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101st Session, Geneva, May–June 2012

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Thursday, 7 June 2012, 10.10 a.m.

Presidents: Mr Alburquerque de Castro and Mr Matthey

FIRST REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE: SUBMISSION AND NOTING

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

Our first task this morning is the submission of the first report of the Credentials Committee, which is contained in *Provisional Record* No. 4B and was adopted on 1 June, so it does not reflect the changes in delegations after that date. These changes will be reflected in the next report.

The report determines the quorum for our work. The Conference is called upon to take note of the report.

(The report is noted.)

FIRST REPORT OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE: SUBMISSION, DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

The second item on the agenda is the first report of the Selection Committee, which is contained in *Provisional Record* No. 2-3. I call on Mr Shahmir, the Chairperson of the Committee, to present the report.

*Mr SHAHMIR (Government, Islamic Republic of Iran;
Chairperson of the Selection Committee)*

As Chairperson of the Selection Committee, it is my great honour to present to you the Committee's first report, which was published on Saturday of last week in *Provisional Record* No. 2-3.

As you know, the Selection Committee is responsible for the organization of the Conference's work, and the report in *Provisional Record* No. 2-3 sets out a number of decisions taken by the Committee that concern the day-to-day functioning of the committees and of the plenary. I should add that the Committee, after its meeting, delegates its authority to its Officers – the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons – and we have met at regular intervals and will continue to meet for the duration of the Conference to make sure everything goes very smoothly.

The Committee decided that the discussion of the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General would begin on Wednesday, 6 June at 10 a.m., and that the list of speakers would close on Tuesday, 5 June at 6 p.m.

The Committee also endorsed the tentative plan of work for the Conference, which is reproduced in Appendix I of the report. This may of course be

modified by the Officers of the Committee, as needed during our work.

As you are aware, at its first sitting, the Conference decided that the additional item placed on its agenda by the March session of the Governing Body, that is to say, the review of measures previously adopted by the Conference to secure compliance by Myanmar with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, should be considered by the Selection Committee. The Committee decided then to set up a subcommittee to consider this item, with membership open to all members of the Selection Committee. It further decided that the subcommittee would elect its own Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons from each of the three groups, and that the outcome of the work of the subcommittee, including any resolution that it may adopt, would be presented to the Conference directly as a report of the Selection Committee, without reconvening the Selection Committee solely for the purpose of approving the report.

I have the great honour of advising you that the subcommittee met yesterday, Wednesday, 6 June, in the morning. It elected Mr Greg Vines, Government, Australia, as its Chairperson, Mr Daniel Funes de Rioja, Employer, Argentina, and Mr Luc Cortebeeck, Worker, Belgium, as its Vice-Chairpersons, and held a discussion on the issues before it. The outcome of this discussion will be submitted to the next sitting of the subcommittee, which will be held on Monday, 11 June. The report of the subcommittee's work will be presented to the Conference as the second report of the Selection Committee on Wednesday, 13 June, in the afternoon.

In order to facilitate the debate held by the Committee for the Recurrent Discussion on Fundamental Principles and Rights, the Selection Committee also authorized in advance the transmission to that Committee of any information from or outcome adopted by the Committee on the Application of Standards on its consideration of the General Survey on the fundamental Conventions. This decision was taken with a view to following up on the Governing Body decision to align the General Survey drawn up on the basis of article 19 reports with the recurrent discussion items.

The Selection Committee was also asked to consider a draft proposal to amend article 18 of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference, in order to align it with the package adopted by the Governing Body at its 310th Session so as to improve its functioning, as provided under

the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

The Committee invited the Conference to adopt the proposed amendment, which you will see is reproduced in Appendix II.

The Committee reviewed a number of requests for representation in Conference committees by international non-governmental organizations, and approved the lists that had been submitted to it by the Governing Body and it also confirmed a range of principles aimed at facilitating the work of the Conference.

Finally, the Selection Committee also appointed a Conference Drafting Committee, constituted as set out in section 11 of the report.

Those are the matters which I felt should be reported to the Conference. I therefore do not intend to prolong this presentation beyond thanking the members of the Committee and my fellow Officers for their dedication and consensual spirit which always prevailed in the Selection Committee discussion, and with which they have approached our work. With that, I commend the first report of the Selection Committee to the Conference.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference agrees with the decisions adopted by the Selection Committee on behalf of the Conference, as set out in the first report, and that it approves the report, paragraphs 1 to 13, and Appendices I and III?

(The report – paragraphs 1 to 13 – and Appendices I and III are approved.)

Lastly, the Conference is to adopt the amendment proposed to article 18 of its Standing Orders, as set out in Appendix II of the report. If there are no objections, may I take it that this amendment is adopted?

(The amendment is adopted.)

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

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

We can now continue with the general discussion on the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General's Report.

Mr KIM (*Employer, Republic of Korea*)

On behalf of the Republic of Korea Employers, I would like to congratulate Mr Albuquerque de Castro on his election as President of the International Labour Conference.

First of all, I would like to extend my deep appreciation to Mr Juan Somavia for his efforts and dedication in successfully guiding the ILO for the past 13 years.

Since he was elected, Mr Somavia has introduced and promoted the core values of the ILO, including decent work, fair globalization and social justice. He has also contributed greatly to raising the status of the ILO through cooperation with other international organizations.

Unfortunately, however, the world employment situation has not improved despite these efforts.

The ILO predicted a 6.1 per cent unemployment rate for this year, which will not decrease until 2016. The youth unemployment rate this year is

forecast to be 12.7 per cent, virtually unchanged since 2009. Just to return to pre-crisis levels, 21 million more jobs are needed.

Unemployment should be the top priority of the ILO and addressed first and foremost by the tripartite members.

The best social protection is employment. Jobs should no longer be seen as the preserve of employment policies. Jobs are the best welfare policy, enabling vulnerable people to sustain themselves with earned incomes.

Productive welfare policies that can boost economic growth through job creation while helping to attain an appropriate level of social welfare are more desirable than simple welfare policies providing financial support. Supporting those who are willing to work is the best welfare we can provide.

Second, the excessive welfare programmes currently blamed for the economic crisis in Europe often result in an increase of sovereign debt, which impairs the economy and the capacity for job creation.

Excessive welfare can act as a catalyst for conflict between generations, as the exorbitant cost of current welfare programmes are passed on to the next generation.

In this regard, we need to review our welfare policies comprehensively, taking fiscal soundness into account as we seek to create jobs for more people.

