regard.

In order to eliminate unemployment in our country, we are concentrating on the following points. Firstly, to reduce unemployment, we have been providing vocational training that has been expanded through a national skills development programme and through other vocational training institutions, with the cooperation of friendly countries at a provincial level. Using these resources, a large number of young people who were outside the education system, as well as widows, eligible disabled people, former combatants, the surviving dependants of martyrs and other vulnerable groups, have been able to take part in vocational training programmes that have been launched. After completion of the training programme, these groups of people are then available for the labour market, but these efforts are not sufficient. We do need further assistance and cooperation to expand the existing programme.

Another tool we are using to reduce unemployment, bearing in mind the lack of sufficient employment in our country, is to explore ways and means of sending Afghan workers abroad. Efforts have been made to sign bilateral agreements to send Afghan workers abroad and to license private recruitments agencies that can do this. The labour migration programme aims to provide employment facilities for Afghan workers abroad and has started its activities with the cooperation of the ILO in the framework of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled.

I would like to state quite clearly here that, in the world in which we are living, we are all responsible for issues such as the reduction of unemployment, making sure that people can live a good life, addressing the needs of orphans, widows and disabled people, reducing illiteracy, eliminating poverty, combating famine, contagious diseases, discrimination, trafficking in children, hazardous forms of

child labour, the abuse of women and children and combating terrorism and preventing the cultivation and smuggling of narcotics. These are not the responsibilities of just one country.

In order to accomplish these tasks and these responsibilities, the international community should struggle together with Afghanistan and cooperate with it. As a member of the global community, like certain other countries, Afghanistan is not able to solve these problems alone.

Although Afghanistan has not ratified the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), it does intend to do so in the near future. The social protection strategy in the field of disability has been drafted in close cooperation and consultation with the Afghan National Development Strategy Secretariat, which identifies the challenges and ways to overcome those challenges.

A special unit has been set up within the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, in order to defend the rights of disabled people, to raise public awareness and to assist in the implementation of relevant legislation. This unit also develops comprehensive policies for people with disabilities and coordinates the different policies involved.

Some other things that are being done at the moment are setting up working groups for social protection, defending the rights of disabled people, vulnerable women, preventing the use of narcotics, treating people who are addicted to drugs and seeking employment opportunities for young people and demobilized soldiers.

It is worth mentioning that the Ministry has taken the initiative of establishing councils for the support of vulnerable groups, with the participation of community elders with the view to organizing work on the issues I have mentioned within provinces and districts. Experience shows that we can solve people's problems using their own resources and facilities.

Bearing in mind the importance of gender, the cooperation carried out by the Ministry with the Ministry for Women's Affairs and the National Action Plan for Women has been expanded. The National Action Plan has been approved by the President and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled has taken appropriate steps to implement the plan.

The Government of Afghanistan is willing to ratify core ILO Conventions Nos 138 and 182 in order to strengthen the capacity for the protection of human rights, including the social and economic rights of every man and woman, and to improve our image at the international level. The ratification process has already started and will be completed in the near future. Afghanistan also intends to ratify Convention No. 144 on tripartite consultation, Convention No. 159, as I mentioned earlier, and the amendment to the ILO Constitution. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled has taken the appropriate steps and sent the relevant documents to the National Assembly for processing. Once approved by the National Assembly and the President, they will be sent to the ILO.

In conclusion, I wish you every success in the implementation of the instruments and decisions that come from this Conference, and I would like to thank you all for listening and wish you all every success.

On behalf of the President of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), Ms Corazon de la Paz-Bernardo, it is my pleasure to bring to all delegates of the International Labour Conference the greetings of the Association and of its membership of 350 social security institutions from some 149 countries.

As many of you know, the ISSA and the ILO have worked together for more than 80 years in the promotion and development of social security systems around the world. This long-term relationship and solid partnership, that goes back to the ILO's role in the creation of the ISSA in 1927, has evolved over the decades. I am proud to inform you that it has recently entered into a new era as the ISSA and the ILO Social Security Department have strengthened their collaborative efforts through a new process of joint work planning and implementation.

The Director-General of the ILO has, in his Report to the Conference, outlined the important challenges the world is facing, including the financial crisis, economic imbalances and increasing social divides and inequalities. The ISSA wholeheartedly agrees that particularly in this difficult context, decent work is at the heart of social, environmental and economic progress.

And social security protection is an essential component of decent work. Social security is first and foremost a means of ensuring that all members of society are protected economically. But social security can achieve much more, as it enhances the quality of life of individuals, supports growth, and contributes to advancing social justice and social cohesion.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the recognition of social security as a fundamental human right. Sadly, a large part of the world population still does not have access to social security protection. ILO research has recently demonstrated that affordability of a basic social security package, even for low-income countries, as well as the positive impact of social security transfers on poverty reduction and growth. The ISSA supports the call of the ILO for at least basic social security protection for all – a basic social floor on which more adequate social security systems gradually can be built in line with the capacities of the countries concerned. ISSA member organizations throughout the world will be instrumental in ensuring the proper administration and implementation of cash transfers and health-care service provision.

In order to achieve protection for all, innovations are needed, both in social security policy and administration. Last year, I presented to you the ISSA's new strategic vision of a dynamic social security system that is accessible, sustainable, well governed, innovative and pro-active. Today, we are encouraged by the progress that has been made.

At the First ISSA World Social Security Forum that brought together more than 1,000 social security leaders and specialists last September in Moscow, mounting evidence was presented that social security is indeed dynamically adapting and innovating to protect populations in our increasingly global and rapidly changing world. International organizations and policy-makers at the First World Social Security Summit called upon the ISSA to

strengthen its efforts to promote dynamic social security.

Responding to this message, the ISSA has this year started a new and exciting three-year programme of activities to strengthen the capacities of social security organizations worldwide in order to: increase their administrative and operational efficiency and achieve good governance; work with and influence social security reforms; work towards the extension of coverage; and cope with the challenges of demographic change.

In implementing this exciting programme of activities, and in achieving its objectives, the ILO is the ISSA's most important partner. It is not only our longstanding relationship that makes us continue to work together. It is above all our common values and our shared objectives that provide the rationale for the recent strengthening of our joint efforts. No institution can achieve the necessary progress alone. The ISSA is proud to be able to work with the ILO and to contribute to making the vision of decent work a reality.

Mr MALENTACCHI (*representative, International Metalworkers' Federation*)

It is with a heavy heart that I address you today to voice my concerns about ongoing violations of trade union rights in Mexico.

I represent the collective interests of 25 million metalworkers affiliated to the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF). Together we are outraged by the action of the Mexican Government and the country's largest mining company, Grupo México, against the National Miners' and Metalworkers' Union of Mexico and its General Secretary, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia.

The situation is a sordid tale of corruption, false charges, violence, murder and the death of 65 miners in a mine explosion in Pasta de Conches.

It began in February 2006 when the Mexican Government illegally removed the Union's General Secretary, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia, and replaced him with a government appointee.

This move was only made public after Gómez spoke out against the Government and the Grupo México over serious lapses in health and safety at the Pasta de Conches mine, where an explosion killed 65 mine workers on 19 February 2006.

To this day 63, of the miners' bodies remain buried and the Mexican Government and the Grupo México have done nothing to recover the bodies of the workers, much to the devastation of the widows and the families of Pasta de Conches, who lost their loved ones in the explosion. Furthermore, a proper investigation into the incident has not taken place, and those responsible have not been held to account.

In addition, the Government perverted the Mexican legal system and levelled charges of corruption and embezzlement against Gómez. An independent audit of the Union's accounts, commissioned by the International Metalworkers' Federation, proved all funds were accounted for, and exonerated Gómez of any offence yet the Government to this day refuses to correct this wrongdoing.

When a number of inquiries into these actions revealed that the Government had used falsified documents, concealed evidence, and coerced officials to issue baseless arrest warrants against the Union leader, Grupo México, and the Government moved to divide the Union. The Government

granted overnight recognition to a pro-company union and the company held a so-called election in which workers were forced and coerced to join its ranks.

Meanwhile, the national army and the federal police are used to break strikes, kill workers and arrest union leaders fighting for safer working conditions.

For instance, on 19 April 2006, federal and state police, backed by Mexican military troops, were used to unleash a violent attack on legally striking workers at the Sicartsa Plant in Lázaro Cárdenas, killing two workers.

On 11 August 2007 at a Grupo México copper mine in Nacozari, Sonora, a worker was murdered by an armed individual in the employ of Grupo México.

To this day these deaths have not been investigated and nobody has been charged.

Gómez was officially reinstated as General Secretary on 11 April 2007, after a Federal court ruled the labour secretariat had overstepped its authority and failed to comply with established procedures.

However, despite receiving overwhelming support from the Union is membership when re-elected as General Secretary, once more in May 2008, Gómez remains in exile due to unfounded pending charges and intense safety and security threats against him and his family.

The IMF and its affiliates are calling on the Mexican Government to: lift all the charges still pending against Napoleón Gomez Urrutia and other members of the Mexican Miners' Union; prosecute in a court of law, immediately and transparently, all those responsible in the corruption of documents and facts; recover the 63 bodies at the Pasta de Conches mine and properly investigate and prosecute those responsible for the accident; investigate Grupo México's involvement in the murder of Reynaldo Hernández González and the detention and torture of 20 Mexican Miners' Union members in Nacozari, Sonora; and, finally, release all union funds illegally seized by the Government.

The Mexican Miners' Union has actively promoted a democratic and independent labour movement in Mexico. The Union has won significant gains for its members and has taken an outspoken position against negative labour reforms in Mexico.

This Union deserves the support of the international community and I urge each and every delegate attending this Conference to support the Mexican Miners' Union in its struggle for union independence in Mexico.

Original Turkish: Mr KUMLU (Worker, Turkey)

I would like to start my speech by thanking and congratulating the distinguished Director-General on his efforts and the successful work that he has been carrying out so far. I would also like to say that it would be an honour for us to continue our cooperation with the distinguished Director-General in our future struggle for a fair and liveable world.

During the International Labour Conference every year, we prepare reports, discuss globalization and global problems, and try to find ways to solve them. I would like to clearly state that we have not witnessed any positive outcome of globalization on behalf of workers yet. When we focus on our current situation, in terms of globalization, we see only demolished economies, societies losing their moral values, demolished social values, approaches considering labour costs as an instrument of competi-

tion, drawbacks in workers' rights, dismissals, increasing poverty, changing consumption patterns, and a welfare increase in favour of capital.

Given the current situation, all countries are facing the problem of unemployment and lack of job creation. The priority of the economic and social policies should be to achieve economic growth that focuses on employment creation. In order to solve the unemployment problem, it is necessary to create a sustained and balanced economic development model, focused on the principle of equality.

However, those who are supposed to be providing decent work and decent living conditions are trying to take advantage of the desperate situation of the poor and unemployed. Recent amendments regarding labour costs have decreased the burden of employers in my country. However, the policies implemented to struggle against hunger and poverty are not sufficient.

The workers in my country are opposed to privatization as it reduces employment, opens the way to subcontracting and does not increase productivity. Initiatives to dismiss and deunionize workers are frequently encountered in privatized enterprises.

Another subject that should be highlighted here is the flexible employment models proposed as a solution to unemployment. Instead of being an alternative for workers, flexible employment models have turned out to be a method of employing cheap labour, particularly in undeveloped and developing countries which are deprived of adequate labour protection.

Trade unions are losing their members as they face obstacles to organization. In the last four to five years, more than 35,000 workers have been dismissed for joining trade unions. Turkey has been under discussion for many years within the agenda of the Committee on the Application of Standards because of violations of Conventions Nos 87 and 98. Our Government's efforts with regard to the amendments made to our legislation concerning freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are continuing. We hope that our views and demands regarding these amendments will be taken into consideration.

The problems in Turkey concerning the implementation of occupational health and safety regulations are still continuing. We believe that we can overcome these obstacles by increasing the effectiveness of labour inspections.

The difficulties encountered by public servants with respect to Act 4688 which regulates collective agreements and the right to strike are still ongoing. The decisions of the Board of Consensus have not been taken into consideration adequately. Trade union members and executives are not benefiting from union guarantees to a sufficient extent and the number of public servants deprived of the right to join a union is relatively high.

The regulations regarding retirement age and social security reform which were enacted with the partial consensus of the social partners, do not reflect the reality of the country. Turkish workers are in favour of peace, fraternity and human rights. War and terror are the biggest enemies of human rights, democracy, labour, workers' rights and freedom. Turkish workers wish to see all wars in the world, particularly in the Middle East, brought to an end and we hope that peace will come to dominate the world.

I would like to end my intervention by focusing on global climate change, water and energy shortages, and the food crisis. If we aim to be successful in our struggle against poverty, we must work to create a clean and liveable world, just as we work to protect our social rights. In this respect, I invite the ILO and all of humanity to take urgent action.

(Ms Diallo takes the Chair.)

Mr MUSEKA (*Government, Zimbabwe*)

Our congratulations to the Director-General and his Officers for coming up with an insightful, well put together and comprehensive Report, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, giving us an opportunity to constructively engage on how the Decent Work Agenda itself can be carried forward faced with the challenges such as those attributed to the globalization forces. Indeed, the Report could not have put forward the circumstances that militate against our noble quest for the realization of decent work for all, any more aptly.

The state of the global economy under the prevailing financial credit and food crisis is without doubt posing a serious obstacle in our resolve to improve the lives of our people. It is apparent that the negative manifestations of globalization, particularly the growing inequity in the share of wealth and income among and within nations, are making our situations extremely onerous.

The state of affairs is even more pressing on us; as the custodians of labour, and especially pressing on social policies in our respective countries. It is common knowledge that the disarray occasioned by the enfeebled global economy and the current multilateral system persistently bears its full brunt on our labour markets and on our social sectors at large.

Under globalization, we are made to believe that the pain of adjustment will be temporary and that the compliant and liberalized economic systems, even our fragile ones, will eventually trigger a trickle-down effect that will put in order the social dimension. This loaded formula for economic development is but a formula; the anticipated results are most elusive.

However, these realities do not in any way come as a surprise. We have repeatedly raised concerns so as to draw the attention of this august house to the need to press for the reform of the multilateral system in a way that ensures the equal participation of developing economies. Our motivation is the belief that a multilateral system that fosters the equal participation of all has the potential to respond to the real economic and social needs of all nations, thereby ensuring protection for the most vulnerable.

Today, most developing economies grapple under the weight of increased poverty, increased unemployment and other attendant scourges as a direct result of narrowly conceived and hastily implemented global policies. The unduly hard ability for self-correction of the financial markets and the unrestrained dominance of a few in the global politics of all contribute to relegating to the backburner the social dimension of sustainable social advancement.

As far as the Zimbabwean situation is concerned, the undeserved and illegal import sanctions by the West militate against the pursuit of equity and equality as the basis for sustainable development. Under these conditions, it is imperative for us to point out that the capacity of the Government to safeguard the objectives of the Decent Work

Agenda and create prospects for a healthy and productive economy is, indeed, severely undermined at every turn. Even so, no one should doubt our resolve not to yield to the desires of the neocolonialists.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, my Government will press on and will, without reservation, embrace the Decent Work Agenda, the most viable means to drive developing economies on to a path of sustainable development. The sustainability of the Decent Work Agenda is self-evident, particularly when one considers that it is both a means and an end.

My Government, therefore, fully welcomes the discussion on the Decent Work Agenda, giving due consideration to the debilitating effects of a skewed globalization process, the inadequacies of the multilateral system and the convenient desire for hegemony by the powerful over the small and weak nations.

The Decent Work Agenda, in so far as it advances opportunities for all, for our people to realize work under conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, provides ideals that resonate in my Government's approach to economic turnaround and growth.

The Government has worked tirelessly through collaboration with the willing social partners in modelling its Decent Work Country Programme and in bringing the requisite policy influence to bear on development policies so that the people of Zimbabwe can derive the greatest benefits, even under very difficult circumstances.

The Government of Zimbabwe, through the labour administrative system, has continued to advocate mainstream social dialogue at all levels, as the bedrock for a healthy and enabling platform for reform and sustainable development.

While challenges persist, we are confident that the maturity of all partners involved in this process, more so given the insight drawn from the Report, will bring to fruition the noble aspirations of our Organization, sooner rather than later.

My Government, therefore, lends its full support to the work towards a Strategic Policy Framework for the period 2010–15 that is centred on the Decent Work Agenda, as this will also provide the quintessential focus and impetus for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Indeed, as we allow for dynamism within the policy framework, we must keep in mind the need to raise the profile of the International Labour Organization in the global arena. Without a doubt, a stronger ILO will be better placed to influence global policy coherence and restrain the destructive excesses of narrowly conceived economic and development policies. Economic policies as are envisioned and propagated by the multilateral system, particularly those of the Bretton Woods institutions, are too costly for us to continue passively to accept. Alternatives must be sought to prevent the Decent Work Agenda from becoming an illusion, and in this task my Government stands ready to play its part fully, nationally, regionally and globally.

Original Arabic: Ms MAFARJA (*representative, PGFTU, Palestine*)

The General Confederation of Palestinian Trade Unions joins with all those who have taken the floor before us.

In drafting our legislation, we have been inspired by international and Arab labour standards, as well as agreements in the labour sphere. However, the difficult conditions prevailing in the occupied Arab territories and Palestine prevent us from applying our laws. We are subjected to a policy of organized terrorism, collective sanctions, assassinations, the expropriation of our agricultural lands and the felling of fruit trees.

The closing of Palestinian territories, the isolation of the Gaza Strip and the blockade imposed on the West Bank, including Al-Quds, by means of checkpoints and the wall of discrimination, have isolated Palestinian lands. These have become open prisons where freedom of movement is restricted. As a result, the living conditions of our people, especially our workers, have deteriorated. More than two-thirds of the population are living below the poverty line and unemployment, as well as disguised unemployment, accounts for 73 per cent. There is one breadwinner per family for 5.6 individuals – and one for each seven individuals in Gaza.

We pay tribute to the Report of the Director-General, especially the report concerning the conditions of workers in the occupied Arab territories. We should also like to thank the ILO missions which met with the various parties in order to gather the facts which have served as a basis for the report submitted to this session of the Conference.

All we want is to live in the same conditions as other workers throughout the world. We aspire to be free and independent and enjoy permanent peace in an independent State.

Our workers, employed by Israeli enterprises, are exploited when it comes to their wages; 25 per cent of their pay is withheld, and they receive no insurance or benefits in return. This is added to the fact that they are sometimes arrested and have to pay heavy fines. They are often unable to reach their workplace. They have no right to appeal before Israeli courts, contrary to what was said yesterday by representatives of the Israeli Government and government workers yesterday. They said that there was no discrimination between Israeli workers and workers carrying other citizenship. This is not true.

We would like to thank you for the support you have given to Palestinian workers and to the rights of Palestinians in general, support which is enshrined in United Nations Security Council resolutions. Many of you have expressed your solidarity during meetings at this session of the Conference. We must work together to establish permanent and comprehensive peace in order to bring social justice to all. This requires a number of measures: first, we must put an end to Israeli occupation and create an independent Palestinian State with its capital al-Quds Jerusalem; second, we must organize an international conference to provide support to workers and employers in Palestine, in accordance with the suggestion made by the Arab Labour Organization, Mr Ahmed Lukman; third, we must invigorate the Palestinian social security fund; fourth, we must extend the technical support provided by the ILO to enhance the capacity of our unions; and fifth, we must strengthen relations between workers, both in the Arab world and internationally by giving support to the Federation of Palestinian Unions.

We must also encourage investment in Palestine to ensure social security and decent work for all.

We hope that the State of Palestine will participate in the next Conference as a full member and not merely as an observer.

Ms MENKERIOS (*Government, Eritrea*)

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO for his comprehensive and balanced Report on *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, discussing global financial turmoil, soaring food prices and economic downturn. He pointed out that the crises are a major concern both for their short-term effects on enterprises and employment and for the long-term insecurities and uncertainties that they bring to workers and their families.

Sharing the convictions of the ILO Director-General, let me now briefly outline what the Government of Eritrea is doing in this regard: basing its policy on self-reliance and food security-oriented development; increasing efforts to develop all sectors to improve the people's standard of living and narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.

To achieve the long-term vision of self-reliance and food security-oriented development, the people and the Government of Eritrea are working side by side. The determination and commitment of the leadership boosts the people's morale to face even the most formidable challenges to properly exploit the potential resources of the country.

It has to be noted that Eritrea's policy of self-reliance principally aims for coordination, fair partnership and complementary effort for common benefit. This can be achieved through the concerted effort of tripartite social dialogue.

Eritrea's food security strategy is part and parcel of the overall development strategy.

Today, Eritrea is spearheading towards meeting its food security goals to make food of sufficient quantity and acceptable quality readily accessible to all at affordable prices at any time and place within the country, through the fair price shops.

Recognizing the fact that adequate water supply and road infrastructure are critical for overall development and achievement for food security, the Government and people are engaged in different activities to collect, conserve and develop water resources in an efficient and effective manner, and are working earnestly to rehabilitate and conserve the land and soil by introducing new environmental sound farming technologies and methods. Irrigation methods with appropriate agricultural machinery are being introduced to raise the agricultural productivity. Similarly, the Government has employed the: distribution of improved seeds to farmers, extensive use of fertilizers, use environmentally accepted pesticides, as well as utilization of modern weed killers as its strategy to improve production.

To foster industriousness, learning culture and employment creation, greater effort has been and continues to be expanded to develop human resources through training in different areas. To meet the educated and skilled labour needs in all sectors and expand education to ensure social justice, the Government of Eritrea is working persistently and has established six new colleges, business and technical skills training centres, in addition to the existing ones. In line with the effort to provide quality and efficient health services to produce a healthy workforce across the country, several health facilities including referral hospitals have been established. Within this programme, remarkable

achievements are registered in the social sector, among which include: the number of kindergarten and elementary schools, which raised the enrolment rate and reduced the drop out rates of the school-age population, improved mother and child health care, nutritional status of children, efficient and effective immunization programmes that contributed to the reduction of child morbidity, and under 5 and infant mortality rates, creating an enabling environment for the disadvantaged such as disabled and immobilized, by introducing a cash-for-work programme and interest-free loans in order to help them establish small businesses.

The Government and the people have charted a responsible and visionary development programme that relies on social dialogue and hard work, to achieve its goals. All the aforementioned efforts are done within a decent work perspective, to increase both the quality and the productivity of labour employed in the economy.

In conclusion, at a time where the price of agricultural products is soaring at a global level, investment in this sector as part of efforts to achieve food security is beneficial. We believe that, if we are to build a better future for whole humankind and to attain the objectives of decent work, we must ensure commitment of governments and build strong labour alliance to fight poverty and guarantee social justice.

Mr PANDEY (*Employer, Nepal*)

I am very privileged to present my brief remarks in the presence of such eminent delegates at this session of the International Labour Conference. This is a very important forum, where we come together to express views, concerns and matters of interest, as well as to discuss the issues of socio-economic development. I strongly believe that the views put forward and concerns raised here by the delegates will, no doubt, establish a good basis for fruitful discussion. Our debate will also help us to understand the underlying problems related to the issues of labour and employers. I am sure that it will definitely help the ILO to develop and shape new policies and programmes which are essential and relevant to deal with the new challenges.

The Director-General's Report and the issues raised in the Report have drawn our attention. The Report has focused on various issues, with special emphasis on the global financial crisis. The Report points out many areas of immediate concern, such as the informal economy. Despite the growth of employment through the informal economy, there is a pressing need to regulate it – and this problem is not new to Nepal. The growing informal economy in Nepal is one of the key components in the poverty reduction programme. However, regulation is a problem. The ILO needs to be lend a helping hand in transforming this sector into an organized one.

Over the years, countries have made considerable advances in promoting labour standards, improving working conditions and enhancing the quality of working people. These positive aspects also need to be deliberated in the context of globalization. The role of the ILO in this changed environment is important. The employers need tacit support from the ILO in handling interconnected issues of globalization and promoting labour standards in the world of work.

The employers of Nepal are also concerned with the issue of developing more enterprises and creat-

ing more jobs and wealth, with the objective of reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. Therefore, all the labour-related matters taken up by the ILO need to be brought in line with the above objective. The economic and social impact of labour standards require special focus, especially in an underdeveloped country like Nepal. Some of the new issues being taken up by the ILO, such as the extension of social security to the informal economy, call for a pragmatic solution.

Most of you are aware of the situation we are currently facing in Nepal. Currently, we are passing through a transitional phase. On the one hand, there is a need for more employment opportunities and, on the other hand, there are obstacles in the way. However, we have been making efforts to address the socio-economic issues, despite the adverse business environment. I would not like to repeat in detail the developments we have made as our Government delegates have already shed light on those aspects. At present our primary concern is to sustain existing employment and create an environment conducive to establishing industrial peace and employment generation for sustainable socio-economic development in our country.

The employers' organization of Nepal is working actively to further good industrial relations, and the promotion of employment creation strategies is at the top of our agenda. Reducing gender disparity, eliminating child labour, developing better working conditions, youth employment, occupational safety and health and combating HIV/AIDS – all these vital issues have occupied a very important place in our programme activities. A legal cell has also been established to work on legislative reforms, and to help industries in litigation thereby enhancing the compliance level of laws and rules. At the initiative of the Government, the process of labour law reform was making good headway, until the current political instability obstructed it. As soon as the political confusion is settled, the tripartite consultations on labour law reform will again be resumed. The ILO Office in Nepal has been instrumental in taking the reformation process ahead. We believe that all these efforts will contribute towards developing a decent work environment in the country.

A balance of interest between employers and labour, brought about by the establishment of industrial peace, is the major concern of both parties. However, it is widely considered that, in an underdeveloped economy like Nepal, there is a need for a certain amount of labour flexibility to ensure industrial growth and respond to the changing global forces and emerging trends. We urge the ILO to provide its support with new strategies.

Mr YARDLEY (*Government, Australia*)

In November last year, the Australian people elected a new Government, which is firmly committed to advancing the goals and aspirations of the ILO, particularly the desire to achieve decent and productive work for all.

The domestic reform agenda which the Australian Government is vigorously pursuing at the moment, reflects core elements of the Decent Work Agenda. Australia has a long and proud association with the International Labour Organization and has been a Member of the ILO continuously since the Organization was created in 1919. The Australian Government looks forward to a new period of coopera-

tive, productive and positive engagement with the Organization.

Productivity improvements, achieved in large part through a fair and balanced workplace relations system, are the cornerstone of the new Australian Government's extensive workplace relations policy reform agenda. In line with the sentiments expressed in Report V, prepared for this session of the Conference, the Australian Government believes a two-way relationship exists between productivity and decent work. Through the development and reform of policies concerning education, training, workplace relations and workforce participation, the Australian Government is building a more productive and socially inclusive society, one which values diversity and provides opportunities for all Australians to enjoy rewarding social and economic lives.

The quest to improve Australia's productive capacity, including through bringing fairness and balance to Australian workplaces, is consistent with the core values of the ILO and its Decent Work Agenda. Reforms to the Australian workplace relations legislative framework, developed after consultation with the Government's social partners and other stakeholders, will enshrine collective enterprise bargaining at the heart of the Australian workplace relations system, will protect the basic rights of freedom of association and genuine workplace representation, protect employees from workplace discrimination and will provide for equal remuneration for work of equal value.

The Director-General stated in his Report to this Conference in 2003 that work has the best route out of poverty. Decent work is not just about the creation of jobs; it is about the creation of jobs that are productive and humane, through the convergence of the four strategic pillars of the Decent Work Agenda. If decent work is to become a practical reality, Member governments and their social partners must be prepared to work closely with each other and with the ILO to achieve it. In the light of the views shared by the ILO and the Australian Government on productivity and decent work, we are very pleased to see and to support the Organization's continuing efforts to analyse and enhance its own productivity through internal reforms. The development of the Strategic Policy Framework for 2010–15 offers an exciting opportunity to work together on a framework for delivering on the Organization's objectives. The Australian Government considers this to be a fundamental aspect of the ILO's current work. With a continuing focus on capacity building of both constituents and the Office, on results-based strategies and management, as well as integrated programme design and monitoring and evaluation systems, the Organization will be well placed to assist all Members in making decent work for all a practical reality.

In strategic terms then, the second discussion of this Conference on strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization, is of crucial importance. The outcomes of these discussions, the Declaration and its associated proposed work plan on capacity building have the potential to streamline and focus the activities of the Organization and to deliver productivity gains for the Organization itself. Given the key role the ILO plays in understanding and enhancing global productivity through the Decent Work Agenda, increasing the Organization's capacity and therefore its own productivity in

the delivery of advice and technical assistance is a major contribution to global productivity. It is for this reason that the Australian Government regards the outcomes of the SILC discussion to be critical to the forward work programme of the ILO.

As a Governing Body member, the Australian Government is privileged to have been able to support the ILO's efforts to promote decent work in the Asia-Pacific region and in particular, the far East Asia and Pacific subregion. On behalf of the Australian Government I would like to thank those governments that have supported Australia's membership of the Governing Body for the period to 2011. This will enable Australia to build on our work with regional member States and the Bangkok and Suva Offices to seek to make decent work a reality in our part of the world.

Once again the Australian Government looks forward to a period of ongoing positive and productive engagement with the ILO both as a Member and as an ongoing Governing Body representative of its close neighbours.

Original French: Ms SEBUDANDI (Government, Rwanda)

I would like to use this opportunity to give you an idea of some of the initiatives taken by the Government of Rwanda to promote employment.

These initiatives focus on the following: the promotion of employment and various integrated approaches for its implementation; decent work and social dialogue; health and safety at work; and social security.

With regard to promoting employment, the Government of Rwanda has established a five-year plan to promote the employment of young people and women in the implementation of our national employment policy. These two categories of the Rwandan population are a national priority. In implementing our action plan for the employment of young people, the Government of Rwanda has committed itself to being one of the leading countries in promoting work for young people in Africa in the framework of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) programme, aimed at prioritizing the four "Es" which, in French, are employment, employability, spirit of enterprise and equality of opportunity.

Last February, we organized, in collaboration with the workers' and employers' organizations, a national conference in Rwanda on employment which is intended to raise consciousness in the population as a whole about the need to invest in the job-creation programmes that are indispensable if we are to meet the objective of reducing poverty in accordance with the economic development and poverty eradication strategy. There are plans to set up a National Employment Agency which will be responsible for managing training programmes and internships and the national fund for the promotion of employment. One investment policy in Rwanda, which has already been adopted, contains a large number of incentives in favour of national and international investors, which is also going to create new jobs.

With regard to decent work and social dialogue, the Government of Rwanda is working together with the social partners in order to revise our labour legislation, in order to adapt it to the national and international socio-economic environment. Rwanda, working together with both the ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is also carry-

ing out an inquiry into the worst forms of child labour, in order to understand how things really stand for children in Rwanda and in order to achieve our overall aim of eliminating child labour altogether.

A national inquiry into employment will soon be carried out to evaluate how things stand in the labour market, as part of a strategy to promote employment and decent work.

As far as health and safety at work are concerned, there are plans to establish, in the near future, a policy for health and safety at work, because our Government is aware that company productivity and individual prosperity are very closely linked to good working conditions. Unhealthy working environments inspire unease and discomfort, and, if the workplace is not healthy, then that is bound to harm company productivity.

With regard to social security a national policy is soon to be adopted, and it will cover both the formal and the informal sectors, starting with sickness, old age, invalidity, widowed spouses, accidents in the workplace, occupational diseases and maternity. We should stress that the majority, more than 80 per cent, of the population is covered by medical insurance, which is regulated by the law.