I would also like to express my sincere congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General-elect of the ILO, and would like to make some suggestions for his future endeavours for the ILO.

First, it is enterprises that play the leading role in job creation. Financial resources for social security come in large part from business.

After all, the unemployment issue cannot be solved without strengthening the competitiveness of enterprises, the main engines of economic growth.

It is necessary to create an environment conducive to doing business, and therefore the future activities of the ILO should be redirected along this path, by restructuring the Organization to strengthen the work of employment and the business sector.

Second, in establishing a social protection floor, we should consider economic conditions and fiscal capabilities. I fully agree with the need to protect the poor from social risk and assist them in becoming self-reliant through social protection foundations.

At the same time, however, this should be designed in a way that enables low-income earners to leave poverty behind and gain independence through incentives to join the labour market.

Third, employment should be the top policy priority. When the ILO establishes a new policy or plans a technical cooperation project, an assessment of the employment impact should be conducted in advance to determine realistically how much the policy or project will actually help to create jobs.

Last, but not least, while it is important for a new Director-General to begin new programmes, what is more important is to examine the existing policies and programmes from a new perspective.

Policies that expand the opportunities for people to find productive work and earn a decent livelihood necessarily involve the promotion of rights at work.

The ILO will change under a new Director-General, but changes must be made for the purpose of development, not simply for the sake of change. This development will be to job creation.

Mr BELBASE (*Minister for Labour and Employment, Nepal*)

We deeply appreciate the contribution of Mr Juan Somavia as the Director-General of the ILO. I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the next Director-General of the Organization. I wish him every success in fulfilling his important responsibilities.

My delegation believes that productive employment and decent work, economic growth and social security are naturally interlinked. Increased production leads to higher growth and growth should lead to development. This allows for a higher level of investment in social and human development. We should promote economic growth in a way that ensures an equitable distribution of its benefits to all at all levels. Against this backdrop, Nepal considers the ongoing discussion on the development of our new ILO Recommendation on the social protection floor as a positive step.

The ongoing adverse effects of multiple yet mutually reinforcing economic and financial crises, as well as the food and energy crisis, combined with the adverse impact of climate change, have posed a threat to the minimal gains made so far in the realization of full and productive employment and decent work around the world, including in least developed countries. Poor countries have not been able to afford appropriate social security cover for their people and this tends to push many more into the poverty trap. For the countries of origin of migrant workers like Nepal, a favourable and stable external environment, including in destination countries, remains critical.

Nepal is committed to promote decent employment and ensure equal opportunity in employment. Every year 400,000 young men and women enter the job market. Ensuring productive and decent employment for them has always been a major challenge for us.

Nepal has initiated and put in place a legal institutional framework for a contribution-based social security plan for workers in the formal sector. We have launched a horizontal social protection system by providing cash transfers for senior citizens and other specific groups such as indigenous people, single women and targeted children. With limited resources at our disposal and huge development needs, it has, however, been difficult for us to put in place a comprehensive social security system.

Nepal feels that a vibrant and responsible private sector and a capable and effective state are complementary to each other. As we uphold the principal of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and social development, issues like inclusion and social responsibilities become important for every actor in the economy.

Foreign employment has become a significant source of employment for the Nepalese workforce. Nepal is actively working to develop safe, productive and decent foreign employment. Our efforts are also directed toward concluding bilateral agreements with major destination countries. I would like to call upon the ILO and all members to work together to ensure that migrant workers enjoy their basic rights.

Before I conclude, I would like to reaffirm Nepal's strong support for the work of the ILO. We are of the view that the level of development and the socio-economic conditions of countries, in particular of the least developed countries, need to be taken

into account while devising new standards. This will be in line with the spirit of social justice and humanity as enshrined in the ILO Constitution.

Mr SLADOWSKI (*Employer, Poland*)

It is a privilege for me to address this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference in my own name and on behalf of the Association of Employers of Poland.

I would like to express my satisfaction that this Conference is focusing its activity on a wide spectrum of important issues: the strategic objectives of fundamental principles and rights at work, the social protection floors as well as the youth employment crisis in labour markets.

Nevertheless, we paid great attention to the particularly important Report of the Director-General, *ILO programme implementation 2010–11* addressed to the delegates, all actors of the real economy, attending the ILO's 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

The Report is detailed, analytical and comprises extensive information and level of results on the ILO's involvement in implementing and achieving strategic targets and outcomes set by the Organization for 2010 and 2011 – which have been difficult years for the world of work, due to the current global economic situation. We welcome the comments of the Director-General on the challenges and implications for the future and we stress the world of work and we stress the importance of the ILO, the international organization with a mandate that focuses on the world of work and on tripartism as the best way of seeking fair solutions and social agreements.

We fully share the expressed concerns because of the global crisis and the conclusions especially for Europe placed in the Director-General's Report. Related to the results of the implementation of ILO objectives in member States which are contained in the fundamental documents of the Decent Work Agenda, the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Global Jobs Pact.

In the context of the Report of the Director-General, and his assessment of the crisis, I am glad to say that Poland has done well in terms of economic growth in relation to other European countries. It is confirmed by 4.3 per cent gross GDP last year and 3.5 per cent gross in the first quarter of this year. This is an exceptionally good Polish position compared to the recession in the eurozone. However, we are afraid of turbulence in our market if the economic situation of Greece does not stabilize.

We have read with interest the Report entitled *The youth employment crisis: Time for action*. It serves as an alarm for the ILO in this matter. The Report shows that never in the history of research in the world, have there been so many young unemployed. In relation to my country, Poland, I would like to say that the unemployment rate is over 13 per cent generally, but unemployment among young Poles is now reaching a record, almost 30 per cent. More than one third of the unemployed are graduates from high schools. The employers of Poland think that the education system is one of the main problems in this matter. Young people in certain fields of study do not have the qualifications and marketable skills. We hope that this should be better in the near future.

First, the Government created the legal framework to form programmes of study by employers,

together with universities and ordered the training of the necessary specialists.

Second, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy will begin piloting a new programme with the task of labour market activation for young people which is a special financial bonus for six months for employers who hire young employees, vouchers for worker training and subsidies for renting a flat.

Finally, I want to tell you about the situation on bilateral and tripartite dialogue in Poland. In our opinion social dialogue limps; it has different faces. Industry dialogue, two-sided at the enterprise level, is still better than at the central level in the tripartite commission between government and social partners. We want to continue and develop a dialogue – especially now during an economic downturn and the risk of the second wave of crisis, the disruption in the eurozone. We propose new forms of dialogue for employees – generally speaking – representatives, trade unions, work councils, non-governmental organizations and also employees who are not members.