Mr AHMED (*Worker, Bangladesh*)

After going through the comprehensive Report of the Director-General, I am fully convinced that this is a unique Report which has covered all issues relating to the ILO. This is the outcome of the tireless and relentless efforts of the whole ILO team. Indeed, I feel that the full Secretariat was behind this endeavour. So many discussions have been taking place on this Report. Many delegates expressed their opinions regarding numerous aspects of the Report. The Committee of Experts also gave its valuable comments, which eventually will mean a more effective Report.

It is inevitable to mention here that decent work is an integral part of establishing a policy strategy and enhancing productivity and profitability. This is also the prerequisite to paving the way for the economic growth of any country. I feel that, without skilled development for either the employers or the workers, decent work could not be very effective. As we know, the ILO has pledged to ensure decent work but, in spite of providing training and financial help in various fields, such as child labour, this is inadequate. Some sectors are not addressed, which needs to be taken into consideration in developing and least developed countries like Bangladesh. The budget for intensive training programmes should be increased for poverty alleviation, elimination of child labour, awareness development on HIV/AIDS, labour law, ILO Conventions and health and safety for least developed countries.

It is indispensable to mention here that some strategic challenges lie ahead concerning curbing the gap between the rich and poor. Without strengthening the rural economy, no country is able to achieve the cherished goal of sustainable development. Due to lack of rural development and job opportunities, unprecedented migration of workers is taking place from rural to urban areas. So, employment generation in rural areas is a very important element in poverty alleviation and demonstrating sustainable development.

The Government of Bangladesh has made a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper with a view to alleviating poverty in the country. It is my appeal to the

ILO to undertake a comprehensive training programme, and also ask the donor countries and the Organization to come forward with microcredit, in order to help the farmers and fishermen to stand on their own feet by getting training and microcredit facilities.

Strengthening the ILO's capacity should be the principle object of strengthening the trade union movement of the globe. If the ILO is not strengthened, the fate of the working people shall be far-reaching. The ILO should take aggressive steps to eliminate all types of oppression and outrageous acts of the Government and the employers, which have been the common phenomenon of the world.

The Government of Bangladesh brought the draft child labour policy to the table to discuss in the Tripartite Consultative Committee (TCC) meeting. Broad-based discussion on the mission took place over the course of several meetings, and the policy was approved unanimously.

In order to implement this policy, this will be followed by law. Worst forms of child labour across the globe is one of the principal agendas of the contemporary world. When children need to be educated, then they are compelled to go to work. This is taking place, particularly in the developing and least developed countries across the world, because of poverty. If the world fails to address the eradication of poverty, eliminating child labour, more challenges will arise. This will be more alarming. While these children and their parents have been failing to earn enough to buy minimum food for their livelihood, then how can the children go to school where they need to spend large amounts on tuition fees and the purchase of books. The least developed countries cannot afford to provide free education and food for children.

Personally, I would like to say that the ILO has to take bolder steps to convince the developed countries and the donor organizations to provide sufficient funds to the respective governments, assisting children up to Class 12 with free education, and free meals at school, as in the developed countries.

Our country is facing the negative impact of globalization. Our country has been exporting large numbers of workers in different countries across the world, but it is very unfortunate that workers are not treated properly by the employers in the countries concerned. Workers are abused in different ways. In some cases, we have seen that wages are not paid as per agreements. Other facilities like fringe benefits are also not allowed. Those workers are working in hazardous and inhuman conditions, not only Bangladesh, but many other countries are exporting their manpower in different parts of the world, in spite of the multifarious problems with which Bangladesh is faced.

Original Russian: Mr SAPARBAYEV (Government, Kazakhstan)

I would like to start by thanking the International Labour Organization for all the help which we have had in drafting and implementing our policy on labour relations, and say how keen we are to work together in the future as well.

Our country has made a lot of use of the practical experience of other countries and we use the support, help and consulting services of the ILO.

One of the most important political areas in which we are working is social dialogue. We now have a whole area where dialogue takes place between the

social partners in issues of jobs, social welfare, and so on.

In order to implement all the principles of social equality and sustainable development, social responsibility and the ten principles of the UN, we are going to hold our first ever forum on business commitment, which the President of the country, Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev, has proposed to Kazakh business.

With new codes of conduct and a full awareness of the responsibilities that these entail, the forum is based on a document, an agreement, between the Ministry of Labour and Kazakh business, based on the principles of the UN's global document on labour relations. This includes issues such as social indicators, payment for labour, health and safety at work, professional training, re-training and increasing the level of qualification of the workers.

We need to achieve stability in our human resources and positive results in productivity of labour, and this will make a positive impact on our economy in the near and long-term future.

We have a business memorandum on implementing social projects, and 800 such memorandums to a sum of more than US\$310 million have been signed so far.

A collective bargaining agreement is a document where the organization implements the initiative to implement it, and the quality of these collective bargaining agreements has improved vastly over the last few years.

These developments have improved conditions in which people work, and have also established what new tasks we face for health and safety, things like standard 2001 and the labour audit that takes place in enterprises.

There are other ILO initiatives too. For instance, since last year, in our labour code, we have laid down the relationship between the employer and the employers' workers.

We have also pooled our efforts in order to train highly qualified specialists, and to establish the idea of decent work throughout the country.

We intend to hold an international labour forum, where we will be able to discuss specific issues to do with our labour market. In that context, on behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan, I would like to invite our Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, to visit that forum, which will be discussing professional training, in September of this year.

I would also like to tell you, for your information, that given that migration is one of the very urgent problems facing us today, and that my country is one of the countries to which people come to work from other Central Asian nations, we intend to hold an international forum on regulating labour migration in the Central Asian countries.

Our Government, and our President, are constantly aware of the need to improve the conditions in which the people of the country live.

Mr Nazarbayev, the President, in his annual address, first and foremost tackled this issue of improving the standard of living for the people of Kazakhstan by, for instance, improving wages, pensions, grants for students and, from next year, we have a three-year programme where we will double all of these. From 1 June, in spite of the financial crisis we face in the country, we are going to increase pensions, the dole and student grants.

We also have to improve agriculture and half a billion United States dollars are being put into this programme as well.

Mr WALDORFF (*representative, Public Services International*)

Public Services International (PSI) notes with regret that far too many governments continue to deny public sector employees their fundamental rights.

I want to urge all of you to learn from those countries where well-functioning public services go hand-in-hand with the right to organize and to collective bargaining.

There are many great examples showing that collective agreements are not a threat but indeed support and strengthen the development of quality public services.

We are ready to develop a constructive dialogue with governments and employers on this.

PSI welcomes the Global Report on freedom of association. It rightly criticizes the extensive use of broad definitions of essential services.

Japan is the only OECD country to have ratified ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 that denies fire-fighters the right to organize.

For more than 43 years the Japanese Government has repeatedly ignored recommendations from the Committee on Freedom of Association. The Japanese Government is flagrantly challenging one of the ILO's universal standards.

PSI also finds references to South Korea and Turkey as examples of positive advances to be quite disturbing.

In South Korea, legislation severely limits public officials' right to join trade unions, and union leaders have been harassed and imprisoned.

In Turkey, the Government is guilty of using violence, imprisonment, and branding trade unionists as terrorists, and PSI appeals for the immediate release of Meryeni Ozsogut, from SES, currently imprisoned solely on account of her union activities.

The conclusions of the special session of the Committee on the Application of Standards directed at the Government of Colombia are clear: the Colombian Government must guarantee full trade union rights for public sector workers; amend its definition of essential public services to conform to that of the ILO; reform the labour inspectorate; and end the misuse of service cooperatives to avoid recognition of employment relations.

Quality public services are at the heart of the Decent Work Agenda. PSI is working to strengthen the capacity and resource base of the public sector and respect for public sector employees.

Fiscal and monetary austerity programmes have resulted in low public service pay and degradation of services, and pose serious challenges for the recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

We think it is time to set a new agenda.

A recent report by the Commission on Growth and Development states that no country has sustained rapid growth without high rates of public investment in infrastructure, education and health. Markets alone will not produce the growth in developing countries that will lift them out of poverty, it concludes.

Let me be very clear: the MDGs will not be met without substantial investment in public delivery.

Public-private partnerships cannot be regarded as a means to deliver on commitments to sustainable development and decent work. Health and water are

not commodities to be sold for profit but are human rights and public goods.

Growing inequalities within and between countries, worsened by climate change, food and fuel crises, are driving more people in the developing countries to migrate in search of work.

PSI urges the ILO to lend its full weight to the call for the adoption of a WHO code of conduct on ethical recruitment of health workers. The ILO must play an active role in the second Global Forum on Migration and Development in order to ensure that labour migration is addressed within the framework of human rights norms and labour standards.

In 2009, the ILC will hold a general discussion on gender equality, PSI welcomes this decision. Allow me to urge the Workers' group to take decisive steps to ensure that women are represented in the Workers' delegations. This year only 13 per cent of the Workers' delegates are women. It is simply not tenable. Let 2009 be the turning point.

PSI considers Convention No. 94 on labour clauses in public procurement to be a valid and a vital instrument. As a follow-up to the General Survey, the ILO should resource a promotional campaign and a protocol to the Convention in order to increase ratification and practical implementation.

Original Arabic: Mr AL-GADRIE (Worker, Yemen)

Decent work is closely linked to a country's economic, social and cultural life inasmuch as it encompasses freedom of association, justice and human dignity. All these have an impact on economic and social development and require cooperation between the social partners.

I agree with the Director-General's Report in its analysis of proposals to create a favourable working environment governed by laws and by strong and independent trade unions.

The Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions of Yemen firmly believes in democracy, which it considers to be sacred. We consider that there can be no development without democracy, and no democracy without freedom of association. It is in the exercise of democracy that trade union freedoms can flourish.

That is how the Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions of Yemen believes that a free popular will can find expression. Yemen has made progress towards democracy since the holding of parliamentary, local council and presidential elections by direct secret ballot. We also held local gubernatorial elections on 17 May 2000, a step forward that Yemen is the only country in the region to have taken.

We have also seen the trade union movement grow. In March we had our first union elections and held our first General Conference, which was attended by 12 general trade unions and 15 branch unions throughout Yemen. A number of international organizations, including the ILO, the Arab Labour Organization, the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions and the ICTU took part, along with other friendly federations and confederations.

The general Conference elected a central council of 101 members, 25 per cent of whom were women. The membership of the executive committee is also 25 per cent women. The renewal rate among union officials is extremely high, around 80 per cent, and we therefore have to train them in management and collective bargaining techniques so as to continue

the process of improving working conditions, promoting sustainable economic and social development and providing decent work in a climate of mutual trust among the social partners.

Our Confederation has taken an active part in the drafting of a number of laws, and our suggestions and observations have been listened to favourably and respectfully by the Government. It has also embarked on numerous negotiations with the Government, enterprises and public and private institutions.

For the first time we have managed to establish a minimum wage and have succeeded in having the Confederation take part in the Committee on Wages and Salaries. We have organized strikes and sit-ins with several trade unions which, with the Confederation's help, have solved some of their problems and signed corresponding agreements.

There are many challenges facing trade unions in Yemen and the rest of the world: the reduction in trade union freedoms, soaring prices of most basic commodities, declining wages, rising unemployment among young people and women, child labour, and of course the negative effects of globalization.

We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the adoption of Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, and yet the Palestinian people are still suffering from injustice and oppression. They are being denied the right to a decent life. Because the Nakba of the Palestinian people and the 60th anniversary of Convention No. 87 coincide, we feel we have to call on the world from this tribune to allow Palestinians to exercise their legitimate right to a decent life, along with an independent State with Al-Quds as its capital. We call for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and other occupied Arab territories, in the Syrian Golan and the Shebaa farms of Lebanon.

Finally, we thank the ILO for the assistance it has provided to Yemeni workers. We would like to benefit from more technical assistance, and to receive ILO documents in Arabic so that our workers can learn all about the Organization and its Conventions and Recommendations. We also believe that Arabic should be made one of the ILO's working languages.

Mr KABAMBE (Government, Malawi)

The Malawi delegation has carefully read the Report we are studying today, which follows a new and more user-friendly format as per the guidance provided by the Governing Body, and offers a better picture of the ILO's work. We congratulate you for the work well done during the past year.

This year's Report brings to the fore fundamental issues that not only call for a thorough and constructive debate at this Conference, and subsequently at the national level in our respective countries, but also call for the immediate identification and adoption of time-bound measures to address the situation.

In addition to the known ills of globalization that have been extensively discussed before, the current Report highlights yet another dimension of globalization in the name of the current financial crisis resulting from the US sub-prime mortgage market crash, which is now affecting the real economy and is fast spreading across the globe, including developing countries, which are least prepared.

The impact of the crisis on our economies, at both macro and micro levels, through the distortion of

productive investment and exchange rate volatility among others, has been explained fully in the Report. Developing countries will suffer the most as most of them depend on exports of primary commodities and are highly sensitive to the effects of international capital and financial flows. Inadvertently, enterprises may be forced to make such adjustments in their operations that could jeopardize the working conditions of employees, if they are retained in employment in the first place.

This situation therefore calls for an immediate policy response to cushion and possibly withstand the possible negative shocks. To our advantage, we already have a viable overarching policy framework – the Decent Work Agenda. Countries need to focus on reaching consensus on the choice of an appropriate policy mix that ensures growth through sustainable enterprise development in a manner that achieves the core values of the Decent Work Agenda.

In the Report, the Director-General notes that while the problem of the functioning of the financial markets is the domain of other organizations, such as the IMF, its consequences have a wide and far-reaching impact on the labour market. The ILO is therefore bound not only to debate the issue but also needs to put in place measures to respond to such consequences. I could not agree more. In the same vein, decisions made in the world of work impact on the functioning of the other markets and we need to anticipate such effects. Fortunately, the design of the Decent Work Agenda policy framework, particularly the component of sustainable enterprise development, sufficiently takes care of this need. What remains is our country's choice of the policy mix in the actual implementation of our development programmes.

The Decent Work Agenda is put into practice through the Decent Work Country Programmes. My delegation acknowledges the tremendous work already done by the Office in this respect, as detailed in the Report. We are also aware that the Office cannot reach out to all countries at the same time. However, due to the urgent need to respond to the global shocks, such as the current financial crisis, we would like to call upon the Office to prioritize and expedite the development of Decent Work Country Programmes in accordance with the recently endorsed Decent Work Agenda for Africa for 2007–15, adopted in April last year.

Let me end my contribution by acknowledging the assistance Malawi is receiving from the ILO in developing its Decent Work Country Programme. We have concluded the initial consultation process and we hope to launch the Programme before the end of this year.

I wish to thank the Director-General for the support rendered by the ILO in this respect. In the same vein, let me take this opportunity to appeal for more assistance in the implementation of our Programme, to make decent work a reality in our country.

Original Portuguese: Mr FAJARDO PEREIRA (representative, Trade Unions International of Transport Workers)

I am here to represent the Trade Unions International of Transport Workers. Although accredited here as an NGO, we are a trade union organization which bring together unions, national federations, regional trade union federations, as our affiliates, and they all represent workers in the transport sector across all continents. We are an affiliate of the

World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and we seek to contribute to solidarity and unity between the workers in the struggle against exploitation and social exclusion.

The transport sector in the modern world has become of central importance to the development of society. It has played a crucial part in the development of mobility in cities, and in the shipment of goods and valuables produced across the world. The new technologies applied to the transport of passengers and cargo have led to continuous increases in productivity and in profits for the owners of companies and high externalized costs for society in general.

However, transport workers in the overwhelming majority of countries are not benefiting from this technological development. Over the last few decades, we have suffered significant set backs in terms of our rights, mainly as a result of the process of privatization which has generally affected the transport sector everywhere in the world.

In their anxiety to turn this sector into a source of immediate profit, governments and employers forced the majority of workers to work longer days, while weakening their existing rights. Unfortunately, with important exceptions in Latin America and a few other countries in other parts of the world, this process continues.

Although our work is essential for social and economic development, the workers in this sector are not considered to be important. In most cases, not even our right to struggle is respected. Our fights and struggles against the attacks that we suffer are treated as a police or national security matter. Unions are criminalized and sometimes stopped from acting. Unionists are persecuted, dismissed and even murdered, the most dreadful example of this being recent events in Columbia. However, this does also happen in other countries to a greater or lesser degree. In Brazil, for example, where we are going through a democratic process under the Government of President Lula, which has respected the unions and has entered into dialogue with them, the existing legislation is still very anti-democratic in the way it treats workers, particularly in the case of those work sectors considered essential. This has made it possible for the private sector and for conservative State and municipal governments to dismiss and persecute unionists, as indicated in the recent complaint presented by the Federation of Metro Workers (Fenaruetro) to the ILO concerning the dismissal and persecution of trade unionists and union activists in the metros of the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

I am also here to represent the unionists of the Central Organization of Workers of Brazil (CTB), which was founded in December of last year and which represents around 500,000 workers from more than 450 unions already affiliated to our confederation.

Our organization, which itself is an affiliate of the WFTU, has been trying to contribute to a rich process under way in our country, bringing together all of the union federations, with a single platform for the struggle at a time when Brazil has made significant advances in the fight against social inequality.

The fight against child and slave labour, the increase of the minimum wage, the proposal by the Federal Government to ratify Parliament ILO Conventions Nos 151 and 158 are some of the measures that have been undertaken. However, there is still a

lot of resistance in conservative sectors of the Parliament, in many States and municipal governments, and particularly among the employers.

As far as the case of the ratification of these two Conventions is concerned, there has been a true campaign of opposition to these proposals, run by the employers who, working with the media, have been trying to distort their democratic character and content and the way that they fight against anti-union practices.

The Trade Unions International for Workers in Transport and the CTB will join with anyone who wants an ILO that is more democratic, with proportional representation in its Governing Body. An ILO that is more active in the monitoring of the application of its Conventions and Recommendations. An ILO which carries out its role, which is more and more important, of at least fighting and minimizing the predatory exploitation of labour.

Mr KEARNEY (*representative, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation*)

Forming or joining a trade union in the global textile, clothing and footwear industry, is today more difficult than at any time since the adoption of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), 60 years ago, and bargaining a contract, delivering more than minimum legal entitlement, is nearly impossible in most of the key textile, clothing and footwear-producing countries.

Obstacles to freedom of association and collective bargaining abound. The United States leads the way in employer hostility to workers' organizations, with 82 per cent of companies using union-busting specialists.

The US Administration sets the tone, spending US\$2,500 per branch on union regulation, but less than US\$28 per employer, to ensure compliance with wages, hours and child labour rules.

United States' corporations are successfully exporting this anti-union culture. When a year ago the union at TOS, a subsidiary of Hanes Brands, in the Dominican Republic, broke the 50 per cent membership threshold and secured bargaining rights, more than 100 union members were forced out, with the company even challenging the Labour Ministry's competence to investigate the matter.

United States employers are not unique. Their counterparts in Peru use export promotion legislation, permitting short-term contracts for specific orders, some as short as two weeks, to thwart unionization efforts. Icadie management did this late last year when they simply refused to renew the contracts of 1,200 workers who formed a union. Ironically, a labour ministry investigation found the company ineligible to use such contracts and deemed the workers permanent employees.

Turkey still insists on individual union membership applications being witnessed by notary public, at a cost of nearly a week's wages. Within a sniff of organizing, employers fire workers en masse, and if unionization efforts persist, they simply close and subcontract orders. Desa, a leather jacket manufacturer, embarked on a daily set of dismissals a few months ago aimed at eliminating unionization efforts. The worker of the month award-winner for outstanding productivity was among those fired for "unsatisfactory work". Union members were described as "Kurdish terrorists".

Morocco makes trade union action near impossible by invoking the right-to-work provisions of the Penal Code. When the DIHANEX carpet factory closed illegally last year owing wages and other debts to workers going back two years, union leaders who tried to bargain with the employer were charged with "unpleasant behaviour", found guilty and sent to prison.

Employers in Sri Lanka either ignore the law or manipulate it to eliminate trade union organization. GP Garments fired 518 union members, including all union leaders, in 2005. Three years later, and using anti-terrorist legislation, lawyers for the company have tied the courts in knots while the workers remain unemployed.

Tens of thousands of migrant textile, garment and shoe workers, forbidden to join unions from Taiwan to Korea, Malaysia to Mauritius and Jordan endure near slavery, and millions of workers in export processing zones in every continent face enormous obstacles if they want to organize and bargain. Often trade unions are simply banned or forbidden access to the zones.

Given this governmental and employer hostility, it is not surprising that fundamental rights, like freedom of association and collective bargaining, cannot be effectively exercised. In the textile, clothing and footwear industries this produces excessive working hours, dangerous working conditions and wages for a standard working week well below the United Nations threshold for absolute poverty.

Contrast the US\$15 million salary of the CEO of a leading sporting goods company with the 80 US cents daily earnings of workers stitching sports shirts for the same company. Workers like these are now spending 70 per cent of their monthly salary on rice alone.

Sixty years on from the adoption of Freedom of the Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the ILO needs to insist more aggressively on its application, launching a crusade to secure decent work and including a living wage through worker organizing and bargaining. Practical steps to achievement should be the centrepiece, including a right-to-organize guarantee by employers backed up with agreements on access to all workplaces for trade unions, together with commitments to bargain in good faith when a union is established.

The decent work concept must be flushed out to include the payment of a living wage for a standard weeks' work, particularly relevant in an age of rapidly rising living costs, particularly food. And the ILO should provide practical assistance to help the social partners, country by country, define and determine a living wage.

Mechanisms ensuring enforcement of ILO fundamental Conventions, including innovative approaches linking the traditional ILO constituents with corporate buyers and consumers, must be established.

Harnessing trade rules to incorporate social elements is long overdue.

In short, if the ILO wants to retain credibility with workers, it must urgently embark on detailed commonsense measures which will replace hope with action and provide full and lasting freedom for every worker, regardless of workplace, to join a trade union of their choice and to bargain for a living wage and decent work.

(Mr Tabani takes the Chair.)

Original Spanish: Mr PARRA ROJAS (Employer, Cuba)

Unfortunately, we did not receive the Reports of the Director-General and other documents discussed by Committees in good time. This made it difficult to prepare and participate in debates. This should be a priority for the secretariat.

The Report discusses and warns us about strategic challenges to the Decent Work Agenda.

The current financial crisis is creating unemployment and insecurity and it is made more complex by the constant rise in oil and food prices, and the existence of famines in countries hit by natural disasters, and particularly by the rise in the unequal distribution of wealth. Contrary to what is stated in the reports, we believe that it is not a lack of confidence which causes these problems but structural problems, including the unjust and ineffective global economic order.

In this context, it is very important for everybody to understand that we need to guarantee jobs through sustainable enterprises and economies so that we really can talk about rights at work.

Under these conditions, it is vital to strengthen and broaden social dialogue at the national level. The best solutions can only be found when all social partners are actively involved without exception. At the international level, dialogue between the groups needs to take place on an open and fair basis, without any prejudice and with full participation. The ILO should act as a catalyst to help us find solutions.

We are very pleased with the cooperation with other international bodies through the Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work which was drawn up by the ILO and approved by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination of the United Nations system. At the same time, we believe that the major challenge lies in improving the capacity of some of these bodies, to fulfil their challenges and commitments. Look, for example, at the current crisis which is facing the rather discredited International Monetary Fund or the obstacles to negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Promoting a socially fair transition towards green jobs is becoming a priority, particularly if we consider the current context in which we find a large proportion of people lacking access to energy and drinking water, growing desertification, illiteracy, unfair trade, inconsistent migration laws, trade barriers, particularly the rise in non-tariff barriers, and barriers to technology transfer. This Organization needs to consider this a priority.

We welcome the important issues chosen to be discussed at this Session of the Conference and through consensus we have produced documents that will be of great use with a view to the future and which set an example of open and fruitful dialogue.

The issue of skills has been of particular interest to the Cuban employers. Our experience shows us that it is an advantage to have a well-educated population who have on average gone beyond Grade 11 at school, and for businesses to be involved in the educational system, to set the preparation and qualification levels by helping to draw up study plans. It also helps if specialists can have a teaching role, professors and students can be involved in the production processes, and schools are

updated on the latest technological advances in companies. These practices have proven to be effective and show us what can be achieved.

We share a vision in which all of humanity together, in every country, region and right around the world, can meet these challenges. The concept of decent work and the Decent Work Agenda can, and should, be one of the fundamental pillars in these vital endeavours.

Original Arabic: Mr ALMAHFOOD (Worker, Bahrain)

The 97th Session of the International Labour Conference is being held as we approach the 90th anniversary of the ILO. This Organization is run based on a unique tripartite system, together with the principles of social dialogue, equality and dynamic relationships between the social partners, Governments, Employers and Workers.

Of course, next year will see the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the ILO. The Organization has remained faithful to its role of defender of workers' rights, the social partnership and an economy which seeks, not only economic, but also human, social and cultural development. In his Report, the Director-General highlights the fact that ratifications of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 now stand at 148 and 158, respectively, out of 181 countries. Yet the Director-General has voiced concern regarding the number of countries which have not, as yet, ratified Convention No. 87, and the fact that ratification does not necessarily guarantee the implementation of the provisions of a Convention.

Trade unionists are still being dismissed, imprisoned, assaulted, or even murdered. This is where the ILO comes into its own, in its role as defender both of workers' and human rights.

We, in the Kingdom of Bahrain, appreciate the importance of the ILO and the support it gave us during the period prior to the granting of trade union freedoms in our country. The ILO helped the general committee of the trade union organization active at the time to improve trade union activities. It also worked to strengthen the movement calling for the introduction of legislation allowing for the creation of free and independent trade unions. Thanks to the struggle carried out by the workers and people of Bahrain, we have achieved this objective, as well as obtaining certain legislative reforms and a political climate of freedom, as desired by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain and his Government. The ILO continued to support the social partners even after the introduction of the legislation on trade unions, with the Organization participating in the development of trade union activities by providing the necessary technical assistance. The workers of my country will never forget this important contribution made by the ILO.

Bahrain is currently in the process of reforming the labour market, in order to regulate the movement of migrant workers through precise data collection procedures regarding their situation. The aim here is to prevent any exploitation of the workers, be they nationals or foreigners.

Although our federation is represented on the tripartite committee responsible for the organization of the labour market and on the parallel tripartite labour fund committee, for the moment, our role is that of observer and we cannot form a judgement regarding these reforms until they have been applied on the ground. We would also like to see capital investments contributing to the creation of a pro-

ductive economy, capable of creating jobs with added value.

Millions of workers, both across the world and in my country, are currently suffering as a result of price rises and inflation. The Ministry of Labour has been attempting to increase wages in certain private enterprises. However, no legislation exists setting a minimum wage which corresponds to living conditions in the country, neither do we have a higher tripartite wage council capable of constantly reviewing wages in light of living costs, in order to ensure that all workers and their families can live in dignity. Until this situation changes, the abovementioned efforts of the Ministry will not, on their own, resolve the problem.

With regards trade union activities, we are grateful for the freedoms granted by the legislation on workers' trade unions, however, the creation of public sector trade unions is still prohibited and certain trade unionists from this sector have been subjected to unfair administrative measures. They can be dismissed, suspended, or may have part of their wages held back. Thus, the President of the Postal Workers' Union and his Vice-President were penalized for having demanded improved working conditions. We are also concerned at the privatization of public sector enterprises by the Government without worker participation. These privatizations could have a negative effect on the workforce and on the respect of workers' rights, especially given the prohibition of public sector trade unions, a measure which deprives the workers in this sector of their rights.

We wish to highlight the reinstatement of a number of trade unionists, following a decision under article 110(b) of the labour law. However, other trade unionists have been dismissed as a result of their trade union activities. We will continue to do everything possible to ensure that their rights are respected and, to this end, we request the support of the ILO.

Mr MACDONALD (*representative, International Co-operative Alliance*)

It is an honour for me to address you today on behalf of cooperative organizations from 88 countries which are members of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). These organizations represent nearly 800 million individual members.

As the representative organization of cooperatives worldwide, the ICA knows that cooperatives can and do make a difference in promoting the Global Employment Agenda and indeed decent work in general. They address the four pillars of decent work – rights, employment, social protection and social dialogue – in as much as cooperatives are a form of enterprise that put people first. They are member-owned, are controlled under democratic principles and are competitive enterprises which are at least as efficient and often more effective in their business operations and use of capital as others in the marketplace. Indeed, a recent survey showed that the top 300 cooperative and mutual enterprises in the world have a combined turnover greater than the gross domestic product of Canada, the tenth economy of the world. Yet, they are not driven by profit, but rather by needs and they care for members and their communities. Cooperatives help people meet their common economic, social, environmental and cultural needs. The flexibility and proven sustainability of our model of enterprise

makes it appropriate not only for addressing the challenges of today's volatile economies and changing conditions, but also those of tomorrow, and so the challenges set out for the Decent Work Agenda are ones that the ICA and its members are prepared to work jointly with the ILO to address.

Today, cooperatives already provide approximately 100 million jobs worldwide. That is 20 per cent more than all the multinational corporations put together, and their potential for contributing to closing the employment gap is widely recognized. They are active in urban and rural areas and have a special role in the promotion of rural employment as recognized in the recent discussions on rural employment for poverty reduction. Active in all sectors of the economy, they are sustainable both in terms of economic viability and environmental actions. They are addressing climate change with policies to reduce carbon emissions, to promote sustainable consumption patterns, to educate their members and the communities in which they operate and find innovative ways to address the issue. In many countries they are the preferred form of enterprise that is used for renewable energy solutions, especially when community control and ownership are important, and so they are producers of green jobs in this and a multitude of other sectors in which cooperatives are found. In fact on 5 July the international community will celebrate International Day of Cooperatives on the theme "Confronting climate change through cooperative enterprise" to highlight their contributions.

We should not forget too, especially today, that as socially-responsible enterprises, cooperatives are also making headway in addressing child labour with joint activities already under way to take stock of existing good practice and to sensitize cooperatives at the local level. The ICA is committed to working with the ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour to make further progress.

However, if cooperatives are to have maximum impact on the economic and social well-being of members and the communities in which they operate, they must have appropriate legal and administrative environments in place. The ICA commends the continuing work of the ILO in assisting its constituencies in implementing ILO Recommendation No. 193 on the promotion of cooperatives, and hopes, that as part of a stronger ILO, it will strengthen its activity in all its departments in ensuring that policy environments exist which enable cooperatives to grow and prosper alongside other forms of enterprise.

The ICA is committed to working with the ILO within its Strategic Policy Framework, in strengthening the potential of cooperatives to contribute to advancing people's real development goals and achieving a fair globalization.

Original Spanish: Mr QUIROZ HERNÁNDEZ (Worker, Panama)

In 2001, fulfilling the mandate of the National Council of Organized Workers, CONATO, we confirmed the complaint brought before the ILO against the Panamanian Government for violations of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 with regard to freedom of association, union immunity, the right to organize, anti-union practices, collective bargaining and the right to strike. And today it can be said that there have been no changes.

The most dramatic aspect of this case is that since they have been ratified, those Conventions have to be applied via national law, but this is forgotten by the business sector and the Ministry of Labour. This conduct goes unnoticed or, put another way, there is a long way to go before trade unionism can develop in Panama. Section 334 of the Panamanian Labour Code states that the constitution of unions as an effective means of contributing to economic and social development of the country, popular culture and democracy is declared to be in the public interest. In spite of this, we are getting no further forward.