In conclusion, I want to stress that all of the discussions at this Conference, as well as any conclusions and recommendations that come out of it, will serve as important arguments for all delegations, and will be taken into account in any future work on fundamental principles and rights at work, the social protection floor, and youth employment.

Ms DIMAPILIS-BALDOZ (Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippines)

I pay my highest respect to the Director-General, Juan Somavia, for his distinguished stewardship of the ILO for the past 13 years. Decent work is a living testament to his visionary leadership for which he will long be remembered. I congratulate Mr Guy Ryder, the incoming Director-General, and assure him of our wholehearted support.

The Philippine Government, buoyed by strong business confidence and the sustained trust of its people, continues to implement the tripartite-crafted Labor and Employment Plan on Decent Work with encouraging results towards achieving inclusive growth. Last year we surpassed the employment target of at least 1 million with 3.7 per cent GDP growth. Economic growth almost doubled to 6.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2012 and we expect that growth will be sustained and will translate into quality jobs, which will reduce significantly the unemployed, the majority of whom are the youth. We support employment generation in the private sector through more efficient job placement programmes, massive community-based employment infrastructure projects, extensive entrepreneurial activities, skills training for work scholarships, special employment programmes for students and out-of-school youth and convergent initiatives to address the jobs and skills mismatch. The recognition of youth unemployment is a global concern and its inclusion on the agenda of this Conference is therefore timely and important to us. The tripartite endorsement of the promotion of decent work for our seafarers and domestic workers both locally and overseas received the support of President Benigno S. Aquino III with the ratification of the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185), the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

For women workers, more employment opportunities are open to them because of the repeal of the law prohibiting night work. Protection for migrant workers continues to receive particular attention through bilateral agreements and through the Abu Dhabi Dialogue among countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and countries of origin in Asia. The Philippines will chair the Dialogue for the next two years.

We gave highest priority to our compliance with Convention No. 87. There is heightened awareness of respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining even in economic processing zones. The roles of the police, security personnel and the military are now clearly defined for maximum coordination in case of involvement in a labour dispute. The National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council efficiently monitors cases; the legislative agenda is fast moving and capacity building continues. We submit timely reports and we are encouraged that the ILO supervisory bodies have noted substantial progress in our compliance. We acknowledge the assistance of the ILO, including the recently approved technical cooperation programme, supported by the United States Government, to sustain the progress we have made. We established the legal framework for subcontracting and curtailed schemes to circumvent labour standards, safety and health regulations, labour rights and security of tenure. Following the ILO technical audit on labour standards enforcement, we combined our regulatory system with educational and technical advisory services to promote voluntary compliance. Instead of inspectors we will now deploy compliance officers to strengthen the labour standards compliance system.

For minimum wage earners, in addition to the guaranteed minimum wage as a safety net for new entrants, the two-tier wage system will afford added income through productivity-based wage increases. For vulnerable and informal workers, social protection is being enhanced through prevention, protection and promotion using single-window convergence and community-driven strategies.

Our reforms to speed up the fair settlement of labour cases and the effective use of alternative dispute resolution serve well the cause of just and stable industrial peace. As a complement, industry tripartite councils have adopted voluntary codes of work practices. The policy is to strengthen labour dispute prevention and settlement as the norm and government intervention as the exception. These and other reforms will be covered in the amendments to the Labour Code now undergoing tripartite review. The reforms could not have borne positive results without the support of our social partners and the ILO in forging consensus through a robust system of tripartism and social dialogue.

Finally, as an ASEAN member State, the Philippines welcomes the recently concluded national election in Myanmar and notes with interest the reforms being undertaken. The Philippines stands ready to assist Myanmar through the ILO technical cooperation programme.

Mr KYI (Union Minister, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Myanmar)

It gives me great honour and pleasure to address this important gathering of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that under your able guidance, wisdom and leader-

ship, our deliberations will bring about a successful outcome.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of South Sudan as the 184th Member of the ILO in our midst.

First of all, I would like to thank the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for his comprehensive and highly useful Report, *ILO programme implementation 2010–11*, submitted to this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. The Report reflects the highest organizational results and outcomes achieved for the member countries within these two years under the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15. It provides us with a clear understanding on the ILO's reach, policy and actions during the biennium. It also provides us with information and thoughts for governments to help shape their own domestic policies to enhance the interests of workers.

As we are in a knowledge-led area, I am particularly pleased to note that the ILO's outreach programmes are reaching hundreds and thousands of students, women and workers.

Allow me to briefly inform you of what Myanmar has achieved in the interest of our workers and in cooperation with the ILO.

On the legislation front, Myanmar is able to achieve tangible progress in a short timespan. The Ward or Village Tract Administration Law, with its unambiguous definition and provisions for criminalization and sufficient penalization, constitutes a strong legal basis for elimination of forced labour. The adoption and implementation of the Labour Organizations Law enables our workers and employers to form their own organizations freely in the country. Another newly enacted law is the Settlement of Labour Disputes Law. This Law shall undoubtedly consolidate the social dialogue under the tripartite system. And the new Social Security Law under discussion in the Parliament provides more comprehensive social protection for all workers, including a superannuation scheme and social security housing project.

Rules to implement these laws are in place. In putting these laws into practice, their full implementation and strict enforcement will be observed.

Elimination of forced labour is one of the priorities of the Government. A comprehensive plan of action to this end is finalized. We are confident that with the highest-level political commitment made by the President, we shall reach this goal earlier than the targeted year of 2015.

In 1998, the Commission of Inquiry adopted recommendations which relate to compliance with the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). We earnestly believe that Myanmar is adequately compliant with these recommendations. Legislative, administrative and judiciary measures taken by the Government should be duly recognized and appropriately reciprocated.

On our part, Myanmar will continue and intensify its cooperation with the ILO in many areas. Advocacy is required for all stakeholders in a new environment. Job creation and income generation are also needed in the country. Myanmar needs the international community's support and assistance for its people.

Myanmar's political, economic and social reform process centering on the people's interest is gathering momentum. They represent the will of the people. They are concrete and irreversible. Myanmar is

now in a new era. As such, Myanmar should be seen from a new perspective and encouraged.