We would like to inform this Conference that on 26 May 2007 CONATO presented a complaint against the Republic of Panama to the Commission of Human Rights of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights under Article 44 of the Convention and Article 23 of the regulations of the Commission because of the application of Decree No 8 of 26 February 1998 regulating work at sea and on navigable waterways. This decree violates the rights of such workers, i.e. the workers at sea or on navigable waterways on Panamanian-flagged vessels. It also violates Inter-American standards of human rights, including several provisions of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights (the Protocol of San Salvador).

In Panama, clearly, there is economic growth but there is no social development, which is widening the gap between the rich and the poor. We have galloping inflation, which is driving the society of our country towards an explosion. The business sector, in such a situation, is reaping great profits because there are no price controls, merely the play of supply and demand.

Furthermore, unemployment has not fallen since there is no compliance with the articles about contracting in the labour code and most contracts are in fact fixed-term, in violation of section 75 of the Labour Code, which states that a fixed-term contract cannot be used to cover temporarily a job which, by its nature, is permanent. But this has been violated everywhere by the commercial sector. We would like to mention workers who do not have any social security in violation of Act No. 51 on social security.

We would also like to see a solution to the eternal problem of public transport, which we would like to be safe, convenient and efficient. We are opposed to intentions to privatize the National Water Supply Institute by concessions to the private sector and also other institutions in the Panamanian State. We are against the business sector's intentions to have the reconciliation boards transferred to the labour jurisdiction of the judiciary, since under the present system the workers are able to safeguard their benefits. The statistics maintained in that institution have shown its effectiveness, even though the Higher Labour Court is opposed to it and it has always settled appeals to the detriment of the workers.

All the workers in the country are seeking a wage rise. Those in the public sector are seeking real implementation of the policy on jobs in the administrative service, as well as a real food policy which guarantees basic products and addresses the issue of hunger in the country. We also want an energy policy, and measures to eradicate child labour and to protect our ecosystem – the marine resources, the mangroves and the coral reefs.

We would like to mention that there was a national symposium on development which raised important subjects under the heading of what Panama is able and willing to achieve. These subjects included a complete reform of education, economic growth and competitiveness, institutional modernization, well-being and equity, reform of the health-care system in terms of prevention, cure and investment. The workers made a considerable contribution to this congress, hoping that the conclusions will be put into practice and will not just remain a dead letter as has often been the case in the past.

Finally, we have to fight to improve democracy in the country. We are against the neo-liberal economic order which has been imposed on us, whereby profits are created by the great majority but are never shared by that majority and are merely concentrated in a few hands.

Original Afghan: Mr RAHEEN (Worker, Afghanistan)

The great movement of the labour union in Afghanistan started in 1964 at the same time as the decades of democracy, along with establishment of collecting boxes in order to assist workers of companies, industries and the transportation sector. Later on, this association was progressively developed with an increase in membership to 350,000.

Unfortunately due to war and conflict in the country for more than two decades, the National Union of Afghanistan Employees folded until 2001. Fortunately, after the establishment of a new Government in 2001 and the adoption of the Constitution of Afghanistan, and thanks to the efforts made by some philanthropic and talented Afghan people, the United Nations, as well as national and international organizations, the National Union of Afghanistan Employees officially resumed its activities and promoted development and productivity under a proper organizational structure.

So far, the National Union of Afghanistan Employees functions as a comprehensive and respected authorized labour union in our country.

In order to carry out its activities, its rules and regulations, a national conference was held focusing on the establishment of a comprehensive Constitution for the Afghanistan Labour Union, representing real democracy in that particular area. It was also agreed that a national union congress would be held as soon as possible, and a comprehensive labour strategy would be developed in accordance with the current situation in the country.

It is expected that the National Union Congress could empower the Union as key elements on significant changes.

For the moment, the NUAEE is actively involved in activities in both public and private sectors in the country. The NUAEE cooperated closely with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and the Disabled in drafting the Labour Law, and believes that by implementing such a comprehensive Labour Law in the country, the standard of living will be improved. It is necessary to indicate that, unfortunately, our relations are limited at the international level and, for the moment, we do not have the honour of membership with other international labour unions. The NUAEE is a non-governmental, non-political and independent social association, acting as a legally responsible unit for labour rights.

As you might be aware, three decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan have led to socio-economic problems for workers and labourers. Workers are

struggling with socio-economic problems that day by day are increasing, with fewer wages over the last two decades. The monthly wages are significantly inadequate for meeting their daily needs. In spite of some assistance donated by the international community, we are still living below the poverty line in our country.

The major conditions that cause insecurity are due to ministerial corruption, poppy cultivation, violations of the law, anarchy, increasing crisis, unemployment, problems of social services, increase in food prices, hunger, hoarding and the problems of human trafficking, as well as with persecution, problems in rehabilitation. All these issues are the main causes of suffering of the people of Afghanistan.

During the meeting held for the International Labour Day on 1 May, the following provisions were agreed to by the NUAЕ: The NUAЕ will be fully prepared to cooperate in adopting a socio-economic programme with the Government of Afghanistan. Second, the NUAЕ requested the attention of the Government and the directors of the National Parliamentary Assembly in order to increase the meeting of primary needs in the country. Third, increase in the employment opportunities, and implementation of a comprehensive employment policy. Fourth, creating comprehensive procedures for equal wages in both public and private sectors. Fifth, establishment of a system for social health and labour insurances. Sixth, establishment and empowerment of comprehensive social dialogue on a tripartite basis. Seventh, nationalize the capacity building, skill development and worker technical skill programmes and improve the level of workers' awareness and skill with modern technology. Eighth, establishment of reasonable shelter programmes by the Government with the support of communities. Ninth, the NUAЕ fully supports the ratification of the international labour Conventions by the Government of Afghanistan.

Once again, the NUAЕ requests further assistance from interested countries and the United Nations to advocate promoting the position of workers in Afghanistan.

Original Arabic: Mr AHMED (Employer, Iraq)

At the outset we would like to state our appreciation of the Report of the Director-General under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work concerning the questions of freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as other important issues which will make it possible to face up to the challenges posed by globalization. We welcome this Report and we support the action plan as well as the signing of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87). These principles are prerequisites to ensure the necessary balance of the employment market and to ensure growth and democracy as well as political and social stability by promoting investment and exports. These principles will allow the governments to promulgate appropriate laws and avoid interventionism. One of the most visible phenomena of our time is the issue of unemployment which is worsening, along with social exclusion and poverty. This phenomenon has become a major concern for governments and social partners. It reduces to nothing the efforts made so that individuals can benefit from their rights and it is a persistent threat to peace and

stability for all humanity. This is why this Report is so important, and we hope that the ideas it contains will allow us to confront these phenomena, notably when it comes to promoting employment. The ILO plays an important role in assisting its members by providing technical and institutional support, in particular to those countries which are going through crisis and difficult times, such as Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and the Sudan.

In Iraq, efforts are being made to promote the private sector through loans which are provided under favourable conditions to small companies. These loans are provided by the Ministry of Labour and Industry and the Iraqi Union of Industrialists. They help to stimulate the market and create new employment opportunities. We hope that we will see more programmes from the Government to allow the private sector in Iraq to play a greater role in reconstruction and development.

Iraq launched an initiative called the International Compact at a conference in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt last year to set up a partnership with the international community involving a number of reciprocal commitments. Iraq has fulfilled its commitments, bringing about security and stability, reducing violence and facing up to terrorism, fighting sectarianism to achieve national reconciliation. As well as leading to the promulgation of many new economic and social laws, the second conference on the International Compact, which was held last month in Stockholm, restated the success of Iraq, as confirmed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the resolutions that were adopted. The presence of a large number of countries and international organizations, over 100, is proof that the world is aware of the importance of Iraq, its capacities and opportunities in all areas, especially with regard to promoting peace, security and the fight against terrorism in our region and in the world.

Iraq has the capacity to progress and move forward to ease the burden of all the people of our region and throughout the world. Iraq can play an important role in stabilizing the international economy, given the increases in energy and food prices. The commitments of the international community particularly those of neighbouring countries, and our brother Arab countries towards our country do not go far enough. Iraq has been able to pay back US\$70 million of debt, but it was a major burden on us. The international community must support the International Compact. The International Organisation of Employers must help to promote investment in Iraq and to provide increased technical assistance so that Iraq can once again become a strong and calm country, playing an active role in the various activities of this Organization.

Ms OPECHOWSKA (Employer, Poland)

It gives me great honour to have the opportunity of representing Polish employers during this year's 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. Participation in our Conference is both an honour and a source of great satisfaction, since, as every year, it serves as a source of numerous inspirations and initiatives.

Taking into account the Global Report and Report V entitled *Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development*, I would like to share with you the situation and our intentions in Poland in this matter.

The organization which I represent, the Polish Craft Association, contributes to the growth of professional skills among both adults and young people in secondary schools.

In the Polish education system, 101 craft professions can now be taught but this does not satisfy us; our organization wants to change this situation. The new trades appearing in times of globalization should be acknowledged as craft professions. The total period of time which must be spent in education to take the secondary school-leaving exam is 12 to 15 years. After passing this exam, graduates receive a certificate allowing them to apply for admittance to high schools. Polish employers would like to expand skills among people to create employment growth and sustainable development. At the moment, in the face of high-level economic development of 6 per cent GNP, we are finding it difficult to find employees for many sectors of the economy. Building contractors in particular cannot find employees, because more and more workers are emigrating to Western European countries, where salaries are higher, taxes are lower and social care is better than in Poland.

In Poland, 92 per cent of all enterprises on the market are SMEs, and 89 per cent are microenterprises, often family companies. The main source of workers and their qualifications are from the crafts industry. Unfortunately, the Government places little emphasis on craft professions and they are not a priority for economic development. We think that too few people in Poland participate in the lifelong learning system. Among European countries, Poland has to catch up in many areas in this matter. Public awareness about qualifications and about changing professions, even during unemployment, is insufficient. By next year, one in every two Poles will not have basic education. This shows shortsightedness and a belief that acquiring basic education is enough for one's whole life. The Polish Craft Association and employers think that education should be based more on practical skills.

Young people finishing school are usually unprepared for professional work, and they must learn practical skills at work. In Poland, many people with higher qualifications, graduates from universities, specialists, managers and engineers, participate in education. It is a bad situation. However, people with low qualifications, the unemployed, or those at risk of unemployment, do not fill in the gaps in their education.

Nevertheless, Polish employers hope that the present Government will support economic and employment growth through several strategies being realized within the next few years. We believe that these strategies will be realized in cooperation with the social partners, as is strongly expressed in Chapter 3, Report V of the ILO.

Finally, I would like to tell you about the situation of bilateral and tripartite dialogue in Poland. During the last two years, the former Government's approach did not create an atmosphere for better and more effective dialogue. Now the situation is changing. First of all, there is good cooperation between employers and the present Government with respect to modifications of the Labour Code, Trade Union Act and industrial disputes and collective bargaining is noticeable. The objective of such cooperation is to prevent trade unions from organizing illegal strikes. Illegal occupation of company premises will be punished with damages worth millions.

At present, strike legislation in Poland is unclear and frequently violated. The employers' proposal in the tripartite committee on labour law and industrial relations is to apply the principle of representation by selecting only the trade unions representing at least one-third of staff to negotiate with the employer; to reduce strike freedom (50 per cent of staff in favour of a strike instead of 25 per cent, as it has been so far); and to clearly specify the body (Social Labour Inspection or Labour Court) to rule whether or not a strike is legal. Major trade organizations are in favour of the changes while minor ones are against. The Government has announced that the settlements between the major trade unions and employees in the Tripartite Committee will be included in the collective bargaining Bill.

Generally speaking, the situation in tripartite dialogue is better than in bilateral. No autonomous dialogue as one of the most important challenges that social partners have to face has been observed in Poland yet. Many issues cannot be solved without nationwide social discussions, which will particularly concern pay, pension reform and the health-care system.

Original Spanish: Mr FAZIO (Worker, Uruguay)

The workers of Uruguay represented at this Conference have seriously and carefully studied your introductory Report, ready to commit and contribute, as social partners, to the deepening of social dialogue and tripartism. We believe that your analysis, based on the challenge that it represents to the different actors who make up this system is accurate and, with those instruments, we can formulate policies aimed at the creation of decent work in our countries, which will guarantee growth with social justice and, by supporting those decisions, we can work together to improve the institutional efficiency of the ILO.

We believe that, as workers, we should continue to improve and modernize labour relations, maximizing the potential offered by the mandate and mechanisms of the ILO. We would like to reiterate in this plenary that Uruguayan workers are not newcomers to tripartism, nor do we think that social dialogue is some kind of new fad. We have always been optimistic about the impact on our working conditions resulting from collective bargaining and, above all, we have always upheld the view that, as workers, we need to work towards a strategy of a new development model for our country.

In this regard, we should like to highlight the achievements attained since the present Government came to power. The labour relations system is in line with national and international standards that uphold our rights, including freedom of association, in accordance with ILO Convention No. 98 and which outlines the framework for collective bargaining in the public and private sectors, including rural and domestic workers. However, 24 employers' organizations met with the President to express their disagreement with the labour policy, putting forward a labour-relations system based on the elimination of tripartism, company freedom, the power of top management and the right of ownership.

This anachronistic position, dating back to a very dark past for the workers and our country, shows clearly that the business sector has still not realized that we are in a political and social context that is different from the one in which they were able to

impose their own ideas on labour relations for more than ten years, eliminating collective bargaining and wage councils, a context in which our country fell into poverty, unemployment, a loss in real income, and persecution, with the dismissal and social uprooting of many workers who were blacklisted.

We workers are part of a popular movement and, since our class gained independence, we have supported the changes made by this Government and we should continue advancing proposals to move towards an ever more equitable distribution of wealth, the creation of more decent jobs and better salaries for workers, thus reducing poverty and inequality.

We would like to encourage the employer sector of our country to fulfil their commitment to dialogue, negotiation and tripartism as instruments to bring about those changes that will improve the functioning of the labour market and create decent jobs and a dignified life for workers.

We endorse the efforts of this Organization to include on the agenda of the multilateral system a strategic position to enable the development of decent work plans and programmes, i.e. decent and sustainable work as a basic mechanism for social integration.

We encourage efforts to strengthen the ILO's capacity, to strengthen tripartism and to obtain a greater number of countries ratifying more Conventions. The efforts we support go against the employer sector's aim of weakening the standards framework of the ILO, substituting the protective and compulsory content of the standards for more flexible guidelines. A clear example of this was highlighted in the Committee on the Application of Standards with regard to Convention No. 94.

We accept the centenary project of the ILO, to be launched at the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the ILO next year, and we confirm that we will take part in the debates including in the world programme of tripartite events.

We would like to express our concern at the increased criminalization of social protest in our region. As we said in the Committee on the Application of Standards, this year almost 50 brothers have died, half of them in Colombia, where flagrant, massive and systematic violations of human rights are committed. This year, in which we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), we urge you and all governments and employers attending this Conference to take actions to change this reality and to speak out against these actions, which violate the fundamental human right to freedom of association and the right to life and freedom of expression.

The workers of Uruguay would like to reiterate our commitment to dignity, dialogue and to the plans and programmes of this Organization, and we would urge you not to diminish the efforts to continue strengthening unity, solidarity and cooperation among all. This is the only way that we can defend our rights and take up our rightful place on the international stage. We are committed, above all, to all workers throughout the world.

Mr MOTAMEDI (*Employer, Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Much work on advancing sustainable development has focused merely on the role of technology, particularly environmental technologies. Where the

need for systemic social change is recognized, it is usually invoked to support the diffusion of new technological innovations.

However, there is growing appreciation that it is not human technology, so much as patterns of human activity, that are challenging the sustainability of human development.

The overwhelming attention scientists and practitioners afford to technological means of redressing biophysical challenges to sustainable development represents a means-end paradigm that distorts crucial aspects of both perspective and approach.

The remedy for this distortion lies in recognizing that, at their core, both sustainability and development are necessarily human-centred concepts.