Myanmar asked for lifting both resolutions adopted at the 87th and 88th Sessions of the International Labour Conference as a whole. This is the only way to lift resolutions in a principled, respectable and logical manner for the people of Myanmar. Any failure to lift them will dampen their hope for the future. The UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, in his speech to the joint session of Myanmar's Parliament, urged the international community "to go even further in lifting, suspending or easing trade restrictions and other sanctions". He made this point both as a recognition of and as an encouragement for the democratization and reform process in Myanmar.

If we pay the price for something, we have the right to get it. Myanmar has paid the price through the concrete measures. In return, she expects the International Labour Conference to lift the resolutions in whole, as a package, not in a piecemeal approach.

Original French: Mr BEKALE (Worker, Gabon)

The group of workers of Gabon are pleased to participate once again in the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, side by side with brothers and sisters who have come from the four corners of the earth. I extend to each member of this august body my fraternal greetings. Allow me also to congratulate on behalf of the group that I am representing here the Director-General and the President of the Governing Body for their exhaustive and clear reports which they have kindly presented to us. It is incumbent upon each of us here at the Conference to make good use of them.

Among the items on the agenda this year, the elaboration of an autonomous Recommendation on the Social Protection Floor and the youth employment crisis are, in many respects, of genuine interest for workers. The reason for this is quite simple: the Social Protection Floor aims at guaranteeing a basket of essential goods, services and transfers at the national level to ensure that people do not go hungry, suffer from diseases they cannot treat, remain without education, are forced to drink dirty water, or that they live without housing.

This is founded on the current principle that people who have access to a number of basic goods, services and transfers manage to rise out of poverty and their precarious situation and are able to participate in their country's growth.

Accordingly, my country, Gabon, created the National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund to assist all Gabonese who are economically vulnerable. Today, free medical care is a reality; but the process to expand this to workers in the private sector is slow in coming – a situation that we all regret.

Youth unemployment has become the new cancer which is metastasizing and poisoning the very fabric of society. It is for this reason that we subscribe to the effort to make youth employment a priority.

These two subjects are complementary and a prerequisite for any new domestic policies.

Filled with optimism by the choice of these two themes, I would hope that the discussions enable us to decide upon a standard and pragmatic plan of action, which is necessary for the effective implementation of a social security system. Let us not lose sight of the fact that this system has the advantage of covering all strata of the population of every

nation and provides a guarantee of national solidarity.

It is with these considerations in mind that I espouse, here and now, the adoption of a strong recommendation on these subjects. By committing ourselves to this goal, we shall prove once again to the world to what extent the ILO is endeavouring to respond to the aspirations of all peoples.

Like other countries in the sub-Saharan, the Government, workers' and employers' organizations in Gabon have signed a national charter for social dialogue, constituting a true platform from which all stakeholders will be able to freely express their views with the sole goal of implementing the recommendations of the ILO. It is important here to highlight, however, that this national council for social dialogue, which we so crave, is taking time to materialize.

Many regulations have been adopted to allow each man and each woman to obtain a productive and decent job exercised with liberty, equity, security and dignity, in order to reduce the chasm between the expectations of workers, with respect to their working conditions, and the real situation they face.

It is here that the Global Jobs Pact and the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) are becoming indispensable and strategic components to allow us, on the one hand, to find sustainable solutions to the economic and financial crisis afflicting our countries, and, on the other hand, to respond to the aspirations of the many young people looking for a job.

There is a saying that "As long as there is life, there is hope". Hope is exactly what we have to give to all workers carrying out their professions in dangerous conditions, to the unemployed who have lost their dignity and to all those who languish in poverty.

Before concluding, allow me to thank a man, Juan Somavia, who has spared no efforts in supporting workers throughout his stewardship of our Organization.

Director-General, the workers will always be grateful to you. I would like lastly to congratulate our brother, Guy Ryder, on his election to the position of Director-General of the ILO.

Yes, brother, our hopes are high but we are convinced that you will rise to meet their challenge. The working world will accompany you.

Mr SATHASIVAM (*Minister of Human Resources, Malaysia*)

I would like to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder for being elected as the new Director-General of the ILO. On behalf of the Government of Malaysia, I would like to offer my Government's commitment to assist and support the new Director-General in all his efforts to face the challenges of the global economic uncertainty and to promote decent work and fair labour standards in the third world and developing member States. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for his exemplary and selfless contributions to the ILO during his term of office, particularly in the field of the promotion of decent work.

Through tripartite deliberations the ILO has developed labour standards which have been codified and structured as ILO Conventions. The spirit and substance of the Conventions are beyond debate. All of us who believe in the spirit of humanity, filled with all its love and compassion, cannot dis-

agree with the Convention. The problem is often with the small print and the sub-clauses and subsections. Many nations that believe in the spirit and substance of the Conventions find it hard to fulfil the stringent requirements of the small print. We should ask ourselves whether the original spirit and greater objectives should be allowed to suffer because of an obsession with the small print. This noble Organization should nurture, guide and support the developing member States in fulfilling their quest for globalized labour standards.

As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), I echo the strong request from my colleague from Myanmar just now for the support of the global community in the social, economic and political evolution of Myanmar.

Work without social protection is akin to a ship without sails; it subjects workers to the unprotected perils of economic uncertainty and illness and denies them the right to age with dignity. Malaysia has a well-stabilized tradition of social protection through our Employees Provident Fund, social security scheme and public sector pension scheme. We have taken the historic step in 2012 of institutionalizing a minimum wage. We are in the midst of finalizing an act of Parliament to define a statutory minimum retirement age for the private sector. Injured workers are supported through a systematic return to work programme to allow them to be employed and to be productive. A state-of-the-art rehabilitation centre is being developed by the Social Security Organization to optimize the process of medical and vocational rehabilitation and the subsequent assimilation of the worker into the workforce.

The Government of Malaysia has in the last four years embarked on a major programme to transform our administrative policies, with more focus and well-designed programmes to modernize and transform our economy to a high-income economy based on the principles of inclusiveness and sustainability. These programmes were designed to achieve a gross national income of US\$310 billion (1 trillion Malaysian ringgit) and create 3.3 million jobs by 2020. The emphasis is on ensuring that 60 per cent of these jobs will be based on high skills and knowledge. To achieve this, radical changes are being made to our educational system with greater emphasis given to vocational training and technical education. Our Government has invested approximately US\$620 million in skills training annually. With all this, we hope to maintain our current unemployment rate of 3.2 per cent, or improve upon it. The task of increasing the employability of youth is an important national agenda.