As Clark explains, when we talk about the sustainable future of the planet, surely we mean to say sustainable future for the planet with human beings on it. Sustainability then, refers to the sustainability of human life, and that ultimately depends on how we humans behave.

However, sustainable development describes more than a future in which humans simply self-perpetuate. If we do no more than work for a sustainable future, then we are in danger of creating a world in which living is little more than only not dying.

Sustainable development is more than survival, it is a post-modern vision of progress. This means that it provides a vision that eclipses modernity's concept of progress. Visions of the future, informed by sustainable development, couple the long-term survival of humanity with a measurable and qualitative improvement in the human experience of life on earth.

The debates over whether sustainable development is best understood as a goal or as a process are unwarranted. The fact is, it is both a goal and a process.

Sustainable development represents both a vision of the future worthy of human aspiration and an unending process, adapting human activities to correspond with that aspired future.

Enterprises are created in a contemporary context, which includes the present conditions of the system state, as well as expectations about future conditions. Yet those enterprises that do perpetuate into the future must contend with an ever-changing world that frequently fails to match expectations.

Recognizing a co-evolutionary dynamic of system change, the indeterminate effects of change on different hierarchical levels, and the human capacity for reflection and choice, many different futures become possible. Some of these futures we can classify as consistent with our future notion of sustainable development, and some we can classify as inconsistent with this notion.

Though an enterprise can take many forms, and perform many functions, for it to contribute to sustainable development, the interface between the enterprise and other components of the social-ecological system must be supportive of the future which are consistent with the notion of sustainable development.

Harmonizing among elements to achieve this effect should not be confused with a static view of enterprise design. Rather, in recognizing the ongoing processes of entrepreneurial design, and redesign necessary for an enterprise to persist in a dynamic environment, the importance of prevailing management logics should not be underestimated.

Conforming words and deeds to accepted logics is important for leaders of enterprise to earn legitimacy for their entrepreneurial vision, in order to garner the crucial support of other stakeholders in realizing those visions.

Though stakeholders do possess agency in enterprise design, it must be remembered that the process of organization design is not a wholly calculated procedure in the same way that sustainable architecture and sustainable product design are.

Organization design is an organic, emergent process of negotiated human action, produced and reproduced over time, involving both intentioned and contingent behaviour. This perspective provides a basis for approaching the science and art of sustainable enterprise design. It acknowledges that the future cannot be designed in any deterministic sense, and yet we need not concede human partially constitute the future that is tomorrow.

Design is a way of organizing those artefacts, both human activity systems and technological, to contribute to a future that is consistent with the vision of sustainable development. A design science of sustainable enterprise would support the efforts of those innovative leaders of enterprise intent on re-conceiving the fundamental purposes and essence of enterprise.

In so doing, enterprises can indeed contribute to the co-creation of a future of planet Earth with people, a future in which people both survive and thrive.

Original Arabic: Mr AL-DARRAJI (Worker, Iraq)

Our wish is that this session will reach its objectives and culminate in Conventions and Recommendations that guarantee prosperity for all human kind, which is suffering the repercussions of global imperialist aggression aimed at looting people's wealth, impoverishing people and imposing soaring food prices – all of this the prelude to real humanitarian disasters.

The workers of Iraq hope that the Conference will give due attention, to their disastrous situation resulting from the US occupation of their country and the ensuing negative impacts and repercussions, namely, destruction of the infrastructure, whether economic, industrial, social and or cultural, and of services, as well as the spread of unemployment and informal work and the lack of decent work. Even children have left their classrooms in order to wander the streets begging or search for any kind of work to help their parents in facing the extremely difficult economic conditions arising from the increase in prices, and to avoid dying of hunger.

We have to add to all this the lack of health-care systems, the pollution of the environment, the emergence of serious diseases, especially new cancer cases. All this, while the occupation is still looting our wealth, destroying business and putting people in prison. We can say today that the bloodshed is continuing in Iraq without anyone appearing to care.

The workers' movement in Iraq, which is at the forefront of society given the role it is required to play, is still marginalized, despite the major changes that have occurred in Iraq since April 2003. The best proof of that is that, even today, the Labour Code and the Social Security Act adopted in 1987 are still applied. The same is true of the instructions and decisions taken in accordance with their provisions, including Decision No. 150 of 1987 which

prohibits the establishment of unions within the public sector.

Our hope was that the consecutive governments in Iraq, after April 2003, would finally tackle the plights of the workers and trade unions, who endured a great deal before that. On the contrary, Decision 8750 of 8 August 2005 provides for the seizure of the assets of the unions and all professional bodies in Iraq. In addition, the infamous Decision No. 150 of 1987 is still applied. This is a blatant violation of freedom of association and of international labour conventions and recommendations.

Besides, the new Labour Code has not yet been adopted. Our confederation has played a major role in preparing the draft code alongside the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Iraqi Federation of Industries.

Consequently, the Iraqi trade union movement was unable to play an effective role in the drawing up of national economic policies aimed at finding solutions to the problems of unemployment, economic stagnation, unregulated imports, poverty, child labour, the situation of workers, social security and health.

In spite of all the above, I would like to say that the General Confederation of Iraqi Workers is still adamant about playing a legitimate and effective role in order to ensure the recovery of the economy in Iraq, given the confidence placed in it by the Iraqi labour force and the Iraqi people as a whole, and also thanks to the support that it is receiving from the ILO and from the Arab and international trade unions and federations. We are proud of what the ILO is doing in establishing the ground rules for social dialogue aimed at achieving peace, stability and prosperity, and a decent life for workers.

Mr MAINALI (Government, Nepal)

Nepal is making a democratic transition. Ever since the start of the peace process, following the peaceful People's Movement in April 2006, we have successfully conducted elections to the Constituent Assembly, which was the main demand of the Movement. The first sitting of the Assembly last month took a historic decision and formally abolished the monarchy. Such a great transformation through an electoral process has created an enabling environment for economic and social progress within the democratic framework.

I would like to reiterate Nepal's deep commitment to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Nepal has already ratified seven ILO Conventions, including Convention No. 169. The people of Nepal enjoy freedom to form unions and associations under the Interim Constitution of Nepal. The Government recognizes the right to collective bargaining. Civil servants have been given the right to form trade unions up to officer level. As the Assembly commences the writing of the democratic Constitution, we remain committed to the mainstreaming of respect for fundamental rights of the people, which are of prime importance to the ILO.

Nepal has developed a National Plan of Action to promote a decent work environment in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. We have put in place significant HIV/AIDS policy measures in the workplace. This is expected to improve working conditions and productivity.

As a source of migrant workers, labour migration is one of the priority areas for Nepal. We look for-

ward to working together with the labour-receiving countries to make migrants' employment more secure and systematic, which will be beneficial to all concerned.

Globalization, which has so far remained driven by transfer of technology and free flow of capital, needs to be made fair and inclusive. Proper management of the flow of people helps make the process balanced and beneficial to all.

Nepal has initiated several legal and institutional reforms in a holistic manner. We are committed to the elimination of child labour, to ensuring occupational health and safety, and to the provision of a social security scheme for workers. We recognize tripartite mechanism as an instrument to promote social dialogue and improve labour market governance.

In an open and democratic system, we are working to generate rural employment opportunities and bring gender equality into the mainstream of labour, employment and social policies. This, we believe, helps in promoting sustainable economic development and poverty reduction in the country.

Finally, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the ILO for the technical cooperation provided to Nepal. As a country making a democratic transition after over a decade-long armed conflict, our needs are enormous and specific. Employment, skill and enterprise development, addressing the root causes of conflict, rehabilitation of former combatants and victims of conflicts, including internally displaced people, are all high at the Government's agenda. We urge the ILO to continue to provide robust and comprehensive technical cooperation to address these issues, which have a direct bearing on stability and progress and provide a strong foundation of industrial harmony, peace, social justice, prosperity and development.

Mr SINGH (*Worker, Fiji*)

Since 5 December 2006, Fiji is still in turbulent waters and we are faced with uncertainties in many aspects of our lives. Fiji has seen four coups since 1987 and the events of December 2006 have increased the burden on workers, the most vulnerable group in these trying times.

Let me assure that the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) adamant that it does not support the manner in which events unfolded on 5 December and thereafter. We do not condone any illegal acts to attain political power or breaches of human rights.

We have maintained dialogue and continue to work with the current regime and other stakeholders, despite our reservations on the legality of the administration. May I stress that our priority is to remain committed to our responsibility towards the needs and interests of the workers that we represent.

From rising global food prices, political instability, inflation, expiring land leases and housing problems, and currently, the unilateral decision of the State to replace the Cost of Living Adjustment Method with the introduction of the Performance Management System, as well as contractual appointment of civil servants, have all added to the challenges faced by the workers today.

However, we envisage some relief with the advent of the new labour legislation, the Employment Relations Promulgation, which has seen the industrial relations setting of Fiji undergo significant change.

Although, if I may say, the package of legislation is not a whole basket of goodies for workers, we welcome it as a step towards achieving at least a minimum decent standard of working conditions for all workers, whether unionized or not. It brings with it, new concepts and principles of non-discrimination, the promotion of gender equality through equal remuneration for work of equal value, equal employment opportunities, equal access to grievance-solving machinery and, most importantly, the integration of good faith in collective bargaining.

Another notable change is some degree of conformity of legislation with the ILO Conventions. These changes were long overdue, with the previous laws being archaic, from the times of the colonial era in Fiji. However, the Congress still holds some reservations on the compliance of the new legislation with one fundamental Convention, Convention No. 87, which is the primary focus of the link between the Government and the two social partners.

The Congress expresses deep concern at the stance of the Government in its autonomous decision to remove the Cost of Living Adjustment System and calls on the Government to reverse its decision and engage in genuine dialogue and consultation with the unions. It has also called on the Government to ensure that the rights and freedoms of its citizens are protected and upheld, including the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and other rights, in totality, which are clearly enshrined in 1997 Fiji Bill of Rights.

We also wish to reiterate that our stand on the call for early elections and constructive measures towards the attainment of sustainable democracy in Fiji has not changed.

Original Vietnamese: Mr NGUYEN (Worker, Viet Nam)

This year, 2008, marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the 60th anniversary of the adoption of Convention No. 87 on freedom of association. The 97th Session of the International Labour Conference, which focuses on the debate of the Global Report of the Director-General on *Freedom of association in practice: Lessons learned*, drawing on the implementation of Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, will help us gain a comprehensive outlook and reality of the implementation of the ILO fundamental Conventions. Then in setting measures for promoting ratification and serious enforcement of the ILO fundamental Conventions so that workers' rights and interests in all ILO member States are protected. We highly value the Conference agenda which places importance on practical issues, that is: promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development, strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members to reach its objectives in the context of globalization.

Viet Nam is a highly populated country with the majority of young people in the labour force, who mainly come from rural areas. Therefore, options for job creation, and skills for improved productivity always gain the attention of the Government, employers and trade unions.

The National Employment Strategy of Viet Nam for the period 2001–10, has been successfully implemented over the years, and it received good comments and evaluation from the Committee on

Employment and Social Policy of the Governing Body at the 301st Session of the Governing Body in March 2008.

Viet Nam's status as the 150th member of the World Trade Organization was decided in January 2007, and acknowledges officially its full and in-depth integration into the world economy. Viet Nam's economy grew at a rate of 7.5 per cent annually during the period 2001–05, 8.2 per cent in 2006, and 8.5 per cent in 2007.

The implementation of the National Strategy on Employment over the period 2001–07, resulted in the creation of about 11 million jobs, bringing down the unemployment rate in the urban areas to 4.91 per cent in 2007, compared with 6.28 per cent in 2001. Viet Nam has attained the Millennium Development Goal on poverty alleviation ten years in advance, reducing the number of poor households from 58 per cent in 1993 to 16 per cent in 2006.

With the plan for recruiting 1 million new members in the period 2003–08, set forth at the Ninth National Trade Union Congress in October 2008, over recent years the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) has attached importance to the task of membership and trade union development, especially organizing and recruiting members in the foreign investment sector. So far, the VGCL has recruited more than 1.5 million new members, raising the total number of trade union membership to more than 6.5 million, who organize more than 90,000 grass-roots unions nationwide.

In the context of increasing complex industrial relations in Viet Nam, it is among the primary priorities of the trade unions to promote negotiations and conclude collective bargaining agreements for the protection of workers' legal and legitimate rights and interests, and develops sound industrial relations at enterprises.

In 2007, 53.6 per cent of enterprises have a collective bargaining agreement concluded, which was up 12 per cent compared to the figures of 2006. Meanwhile, 95.6 per cent of state enterprises, 55.1 per cent of foreign-funded enterprises and 41.5 per cent of private enterprises had collective bargaining agreements. The social partners in Viet Nam have agreed that in the years to come, a pilot national industrial and quality bargaining agreement will be initiated.

We wish to express our high appreciation from the VGCL to the ILO for your support and technical assistance provided to Vietnamese trade unions over recent years, and we expect to continue receiving assistance and technical cooperation from the ILO, especially in the areas of training and improving skills for trade union officers in respect of collective bargaining, membership development, occupational safety and health, and social dialogue at the workplace for sound industrial relations, thus contributing to the sustainable development of enterprise and the national economy.

Original Farsi: Mr DARVISHI (Worker, Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the hope of building the capacity of the ILO constituents to give effect, among other things, to the principles of decent work and right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization is a shining beacon, showing us the right path.

We are confident that the hard work of the Office and its constituents over the last two years is well worth praise as the Declaration serves as another

crucial instrument to revitalize the principles of the ILO, and particularly that of decent work.

2008 marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. Social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace, and economic growth is essential to the eradication of poverty. Unfortunately, neither are fulfilled in a climate of unfair globalization, although the aim of ensuring social equity incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals is to be fulfilled by the year 2015.

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work attempts better to respect, promote and realize the Declaration in the context of globalization.

One of the main topics of paramount importance in the Report is the need to combat the exclusion of the categories of workers or employers that are more difficult to organize.

The Report, however, regrettably fails to address the equally important issue of the exclusion of a large portion of workers round the globe, from the right to membership to national and international workers' federations or confederations.

Millions of workers around the globe could not regrettably be heard and this was because they are not members of certain national or international trade unions. It seems that many of the national and international federations are unsure with regards fundamental principles and wish to screen the more preferred trade unions for membership. And, according to the wise saying of the Workers spokesperson at the present Conference, although we are all equal, some people are more equal than others.

In the aftermath of globalization, our world is grappling with its grave consequences, namely: underdevelopment, unemployment, dramatic migration, changes in demographic trends and the deterioration of the environment. The latter has recently led to the deaths, and homelessness of thousands of the poor workers in China and in Myanmar.

Allow me to express my deepest sympathy to the workers of these countries and the families of the bereaved.

On 28 May 2008, when the 97th International Labour Conference was officially convened in Geneva, more than 26 Iranian workers died in an explosion in a petrochemical plant. Another 50 workers sustained irreparable damage to their lungs, eyes, and skin. The fire also caused very serious environmental damage to the local area.

Improper occupational safety and health (OSH) instructions and negligence regarding the corresponding safety at work code claimed the lives of the workers. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has asked for technical assistance on OSH, it has been deprived of any such essential services that address the lives and safety of workers. The excuse given was the protection of the right of the Iranian workers and employers to freedom of association.

We really appreciate the concerns of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) regarding the status of the freedom of association in our region, but we do not believe that is a reason to take technical cooperation hostage so as to ensure its implementation.

On behalf of 8.3 million Iranian workers, and 4,040 workers' associations, we the defenders of the workers' rights in my country, wish to discuss any pending issues face-to-face with the ITUC and to put an end to remote monitoring and remote con-

trolling of the events of the world of work in Islamic Republic of Iran.