Recently, our Government has made the decision to mainstream vocational training in our national educational system. Exposure to vocational skills will be started very early in the secondary school system and continued throughout the high school to ensure that these students have a high degree of employability. Employment opportunities to date have never been a major issue in Malaysia. The challenges, however, have been the matching of specific skills of some graduates and the over-dependence on migrant labour to fulfil the requirements of labour-intensive industries. As a long-term response to these challenges, our Government has chartered a new economic model implemented through the identification of 12 new national key economic areas which will assist in transforming the Malaysian economy, which was based on low

skills and high labour, to an economy which will be based on high skills and low labour. These changes will form the basis in propelling Malaysia to becoming a developed high-income nation by 2020.

In conclusion, let us, as members of the greater global community, put aside our differences, overcome discriminations and join our strengths together to face the challenges of the uncertain global economy and ensure a better future for the present and future citizens of the world.

*Original Portuguese: Ms COSTA DOS RAMOS PINHEIRO
(Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Sao Tome and Principe)*

We read with great interest this year's Report by the Director-General. It covers issues related to social protection and the youth employment crisis. It is of particular relevance because it addresses, at the international level, current problems and the outlook for member States of the ILO. The Government of Sao Tome and Principe is strongly committed to the social protection of its people and that is why we are working on the implementation of an effective and efficient social protection strategy which will make a greater contribution to the economy of the country and the protection of tomorrow's human capital.

In Sao Tome and Principe, there are two systems providing social benefits; one is a contributory system and the other is non-contributory. One specific social protection programme is the basic social service provided mainly by the State in the areas of education, health care and services for young people. A number of different programmes make up the network of social protection in Sao Tome and Principe, and are based on a number of different legal instruments and policies in the areas of health, education and social security. Access to basic social services is adequate with nearly 100 per cent of children attending primary schools but access to secondary education is limited, with only 46.3 per cent of girls and 53.7 per cent of boys finishing secondary education. For the age group of 0–6 years there are pre-school education programmes as well as crèches. It is estimated that nearly 30 per cent of children in this age group are covered. More than 40,000 hot meals are served in schools every day, and a school health-care programme is in place. The vaccination coverage rate is 93 per cent.

The National Social Security Institute is an autonomous institution which provides benefits to nearly 5,000 pensioners and faces challenges such as the lack of secure investment opportunities for the investment of contributors' funds so that a reliable return on contributions can be ensured. Another challenge is in the area of systems for identification and oversight, and mechanisms and programmes for increasing the client base and finding modern technologies to reduce transaction costs. The National Social Security Institute has 5,000 pensioners and most, that is about 45 per cent of the elderly in the country, are retired. The current number of contributors is 4,808 out of a total population of 16,000. In the non-contributory system, the State provides social benefits for the following extremely vulnerable persons: 5,000 elderly persons with no other means of support, and 1,300 low-income single mothers with large families, who are granted access to the microcredit programme.

The youth employment crisis is another major concern of the state of Sao Tome and Principe. In this context, the Government has helped young en-

trepreneurs by granting access to microcredit so that they can create jobs, thereby reducing unemployment among this sector of the population and enabling them to live with dignity. The Government considers it a priority, in the light of its excellent relationship with the ILO, to pay its outstanding contributions. Indeed, in spite of the difficulties the country is facing, we have decided to pay a significant share of our debt to the Organization and we will do everything in our power to do the same in the coming years.

I would like to conclude by wishing this Conference every success. Indeed, this is an important time in the life of our Organization.

Mr WALLABA JAYATISSA LIYANAGE (Government, Sri Lanka)

At the outset please allow me, on behalf of the Group of Fifteen (G15), to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder as the new Director-General of the ILO and express our gratitude for the work done by Mr Somavia.

The G15 is a summit level group of developing countries for South–South cooperation and North–South dialogue comprising 17 member States, with the promotion of international engagement to foster development through cooperation in all its facets as one of its founding objectives. The group has repeatedly emphasized, during the last decade, the following issues regarding labour and employment.

We express concern regarding the growing problem of unemployment in most developing countries that has been exacerbated by the recent financial crisis and affects the socio-economic fabric of societies. Out of the nearly 2 billion unemployed people in the world, over 1.5 billion are in the South, where the associated problems of unemployment and underemployment are also prevalent. At a time of dwindling government tax revenues, as a result of austerity measures, and demands of stabilization policies, social safety nets and other appropriate measures should be strengthened in order to address rising unemployment with massive poverty and income fluctuation. In this context, we recognize the importance of both foreign direct investment and domestic investment in increasing employment and generating income, including support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

We express concern about the adverse impact of the economic crisis on unemployment with millions losing their jobs, constituting an immediate setback to the efforts of developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. We note with satisfaction, however, the action taken by the ILO in this regard and, in particular, the Global Jobs Pact aimed at promoting job-intensive recovery from the present crisis, drawing on its Decent Work Agenda.

We will cooperate with all social partners in the ILO tripartite framework to achieve these objectives and put employment and social protection at the heart of recovery policies. We believe the ILO should further analyse the social and economic impact of the global economic and financial crisis on the informal sector of the economies of developing countries, particularly on vulnerable sectors, and should undertake further studies on the impact of the crisis on the various programmes for poverty alleviation in concerned countries through its Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction.

Regarding the next United Nations General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held in New York in 2013, we understand that migrant workers bring economic benefits to countries of origin, transit and destination, and urge all countries to design appropriate policies that ensure regular movement of migrant workers and to facilitate the transfer of their remittances to countries of origin, as well as ensure the protection of their rights and dignity in the host country.

Mr SARANGI (*Government, India*)

At the outset, I would like to compliment the Director-General for facilitating the initiation of a serious deliberation on the theme of fundamental principles and rights at work at the current International Labour Conference. I feel that during the post-global financial crisis period, as the global economy struggles to recover, there is a need to re-examine certain issues revolving around the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, while reiterating our commitment to respect, promote and realize freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

The pursuit of equality and non-discrimination has been widely accepted not only as a formal principle but also as a binding human right. In 2003, the first Global Report by the ILO on discrimination entitled *Time for equality at work* stressed that the workplace, be it a factory, an office, a farm or the street, was a strategic entry point to free society from discrimination.

The global financial crisis of 2008 has adversely affected the security of jobs and led to increasing discrimination in the workplace. One of the most evident outcomes of this discrimination is its adverse impact on the wages and working conditions of those groups who are discriminated against in the labour market. This form of discrimination has been found to affect vulnerable sections and women in most countries. Hence, India recognizes the urgent need to emphasize that the fundamental principles and rights at work of workers need to be protected at all costs.

On the ratification of ILO Conventions, and particularly the core Conventions, we feel that the conventional approach of judging the status of standard implementation in member States only through the prism of ratifications and complaint-based mechanisms of reporting should give way to more proactive mechanisms entailing the comprehensive and holistic review of the entire process of implementation of these rights.

We need to introspect on why we have not been able to achieve universal ratification of core Conventions – so much so that in some of the core Conventions, about 50 per cent of the global population remains uncovered. In cases where the grounds for non-ratification of core Conventions are genuine, the ILO should work out ways and means to incorporate flexibilities to ensure ratification progressively. Non-conformity of national legislation and practice with the provisions of fundamental Conventions; political, economic and social situations; rigidity of certain ILO instruments; and lengthy and cumbersome ratification procedures are some of the

genuine problems being faced by the countries that have not ratified all the core Conventions. We need to devise ways and means to facilitate universal coverage of core Conventions.

India also feels that we may give more focus and resources for capacity building on the promotion of fundamental ILO Conventions and rights at work through technical cooperation projects, legal assistance and technical advisory services. International cooperation, including South–South cooperation, can play a very constructive and proactive role in our endeavour towards universal ratification of core ILO Conventions. Since most of the underdeveloped and developing countries do not have the luxury of the resources and appropriate technical and legal expertise essential for upholding rights at work, we may consider helping them through the transfer of resources and appropriate technical expertise from the developed countries to the developing countries.

India would also like to encourage initiatives by the ILO on providing technical cooperation and technical assistance that is promotional in nature and takes into account the diversities and socio-economic conditions among the constituents of the ILO.

We believe that respect for fundamental rights goes far beyond ratification and we are more concerned with the implementation of these principles at ground level. As for India, we remain committed to the values enshrined and embodied in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We encourage country-specific, promotional activities by the ILO to achieve universal ratification of the fundamental Conventions in a flexible time frame.

Mr NGATJIZEKO (*Representative, African Union*)

I am pleased to address you in my capacity as Chair of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the African Union on key issues for the African region in the field of labour, employment and social protection.

First, Africa wishes to raise again the urgency of reforming the ILO. The basic values of social justice and democracy on which the ILO is founded and which continue to define the ILO's approach to the world of work require today that each sovereign member State must have an equal voice in the governance of the Organization. However, the current governance structure of the ILO, particularly the composition of the Governing Body, is at odds with these principles.

More than 90 years after the ILO was founded, the two regions with the highest number of sovereign States, namely Africa and Latin America, continue to have unequal, and indeed the lowest, representation in the Governing Body. In 1986, virtually all the Members of the ILO, including the States presently occupying positions of chief industrial importance, adopted a far-reaching reform to democratize ILO governance. Among other things, the 1986 constitutional amendment would expand the Governing Body, allocate regional representation on an equitable basis, abolish seats of chief industrial importance and provide for the election of the Director-General by member States at the International Labour Conference.

The time has come for the ILO to embrace the full participation of all its Members in order to fashion a new and equitable social and economic order. On

behalf of Africa, I now appeal to those member States that have not yet done so to contribute to the emergence of this new order by ratifying the 1986 Constitutional Amendments.

The thematic topics on the agenda of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference concerning youth employment and the social protection floor have been central preoccupations of the African Union for many years. In 2004, an Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation. This policy instrument provides the African framework for tackling issues of youth and women's employment, particularly in the informal economy and rural sector, as well as for supporting access of the poor and vulnerable workers to social protection schemes.

The elements of the social protection floor were captured in the African Union's landmark Social Policy Framework for Africa, adopted in Windhoek in 2008. These policies were reinforced recently at the African Union Heads of State Summit in Malabo in July 2011 by the adoption of a Social Protection Plan for the Informal Economy and Rural Workers, known as SPIREWORK, and by the Declaration on Creating Employment for Youth Empowerment and Development. However, the implementation of these progressive policies needs to be strengthened.

We are confident that the adoption by the Conference of the Recommendation on the social protection floor and the outcome of the discussion on youth employment will generate greater synergies and cooperation between the ILO and the African Union and its member States.

We note that many of the complementary programmes of the ILO and the African Union are embodied in the African regional and national Decent Work Country Programmes. We note that, following the 12th African Regional Meeting of the ILO, the Governing Body resolved in November 2011 that the Office should intensify its efforts to formulate strategies for resource mobilization in support of the implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes in Africa.

We would encourage the ILO to go a step further, to specifically recognize and commit itself to participate in mobilizing support for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Plan of Action and the activities of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the African Union, which is the only tripartite body of the African Union.

Mr BATERIKI (*Minister for Labour and Human Resource Development, Kiribati*)

I would like to congratulate the President on his election and present Kiribati's current progress on its Decent Work Country Programme.

Kiribati has been a Member of the ILO for 12 years and I am proud to inform the Conference that the Government of Kiribati and its social partners have worked together in advancing labour matters through the tripartite advisory forum. The outcome of the tripartite advisory forum has been the establishment of the Decent Work Country Programme which contains development priorities.

Labour law review is one of the priorities of our decent work programme. The Government of Kiribati, with its social partners, have worked progres-

sively on the areas of priorities under the labour law review.

The first achievement under the labour law review is the positive commitment shown towards adopting the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Bill. The Government of Kiribati, after consultation with its social partners, has agreed to work towards adopting the OSH Bill.

Another area under the labour law review is the ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006). The ratification of this Convention is an important step forward for Kiribati in improving seafarers' working conditions in the maritime industry. Our Marine Training Centre is continuously supplying internationally qualified seafarers to work on board German merchant ships.

While noting this, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of New Zealand for its ongoing and generous assistance in upgrading and modernizing our Marine Training Centre. I would also like to thank other ratifying States for their commitment to the MLC, 2006, in improving seafarers' working conditions at an international level.

The fishing industry is another vital sector that Kiribati is relying on for employment opportunities. Qualified fishermen are graduating every year from the Kiribati Fisheries Training Centre, from which they are recruited to man fishing vessels in Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

Recently, in April this year, with the technical assistance of the ILO Suva (Fiji) Office, we have had the opportunity to introduce the Work in Fishing Convention to members of Parliament. The Government of Kiribati is now aiming to improve the working conditions of fishermen by aligning its policies and regulations with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

Another important area in our DWCP is offshore employment. The Government of Kiribati is now focusing on offshore employment for its growing youth population. Kiribati feels privileged to be able to send its unskilled workers to New Zealand and Australia under the seasonal employment schemes.