Finally, I would also like to thank the Office for the very extensive Report prepared on the issue of the occupied Arab territories. It seems they have great problems, such as continuing insecurity for Palestinians, depressed labour markets, poverty and food dependency, isolation of Gaza, and tight control and restriction of movement, continue to affect adversely the daily lives of the Palestinian people and persistently deprive them of decent work and the opportunity of a decent life.

(Ms Diallo takes the Chair.)

Ms LAKICEVIC STOJACIC (*Government, Serbia*)

It is my honour to address the 97th Session of the Conference on behalf of the Republic of Serbia. First of all, let me underline the importance of the messages contained in this year's Global Report on freedom of association in practice, indicating a need for further strengthening of labour rights and principles, as well as social dialogue.

In Serbia, social dialogue has been recognized as the national priority, and represents an effective tool for development of a stable economic and cohesive society. Serbia has been taking up all the challenges resulting from legislative changes after 2000 and from identification of differences in every segment of its society. Bearing in mind its long-term membership experience and observance of the direction towards which ILO has been moving, as well as of principles underpinning the EU, as the country's strategic goal, the Republic of Serbia is completely aware of the key role of a social partnership as a factor that ensures the stable functioning of society.

To this end, last month the priorities of the Decent Work Country Programme 2008 were finally agreed with the ILO.

The first priority deals with capacity building of government institutions and social partners towards promotion of labour market governance. It requires improved functioning on the part of the Social and Economic Council of Serbia, more efficient administration and effective labour dispute settlement mechanisms, all from the aspect of ratification and application of the Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), and more effective trade unions and employers' organizations. The other priority is better implementation of employment policy, particularly focused on disadvantaged young people and vulnerable groups, and greater effectiveness of social policy.

Strengthened cooperation between the ILO and Serbia is reflected in the fact that this year the office of the national coordinator of the ILO has been opened in Serbia, showing that our cooperation has finally reached a point for a more direct approach by the establishment of new procedures and practices, and a more active involvement of Serbia in new initiatives by participation in specialized training and actions.

The effective social dialogue and bargaining in the public sector, to which the Government and representative trade unions are parties, resulted in sectoral collective agreements signed for the public services in Serbia in education, social protection, culture, research and science, and student standards, with ongoing bargaining in the health sector.

The situation is not so favourable in the case of economic sector collective agreements, to which

employers' associations and trade unions are parties. However, we believe that the recent conclusion of the Framework Collective Agreement will serve as a strong impetus for successful bargaining in all branches of the economy. More specifically, on 29 April 2008 the Framework Collective Agreement was concluded between the representative employers' organizations (Union of Employers of Serbia) and representative trade unions (Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia and Trade Union Confederation "Independence").

The bargaining process was opened in 2005 and was neither easy nor simple. However, both parties were understanding, tolerant and willing to compromise. It is a great pleasure to say that this Framework Collective Agreement is one ambitious and jointly forged agenda towards modernization, adoption of, and integration into, the European social model, and a shared vision of priorities in the world of work and social affairs. The Framework Collective Agreement is a benchmark for future economic growth that must be accompanied with equally represented social advancement.

However, economic development in Serbia has not been followed by respective employment growth. It goes on simultaneously with the expansion of the informal sector, particularly in rural and less-developed areas of the country, leaving a certain percentage of the population on the brink of poverty. For example, according to the data available, 85 per cent of the overall territory of Serbia is composed of rural areas with 55 per cent of the population. The rural economy accounts for one third of gross domestic product (GDP), of which 11 per cent goes to agriculture and one quarter to agricultural business.

The population in rural areas is two-and-a-half times poorer than in urban areas, and much more disadvantaged in terms of the presence of physical and social infrastructure.

Therefore, balanced regional development with regional and local social dialogue is the backbone of the development policy of Serbia, which is enshrined in article 94 of the new Constitution. Following its commitment, the Government of Serbia adopted Serbia's Economic Development Strategy for the period 2006 to 2012, with guidelines for the regional development of the Republic of Serbia and also a National Regional Development Strategy for the period 2007 to 2012.

Social dialogue is a poverty reduction tool and a safeguard for the most vulnerable categories of population as a consequence of economic and structural adjustments. To this end, this policy must ensure an enabling environment for all categories of the population. For Serbia, it means equal employment opportunities and equal and better working conditions for all.

The Republic of Serbia is committed to following the path towards further social development and European integration with continued strengthening of social dialogue at local, regional, national and international levels, and in particular continual advancement of the Social and Economic Council of the Republic of Serbia. It is prepared, on the basis of the experiences of the EU and other developed countries, to set objectives and apply all legal tools to address the challenges, to establish functional relations among relevant social partners by creative solution-finding and through organizational flexibility at all levels, which will consequently enable

Serbia to regain respectable positioning Europe-wide and globally.

Mr MAUNG (*Employer, Myanmar*)

We have been witnessing many changes taking place nowadays in economic and social sectors all over the world. There is no doubt that globalization is contributing to those changes. Although the positive effects of globalization have privileged the developed countries, they have not yet fully benefited the developing countries. My delegation is fully confident that this year's Report of the Director-General, which emphasises poverty reduction, increasing rural employment and skills development, will contribute significantly to advancing the progress of the developing nations.

Employers play an important role in alleviating poverty. The constant operation of factories and workplaces without hindrance is a key factor in promoting good production results and employment opportunities. Higher production and increased investment, the two correlated factors resulting from smooth operation of work, promote employment opportunities for workers. Given these circumstances, workers will have a better chance to be employed in the most appropriate jobs, which will contribute further to improve their individual lives and also to the economy of the country as a whole. However, this is unfortunately not the case in Myanmar, since the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference imposed sanctions on Myanmar in the year 2000. Garment industries in Myanmar were extensively and severely affected, particularly because of the extension of economic sanctions. Many workers were laid off as a result of the decrease in production and the permanent or temporary closing down of a number of factories.

I would like to take this opportunity to make the point that sanctions have had extremely negative consequences for such workers and have put them in a very disadvantageous situation. Because of these sanctions, up to 84,000 Myanmar workers have become jobless and the livelihoods of over 400,000 family members have been jeopardized.

Likewise, after September 2007, further sanctions resulted in the closure of another 14 factories and further layoffs in 70 others. About 6,000 more workers lost their jobs and over 14,000 family dependants suffered. Employers are thus struggling for the survival of their business while employment opportunities for workers are constantly decreasing. This decision to improve sanctions against Myanmar has had negative effects on the investment sector.

Despite all these circumstances, the positive co-operation at the moment between Myanmar and the ILO is known to the employers of all ILO member States, as well as the international community. In its efforts to steadfastly follow the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), my country signed the Supplementary Understanding in February 2008. This extends by one more year the trial period for the Government to resolve complaints of forced labour. This outstanding commitment has paved the way for positive developments in preventing forced labour in Myanmar. I would therefore like, on behalf of the Myanmar Employers' delegation, to take this opportunity to call on the International Labour Conference to review and reconsider the sanctions imposed, taking into consideration the negative

consequences of sanctions affecting employers, workers and other related individuals.

Mr RADIBE (*Worker, Botswana*)

The Botswana Federation of Trade Unions supports and appreciates the subject matter on decent work, by the Director-General, Juan Somavia. This subject is very important for critical debate by the workers, employers, governments and members of the international community from all walks of life. I believe that the ILO will improve and strengthen its supervisory and monitoring instruments and structures for the realization of the Decent Work Agenda at the country level.

The Botswana Federation of Trade Unions' leadership is working hard and diligently to raise awareness with the current Government of the Republic of Botswana. However, the Government of Botswana has been very slow to create a dialogue with the social partners to discuss the implications of the Decent Work Agenda.

The BFTU observes that the Botswana Government is slow to adopt a tripartite approach to the debate, and to establish a national action plan on decent work. I would like to indicate that the protection of workers' rights is essential for the Decent Work Agenda.

In that regard, in Botswana, some employers and employing authorities violate the fundamental human and trade union rights of workers without regard to the statutory provisions in labour legislation. The case in point here is the mass dismissal of 461 members and leaders of the Mineworkers Union in 2004 and subsequent cases of mass dismissal. This is very serious, since Botswana's workers will find themselves prematurely out of work if the Government of Botswana does not monitor, assist and provide statutory awareness to employers.

The labour movement in Botswana believes that the ILO is not giving the case the seriousness it deserves. We strongly believed that this year Botswana was going to appear in the standards. However, we are disappointed that this has not taken place. We hope that, next year Botswana will appear at the Application of Standards Committee.

The public service unions are denied their rights to collective bargaining in Botswana because there are no structures in place, so we advise the ILO to assist and help us as a matter of urgency. We also believe that fair trade has to be on the table for the Decent Work Agenda to be realized. We condemn without reservation the World Bank, the European Union Economic Partnership Agreements and the International Monetary Fund, which are exploitative in their administration and management. They must not interfere with the sovereignty and economic empowerment of the local population. We are saying this economic empowerment is a must. However we see EPAs as a way of disempowering the locals.

The Botswana Federation of Trade Unions supports the eradication of poverty. There was a belief that poverty eradication, would go a long way in making our society just and fair. The time has come to stop talking and take concrete action appropriate to the reality of life in terms of economic empowerment and labour legislation implementation at all levels. The people and workers of the world should unite and build a true family to support the ILO. We appreciate the efforts that the ILO has made in the course of this Conference, where topics like skills,

rural employment, and strengthening ILO capacity have been central to the discussions.

Original Spanish: Mr FOSTIK (Employer, Uruguay)

Having heard more than 100 speakers at this 2008 Assembly, we the employers of Uruguay have noted just how important the ILO is for the international community today, and we believe that it is becoming increasingly important as time goes on.

When it was pointed out that 25 per cent of the nations present have not ratified instruments as essential as Convention No. 87, it was not mentioned that the Global Report refers to ratification of the fundamental Conventions as an initial step to implement the principle of freedom, given that the Declaration states that all Members commit themselves to promoting the principles and not their ratification. It is promotion that really matters.

Our country has historically ratified international Conventions and even more so recently, so we have set an excellent example, but it is very important that we implement the necessary measures at the national level to achieve the final goal of creating an adequate framework in due course and not at a date predetermined by the Government only for it to then cause us to take steps back or to have undesired side effects.

Bearing in mind that our Government delegation stated at this assembly that the options available to employers and workers are clearly not equal, we consider it necessary to point out that the laws of our nation guarantee complete freedom of association, promoting it to the extent that the only redress available is the immediate reinstatement of any worker who is registered with a trade union, even if it concerns a microenterprise with just one employee, without exception. It would be interesting to know how many other nations apply the same treatment.

At the same time, the current regulations of the Ministry of Labour allow workers – if they are affiliated to a union – to seize or occupy an enterprise for which they are working, as a means of asserting their right to strike, for however long as they see fit, and to prevent the employer and other workers from carrying out their work or other means of protest, without regulations being in place to remove them from the premises.

Even today, we have not found within the ILO an international instrument to support this particular national situation which, as was said to the floor this week, would not be converted into law. This should not come about under any circumstance, but in the meantime we have to live with this and this has greatly weakened the tripartite system, even in branches of activity in which it used to be exercised fully.

But, in the face of situations such as those I have described, we have to ask, is it because we lack international standards or a ratification, or are we lacking a law? Perhaps none of these things, but rather more mature relations between the social partners, which ought to achieve mutual confidence and respect, and we must bear in mind that we all lose when there is confrontation.

Ms ACUIL (Government, Sudan)

The Sudanese Government is a relative newcomer to the Conference but I would assure everyone that we hold a keen interest in creating a policy environment that promotes harmonious labour relations

and enables Southern Sudan to rapidly develop and bring about prosperity for all. To do so will enable Southern Sudan to benefit from peace and stability and recover from many years of conflict and under-investment. Thus, I would like to take a few moments to outline some of the main points and issues that we face in keeping the peace and successfully implementing the peace agreement signed in 2005.

The comprehensive peace agreement signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in January 2005 lays the foundation for lasting peace and prosperity for Sudan. The comprehensive peace agreement not only drew to a close Africa's longest running civil war but provided a roadmap for the people of Sudan to pursue peace through greater equality in the use of resources and sustained development. The comprehensive peace agreement contains a framework of wealth and power-sharing to address the root cause of the past conflict, that is the inequality of resource distribution between the centre and other parts of the nation.

The first phase in the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement has been marked by a number of positive developments. Relative peace and stability have been maintained in most of the war-affected areas, although there have been some worrying exceptions, not least the latest conflict in Abyei and the continuing violence and insecurity in Darfur. In the south, the key institutions of the Government, namely the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, have been successfully established and operate well, given that they have all had to develop from scratch in a very short time. This is not to pretend that we do not face problems and shortcomings in matters of governance and operational effectiveness and efficiency, but a solid foundation has been laid.

While considerable progress has been made, the pace of implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement has lagged. A stark indication of this was that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement was obliged to suspend its participation in the Government of National Unity late in 2007 in order to highlight critical delays, most notably on the issues of Abyei, the demarcation of the border, the redeployment of Sudanese armed forces, the lack of transparency in matters of oil production and revenue sharing and preparations for the 2009 elections. Following high-level negotiations, most of these contentious issues were addressed by the national Government and an agreement was reached to enable the SPLM to rejoin the national Government. This year, the national census has been completed, although the results are yet to be published, and progress has been made towards establishing the requisite legal and democratic frameworks for the 2009 elections.

However, there remain very real threats to our hard-won peace, and the continuation of the longstanding and unresolved conflict in Darfur, and most recently the clashes in Abyei, indicate that security is not yet assured.

The Government of Southern Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement are committed to the full implementation of the CPA and the peaceful development of Sudan, but we cannot be expected to possibly accept unjustifiable prevarications and refusal to recognize critical provisions of the comprehensive peace agreement.

The Government of Southern Sudan is highly appreciative of the sustained support given by the international community to the comprehensive peace agreement and its full and fair implementation. We would only urge you to maintain your active involvement and redouble your efforts to facilitate the achievement of an equitable and lasting peace in Sudan.

We are also indebted to many international agencies and individual governments for the support they have given and continue to give to help us provide services to the people of Southern Sudan, reconstruct the infrastructure destroyed by war and create the foundations for a prosperous economy. The International Labour Organization has played an important part in this process by helping my Ministry create a legal framework for private sector employment and labour regulation. This framework will replace the current outmoded and unsuitable national law with one that is conducive to a modern market economy that balances the rights and obligations of the worker and the employee. The ILO has also provided invaluable assistance to the Ministry's programme to rebuild our regional labour offices and their staff capacities. We look forward to a long association with the ILO, whose standards and Conventions are globally renowned and recognized as representing international best practice. This association will go beyond one that looks to gain from ILO financial and technical assistance to one that represents mutual benefit and interaction of ideas.

Lastly, Southern Sudan is at the start of a journey that will bring development, economic progress and increasing prosperity to all its people, and we will learn from others and welcome advice and assistance from organizations such as the ILO, so that we may build an equitable society and a modern and dynamic market-driven economy. The two are not mutually exclusive but require mutual recognition of the different but equal roles of the Government, the employers and the workers. The Government of Southern Sudan is determined, from the outset, to establish a productive and just tripartite arrangement for determining the obligations and rights of both employers and workers. I intend to use this occasion to learn more and listen to the advice of those who have already reached our goals and aspirations.

Mr MOSSI (*Worker, Indonesia*)

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be able to represent the Indonesian Workers' Association here in Geneva on the occasion of this important annual Conference.

This year is an important date in the history of labour relations because it is the 60th anniversary of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). This Convention, established in 1948, represented a very significant victory for workers because it gave them the right to a voice. In the same vein, we have now entered the era of decent work, another milestone in the affirmation and protection of workers' rights and of their security and dignity.

So what is decent work? It is the assurance that a worker can be employed in a job and in a manner that respects his dignity by protecting him against the three "Ds" – dirty, dangerous and degrading work – and ensures his safety at work.

Freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively are representations of industrial democ-

racy, in which industrial relations give a worker freedom to express his rights and interests in the workplace. In the context of industrial relations, decent work should be backed up by freedom of association and collective bargaining with employers – and it also has links with other Conventions.