In addition, the Government of Kiribati is now committed to searching for other overseas employment opportunities that are available for skilled labourers. To achieve this, my Ministry, thanks to the generosity of the Australian Government, is now embarking on a major TVET Sector Strengthening Programme (TVETSSP). The aim of the programme is to enhance the training delivery and capacity strengthening of our Kiribati Institute of Technology to deliver Australian qualification standards.

The programme is also providing my Ministry with capacity-building possibilities. On that note, Kiribati would like to thank the Government of Australia for its invaluable assistance.

Labour migration is, above all, an important strategy which will allow Kiribati to address the emerging crisis of a rise in sea levels and its effects, as predicted by scientists. To facilitate dignified migration once the crisis comes into effect, the Government of Kiribati has focused strongly on providing its youth with internationally recognized qualifications so that they will have the chance to obtain employment abroad and contribute economically to the host country.

My Ministry also has signed a cooperation agreement with Fiji's labour ministry and this coop-

eration will allow our countries to assist each other in labour-related matters. In conclusion, I wish to thank the ILO for providing ongoing support to Kiribati. In my capacity as their new Minister of Labour, I look forward to continue working with the ILO to achieve the remaining priority target areas under the Kiribati Decent Work Country Programme.

Original Arabic: Mr GHOSN (Worker, Lebanon)

The report entitled *Social protection floors for social justice and a fair globalization* submitted to this session of the International Labour Conference deals with the most significant issues of our time. Social protection is the basis of any political, economic and social system grounded in social justice and the principles that inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 as well as ILO and Arab Labour Organization (ALO) Conventions on the minimum level of social security, as a means of guaranteeing social protection, the prevention of disease, poverty, deprivation and ignorance and providing the means to live in dignity through decent work and a fair wage.

Wages which are too low place workers below the poverty line and force them to accept degrading working conditions with no protection or job security. This leads to unemployment and poverty, which are a threat to peace and social stability and turn the poor and unemployed into potential time bombs suffering from discouragement, social exclusion, a sense of injustice, defeat and persecution and repressed feelings which can lead to extremism. This is the origin of demands for the right to work, social justice and the fight against corruption. This is why the Arab peoples went into the streets to demand political and economic reform and even the overthrow of despotic regimes that ignored the demands of the people.

Social protection and job creation are urgent demands that all Arab governments must heed because these are the cornerstones of social justice, which can only become a reality if people have the freedom necessary for democracy to be established and to clear the way for oppressed peoples to express their suffering.

One of the causes of the winds of change and peaceful protest currently buffeting the Arab world is the absence of sustainable development and social justice.

The economic policies of a number of Arab States have been dictated by globalization. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and some of their programmes are not in step with social and human norms and are remote from the realities of Arab societies, their economies, or indeed the needs and interests of the various social classes. This has added to the already huge economic, social, cultural, intellectual and ecological challenges faced by our societies.

Unemployment rates have risen, as have poverty and inflation. Malnutrition and a lack of self-sufficiency have also risen. Medical coverage is in retreat and education standards are dropping. This is because States do not shoulder their responsibilities in the areas of social protection and sustainable development, do not manage often minimal social protection systems, and have no radical solutions available for these problems.

The State has lost a large part of its role as a social partner capable of controlling unbridled capital-

ism and free market economics. It has been content to watch from afar as unstable markets are prey to bribery and corruption, leaving markets flooded with consumer products that tighten the noose on productive sectors. This also encourages multinational investment which competes with domestic SMEs, causing job losses and increasing unemployment, in particular youth unemployment.

The economic model which most of our Arab States have adopted in line with the demands of the IMF and World Bank have failed. Our leaders must now shoulder their responsibilities and address the consequences and social repercussions of these economic policies by developing new social and economic strategies to achieve sustainable development and social justice and eliminate unemployment, reduce poverty, end marginalization, and halt the slide in purchasing power as a result of falling salaries or loss of income owing to unemployment, disease, disability or old age. The relationship between social protection and social justice is meaningless unless it is accompanied by sustainable and balanced economic development, along with social development based on equal access to jobs across all social categories, particularly women and young people. The struggle for social protection and jobs was the driving force behind the popular uprisings in Arab countries, and it will not stop until social justice, freedom and democracy become a reality.

We must nevertheless be wary and prevent "creative anarchy" from infiltrating our societies in the guise of social justice, freedom and democracy. It aims to divide our peoples and dislocate our societies until we are nothing more than scattered tribes, sects and communities locked in perpetual conflict. By then, we will have lost our way and gone astray.

Mgr TOMASI (Apostolic Nuncio, the Holy See)

The delegation of the Holy See joins previous speakers and expresses its appreciation to Director-General, Juan Somavia, as he concludes his mandate for his precious service and his able leadership and extends congratulations to the new Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder. We look forward to a continued collaboration as the International Labour Organization addresses work and its impact on the economy and society in the best interest of every human person and for the just progress of every country.

The financial and economic crisis has generated a widespread sense of frustration as the aspiration for decent work appears to many people totally unreachable. In fact, half of the world's workers, more than a billion and a half persons, hold on to a vulnerable job. A quick recovery does not seem realistic, a long period of stagnation risks causing more unemployment and social instability. It is safe to say that in recent years several of the paradigms that we were accustomed to are no longer valid and should be reassessed.

The first paradigm is related to what constitutes the engine of growth of the world economy. During the last 25 years more than half of the world's economic growth has been contributed by the advanced economies while the emerging market's share has been around 40 per cent. During the 2008–09 crisis, on the other hand, emerging markets contributed almost 90 per cent of the world's growth and served as growth engines. The high growth of some emerging economies during the last decade has allowed the lifting of several million people out of poverty.

It has been an unprecedented step towards poverty reduction, but in too many developing countries growth is not happening.

The second paradigm that has been challenged by the crisis is the assumption of a one-size-fits-all policy as a recipe for growth. The experience of some of the BRICs economies shows that it is possible to consistently grow at high rates by following unconventional policies.

The Holy See on several occasions and in different forums has stressed that the effective idea needed to implement true development is centred on the human person and it is by putting the human person in the centre that growth and development strategies can be inclusive and sustainable.

Several important consequences follow from this premise. First of all, development needs to be employment-oriented. During the last decade the world economy has not been able to create sufficient employment opportunities. In particular, the current rates reverse an earlier favourable trend. Young people are first out and last in during times of economic recession. Youth unemployment and underemployment impose heavy social and economic costs. Too many young people are employed in informal work while those in formal work are subjected to insecure employment conditions and to the constant pressure of subcontracting which brings lower wages and lack of protection in the area of social security, preventing many from leading a decent life.