A worker should have guarantees against unpredictable risks such as accidents, illness, or death, and receive an old-age pension or benefits through employees' social security. Decent work brings impacts that reduce poverty whenever job opportunities as well as company growth are sustainable.

Allow me to mention a couple of current challenges for today and tomorrow in the context of decent work, freedom of association, the exploitation of child workers, migrant workers and human trafficking.

First, decent work, and its related content, is covered in the Decent Work Country Programme for all countries, but especially developing countries. Indonesia, for instance, still needs a steady familiarization programme in order to ensure consistent implementation. There must be empowerment and a growth in job opportunities, as well as the recognition that the impacts of relocation cause job loss or sharp reductions. The tariff quotas set by the WTO are still unfair and unequal in terms of the different conditions imposed on developing countries versus the developed countries. Developing countries experience hardship in promoting and protecting their interests in achieving sustainable development. We know that unemployment figures are up and this makes it very difficult for certain countries to reduce poverty.

Second, as regards freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, both the ILO's and ITUC's fact-finding suggests that implementation could be improved due to the less than optimal action programmes – especially in developing countries, including Indonesia. Cases of interference by the security forces (police), are widespread in industrial disputes. For instance, intimidation and the breaking off of work relations have occurred when workers joined a trade union. In my view, freedom of association falls short of meeting expectations. Socialization should be undertaken as well as the empowerment of inspection authorities.

Third, concerning exploitation of children in the workplace, the views of the ILO and the ITUC on the exploitation of child workers are verified in the developing countries. This has had serious consequences for poverty and the survival of future generations.

Fourth, with respect to migrant workers and trafficking, the trafficking of migrant workers is due essentially to the combined effects of poverty, ignorance, and limited job opportunities. In this regard, Indonesia displays a many negative points. The problems associated with migrants must be resolved seriously. All stakeholders – the central and regional governments, employers, trade unions, labour inspectors and other institutions – should work hand in hand.

Fifth, as regards workers in the informal economy sector, the developing countries usually contribute a high number of workers to the informal economy sectors. These workers can account for as much as 65 per cent of the total labour force and they mostly earn only the minimum wage. Moreover, the informal economy sector is almost without any social security coverage.

I would like to congratulate Ambassador Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO for the Reports placed on the agenda of the Conference and, in particular, the Report of the Director-General, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, which I will mention later during my statement.

I am very pleased to be able to thank the Employer members for having re-elected me as deputy member of the ILO Governing Body. I would also like to congratulate all the members of the Governing Body who have been elected for 2008–11, Employer, Worker and Government members.

I can fully endorse the position of Employers as expressed by our Vice-President on behalf of the members of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), of which the Confederation of Gabonese Employers (CPG) is a member, at the international level.

In our continent, the CPG is a member of the Pan African Employers' Confederation (CPE) and a founder member of the Central African Employers' Union (UNIPACE), at the regional level.

As it is clearly stated in the Report, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, we need to ensure the sustainability of enterprises, to help ensure that private investment, especially by smaller businesses, is at the heart of strategies.

In Gabon, the heads of enterprises welcome the new draft trade law. The CPG is deeply involved in this process.

With regard to enhancing our human capital, we need to look at a digital divide, which must be eliminated, particularly in Africa. The small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly affected by this divide.

The support programme for the implementation of the Declaration, PAMODEC, in keeping with the purely professional objective of the follow-up to the Declaration, is a technical cooperation tool, and we would like to thank the Government of France for providing the necessary funding.

We now have to decide whether those eight years have enabled the countries in question to take on board and understand the relevant standards. We think that we are on the right path.

In Gabon, the seminar aimed at identifying obstacles to the implementation of the relevant Conventions was attended by the provincial directors of the nine provinces of Gabon and of 12 departments and by representatives of the Ministry of Labour sectors, four other Ministries, three employers' organizations and 12 workers' organizations.

PAMODEC II has successfully brought together all the stakeholders of social dialogue.

I would like to highlight one of the pillars of the Declaration, that is, the effective elimination of child labour. The informal sector of Gabon, as in the other PAMODEC countries, used child labour, and it should therefore be strongly recommended that PAMODEC be extended to specifically cover the informal sector. In order to do this, statistical, quantitative, qualitative and social studies should be undertaken. These studies would enable the identification of the genuine stakeholders of what I would call, and this is only my personal opinion, the legal informal economy.

This is why I am very happy to note the following statement by Ms Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, representative of the Director-General, as part of the

work of the Committee on the Application of Standards, made in document C.App/D.2: "For the above reasons, NORMES has decided, with the ILO International Institute for Labour Studies to launch next year a research project to better understand the policies that facilitate the integration of standards in the informal economy".

Last and not least, as far as the African employers' organizations are concerned, I would like to express my sincere encouragement, so that they continue to promote the spirit of openness, by daring to bring about change, concerning the appointment of more women delegates and technical advisers to the International Labour Conference (ILC), as well as concerning the increasingly visible role of women in strategic and decision-making posts in our national employers' organizations, at the level of confederations as well as sectoral trade union groupings and at the Pan African level through the CPE. I consider these comments to be appropriate in view of my role as an Employer delegate at the ILC, as the head of a new SME or as General-Secretary of the Union of Gabonese Importers and Exporters (SIMPEX), which is also a member of the CPG.

In making these comments concerning women who head enterprises, I am simply acting as their spokesperson, as we all are when saying that it is by working together that our human resources and our intellect will help to set up a class of sustainable legal enterprises, regardless of their scale or their speciality, in a sustainable private sector, which is profitable, enabling us to have decent and productive work in Africa.

To be competitive, all entrepreneurs must make investments in order to make profits, while assuring decent work for their human resources.

As to the ILO Decent Work Agenda, I would like to congratulate the ILO Training Centre for its 2008 training catalogue, and its excellent idea of bringing together training on the four aspects of decent work. The CPG has considered how to best raise awareness of this catalogue and has decided to place it on its website.

The Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) in Geneva and Turin will no doubt benefit from the strengthening of capacities for employers' programmes, which could also benefit SMEs. We would like to congratulate, encourage and thank ACT/EMP and the IOE for the relevance and quality of their services to members.

(The speaker continues in English.)

I will conclude my statement by paraphrasing a saying that I discovered for the first time as it was used by His Excellency Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission during an interview I heard in the media, and I quote: "When someone shows you the moon with their finger, do not look at the finger, but look at the moon."

Mr GAUTAM (Worker, Nepal)

The Nepalese people, who have already struggled for democracy many times in the past, were once more compelled to fight for sustainable democracy against the autocratic monarchy in April 2006, on the basis of the historic 12-point pact between seven political parties and the Maoist party, which had been fighting the people's war for a decade. Throughout the nation, the people's movement created a hurricane for 19 days which wobbled the

foundations of the 250 year old autocratic monarchy. Subsequently, an interim Government managed the country until a new Government was elected, following which the nation experienced various ups and downs during the two-year transitional phase. The long-awaited constituent assembly election was ultimately held on 10 April 2008. The people's enthusiastic participation in the election and the victory of the democratic Republican political parties further ensured the end of the monarchy and the country was declared a republic. Now the nation has entered a new era through the great victory of the Nepali people.

After the Maoists, who had been fighting the people's war for over a decade, took part in the peace process, the nation held the historic constituent assembly election through which the communist party of Nepal (the Maoists) established itself as the largest party in the nation. However, the republican parties gained victory by overwhelming majority. In this context, the principal objective is now to develop a culture of agreement and joint collaboration among the republican political parties in order to lead the peace process to a successful conclusion, to form a new democratic constitution and to build a new Nepal.

All the workers throughout the nation played a major role in bringing about the historic change through the people's movement of 2006. As a result, Nepalese trade unions have been able successfully to include such trade union issues as human rights, trade union rights, social security and so on in the interim Constitution. This is an appropriate tribute to the great contribution of the working class, which raised a joint and emphatic voice for absolute political change. It has now become one of the major responsibilities of the State to guarantee human rights, trade union rights, decent work, social security and the socio-political restructuring of Nepalese society. The State can pay true homage to the workers only when it ensures workers' rights and interests in the new Constitution. Clearly, the key focus of the new Government is to form a pro-people inclusive constitution. Considering that the overwhelming majority of the people are workers, a pro-worker constitution is needed. It is also apparent that it is the workers who will have to play a major role in the future to build a new politico-economic structure, to establish sustainable peace by leading the peace process to a successful conclusion, and to bring about an economic revolution in the nation. Therefore, all labour issues concerned with workers' rights and interests, such as trade union rights, human rights, social security, employment security, collective bargaining, etc., should be included in the section on fundamental rights in the new constitution, so as to transform the socio-economic life of workers and to promote the level of the working class. We – all the trade union organizations of Nepal – are committed to including workers' issues in the Constitution in order to pressurize the state Parliament regarding implementation and to promote sustainable industrial peace in the nation.

We must recall here the formation of the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) on 30 November 2007 with a view to strengthening our approach for a stronger common labour agenda.

Although Nepalese trade unions are influenced by various political ideologies, we are committed to raising a single voice for workers' rights and inter-

ests. We would further like to consolidate our joint attempts and make them action-oriented. In this context, we would cordially like to appeal to the trade union organizations, to our well-wishers and supporters, and to all national and international organizations and communities.

We are very thankful to the International Labour Organization and to all national and international workers' organizations and trade unions for their continued support and solidarity in the historic people's movement of 2006, the sustainable peace process, and the ensuring of workers' rights and interests.

Original French: The PRESIDENT

The Government of Mexico has requested the right of reply to the intervention made by Mr Malentacchi, representative of the International Metalworkers' Federation.

Replies must be brief, not longer than two minutes, formulated in parliamentary language and limited to the points raised in the intervention in question without opening up a new discussion.

The possibility of replying to that reply will not be granted.

Original Spanish: Mr MORALES GAUZIN (Government, Mexico)

The Government of Mexico would like to use this right of reply to clear up some of the points raised this afternoon by Mr Marcello Malentacchi, General Secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation.

First, the Mexican Government has taken full responsibility for and has given priority to recovering the bodies of the miners that remain trapped in the Pasta de Conchos mine after the tragic accident of 19 February 2006. It has done as much as is technically and humanly possible.

At the request of the families of the victims, a panel of national and international experts in coal mining security was established to prepare an official report on the conditions in the mine and to determine on the basis of the report, whether to continue or suspend efforts to recover the bodies. As a result, it was decided that the conditions were suitable to allow the recovery work to continue.

It is worth pointing out that the Government of Mexico invited the International Metalworkers' Federation to appoint an expert for this panel. Although Mr Manuel Royo was entrusted with this task, finally Mr Royo decided not to participate in the work of the panel and my Government so far has not been informed as to why he withdrew.

The Mexican Government has paid due attention to the family members of the victims with regard to their legitimate requests and the timely payment of the compensation to which they were entitled. The relatives of 55 of the 65 miners who died have placed their trust in the Office of the Federal Defender of Workers' Rights, a government body, to represent them freely, directly and without intermediaries with regard to the claims they have lodged in court relating to the rights and compensation to which they are entitled.

In accordance with Mexican law, the responsible authorities have intervened to determine the responsibilities of the individual enterprises and public officials involved in the accident of the Pasta de Conchos mine and the appropriate sanctions. The result is that five public officials were dismissed

and prohibited from occupying any further public office. The criminal investigation is still continuing, so as to determine the full responsibilities of all involved.

Second, in relation to the death of worker Reinaldo Hernández González in Nacozari, Sonora following a clash between groups of miners and ex-miners, the Government of Mexico regrets the untimely death of such a person and repeats that it has continued to make every effort to carry out investigations to determine where responsibilities lie in this unfortunate event and to apply the relevant sanctions.

Third, in strict compliance with the principle of freedom of association, the Labour Ministry registered the new Board of the National Union of Miners, Metalworkers and other workers and has always respected the Board's decisions. In April 2007, in fulfilment of the relevant court decision, this registration was in fact the withdrawn and the union rights were placed upon a shoulders of Napoleón Gómez Urrútia, in his capacity as General Secretary of the above mentioned union. It is worth mentioning that complaints have been presented by workers in the union itself against the General Secretary, Napoleón Gómez Urrútia, because of the controversy over the use of the resources of a trust fund which was set up in November 1988. The competent legal authorities have processed to the complaints in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Fourth, it is not true that the Government has confiscated funds in any way illegally. A number of labour-related complaints were lodged in 2006 and 2007 by about 6,500 miners belonging to the union. As a result, it is necessary to return a proportional

part of the 55 million dollars which constitute the capital of the abovementioned mining fund.

The result of the audit sponsored by the International Metalworkers' Federation supposedly demonstrates that the charges of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds against Napoleón Gómez Urrútia are baseless. Napoleón Gómez Urrútia is not exonerated of mismanagement, however, as pointed out in the August 2007 report, which is based on the review carried out by Horwath Berney Audit SA. Furthermore, the report has no legal validity.

Fifth, the Government of Mexico does not use the security forces, certainly no the Mexican army to break strikes. When the security forces are used, it is in response to a request for assistance by the legal authorities and they act in a dissuasive and not a repressive manner so as to avoid clashes between groups of workers. The security forces in this type of operation are therefore not armed and their only purpose is to guarantee the freedom to work.

To conclude, this demonstrates that Mr Marcello Malentacchi lied when he made the comments he made this afternoon. The Government of Mexico spoke about this with the General Secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation personally at a meeting which was attended by a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security at the beginning of 2007, in which due recognition was given to the work of that department, and through a number of letters. These matters have been fully attended to by the Mexican Government, in accordance with the provisions of our national legislation.

(The Conference adjourned at 8.40 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Page

Fourteenth sitting

World Day against Child Labour ceremony.....	1
<i>Speakers:</i> The Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr Lupi, Mr Seim, Ms Eastman, Mr Cerescu	
Second report of the Credentials Committee: Submission and noting, and approval of the Committee's proposals	6
<i>Speaker:</i> Mr Kirigua (<i>President and Reporter</i>)	
Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General: Discussion (<i>cont.</i>)	7
<i>Speakers:</i> Ms Cotman, Mr Varga, Mr Gonzáles, Mr Seneviratne, Mr Hosek, Mr Masemene, Mr Brandner, Mr Spidla, Mr Fernandes Salgueiro, Mr Ngatjizeko, Mr Guiro, Mr Szirmai, Ms Kühn, Mr Rodriguez, Mr Morales Cartaya, Mr Walters, Mr Karim	

Fifteenth sitting

Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General: Discussion (<i>cont.</i>)	21
<i>Speakers:</i> Mr Syed Mohamud, Mr Jiménez Aguilar, Mr Navarro Fernández, Mr Asatryan, Mr Gomes Proença, Mr Azouz, Mr Espinal Escobar, Mr Doz, Ms Taliwaku, Mr Gómez Esguerra, Mr Edström, Ms Pillai, Mr Farrugia, Mr Palma Caicedo, Mr Qarqeen, Mr Konkolewsky, Mr Malentacchi, Mr Kumlu, Mr Museka, Ms Mafarja, Ms Menkerios, Mr Pandey, Mr Yardley, Ms Sebudandi, Mr Ahmed, Mr Saparbayev, Mr Waldorff, Mr Al-Gadrie, Mr Kabambe, Mr Fajardo Pereira, Mr Kearney, Mr Parra Rojas, Mr Almahfood, Mr Macdonald, Mr Quiróz Hernández, Mr Raheen, Mr Ahmed, Ms Opechowska, Mr Fazio, Mr Motamedi, Mr Al-Darraj, Mr Mainali, Mr Singh, Mr Nguyen, Mr Darvishi, Ms Lakicevic Stojacic, Mr Maung, Mr Radibe, Mr Fostik, Ms Acuil, Mr Mossi, Ms Awassi Atsimadja, Mr Gautam, Mr Morales Gauzin	