Work is more than a job. It implies exertion and fatigue to produce and achieve good results, but also the ability to transform reality and fulfil a personal vocation. Thus, work expresses and increases man's dignity. There is a practical advantage as well in this approach: the subjective personal dimension in work affects the actual objective result in all activities but especially in services, in research and technological innovation. There is, in those economic activities that promote knowledge and true wealth creation, human and social development.

A second consequence deals with the social protection, a right of all to social security, and to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family. Trade union organizations experience greater difficulty in carrying out their task of representing the interest of workers, partly because governments for reasons of economic utility at times limit the freedom or the negotiating capacity of labour unions.

The mobility of labour associated with a climate of deregulation is an important phenomenon with certain positive aspects. It can stimulate wealth production and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, uncertainty over working conditions caused by mobility and deregulation, when it becomes endemic, tends to create new forms of psychological instability.

In conclusion, the path forward to an effective recovery presupposes a new vision and strategic investments to provide employment and to sustaining enterprises. Priority given to work shows that the economy remains at the service of men and society within an ethical horizon that guarantees its proper role. Confidence becomes possible again as well as a sense of solidarity that embraces the victims of the crisis first but extends to society at large. The primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is the human person in his or her integrity. Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and

social life. Good decisions are necessary in order to move toward a post-crisis phase of globalization of the economy and of work. But only a corresponding ethical interaction of consciences in minds will give rise to integral development where the human person, at the centre of labour relations, journeys with hope toward a better future.

Original Arabic: Mr SOUHAIL (Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Morocco)

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to deliver the statement of the Kingdom of Morocco at this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like, in my personal capacity and on behalf of the delegation of my country, to congratulate the President of this Conference for the trust placed in him, and wish him every success in the deliberations of this Conference.

I would also like to congratulate Mr Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, for the excellent preparation of this important annual meeting.

On the same occasion, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General of the International Labour Office. I wish him every success in the fulfilment of his new duties.

This 101st Session of the International Labour Conference is taking place against the international backdrop of an economic and financial crisis which has dire consequences for working conditions as well as for social stability. Against this backdrop, peoples in the Arab region have risen to claim their rights, in an unprecedented manner, in an attempt to take their destinies in their own hands, so as to exercise their rights and freedoms in the cultural, economic, political and social arenas.

This session is especially significant, special importance as reflected in its agenda, as it highlights the importance of adopting an autonomous Recommendation on the social protection floor as a flexible standard mechanism, offering guidance in building and developing social protection systems, in addition to the importance of the subject of youth unemployment, and the difficulties encountered in integrating this group in the labour market, and the problematic issue of providing suitable training for development and employment.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to speak of the Report of the Director-General, *ILO programme implementation 2010–11*, especially in relation to the application of the four strategic objectives of decent work through: (i) increasing job opportunities for men and women; (ii) promoting social protection and its extension to all persons; (iii) promoting the principle of tripartism, and social dialogue; and (iv) promoting the application of international standards and fundamental rights at work.

Based on our conviction that democracy is the optimum path to society's development, and to widening the participation of citizens, a committee on the review of the Constitution was set up in July 2011, which was adopted by the Moroccan people, at an historical juncture, in which all the forces in society participated: civil, cultural, legal and political, as well as trade unions.

This review also offered a unique opportunity to undertake institutional and legislative reforms which sought in particular to increase collective and individual freedoms; to reiterate equality between

men and women, in addition to promoting economic and social rights (the right to treatment, medical care, social protection, employment, education, training and decent housing) and the rights related to the role and freedom of the social partners.

To consolidate this trend, the Government's programme, which was approved by Morocco's Parliament, sought to adopt public policies which translate the above aims into practice, by ensuring fair access to the key services, thus strengthening solidarity and social justice, the concepts of decent work, and equal opportunity between male and female citizens.

Thus, in the area of employment promotion, the Government endeavoured to develop voluntary programmes for job recovery; to improve and rationalize the labour market; to strengthen the institutional framework for employment policy, whilst providing the means to increase the effectiveness systems promoting self-employment; and to seek to develop such policies after periodically updating them so as to respond to the needs of the unemployed, especially unemployed youth.

In order to adapt the best training systems to integration in the labour market, work is currently under way so as to prepare an integrated strategy for the development and effectiveness of the vocational training system. We shall also continue with the development of social protection by improving the services offered, and widening its scope so as to include new social categories in addition to all workers. Furthermore, in March 2012, the medical care system for persons in need became operational as well, and measures were taken to operationalize the system of unemployment benefits for the 8.5 million unemployed in the forthcoming weeks.

In the context of bringing our national legislation into conformity with international labour standards, our country ratified the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), while the Rural Workers Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), and the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), are in the process of ratification, after the Government's approval. We are also considering the ratification of a set of additional international Conventions in the social sphere and in the 1986 Constitutional Amendment.

In conclusion, we must mention the Palestinian people, who are suffering from unfair social and economic conditions as a result of the unjust siege imposed on them. Allow me to take this opportunity to call upon the international community to act urgently so as to put an end to these inhumane conditions and the suffering of the Palestinian people, so that they might establish their independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds as the capital.

Original French: Ms KASSIM (Government, Comoros)

On behalf of the Government of the Union of Comoros, I thank the ILO for having given me the opportunity to speak to this august assembly in relation to the Report of the Director-General. I would like to pay a wholehearted tribute to Mr Juan Somavia for his tireless efforts and his unyielding work in support of our Organization. My country is very grateful for his work at the helm of our Organization, and we are deeply sorry to see him leave. We wish him a great deal of success for the future. We will always remember Director-General Juan Somavia for his peerless contribution to the

ILO. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General-elect, Guy Ryder, and wish him every success in his new functions. We trust in his commitment and ability to reinforce existing achievements and to promote the ILO's efficacy and credibility.

In many respects, the Director-General's Report makes edifying reading for our Organization and for our countries, and it shows the progress made over the biennium in the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda. The results obtained have improved the ILO's standing around the world and brought significant changes to our countries in terms of social justice and decent work.

Comoros has ratified the ILO's fundamental Conventions and other technical Conventions. Nevertheless, there is now a pressing need to apply those Conventions faithfully with a view to guaranteeing access to social justice and decent work.

We are also convinced that youth unemployment is a major challenge today and in the future. If we fail to act we leave the world at risk of going backwards and of endless street protests. According to many specialists, the consequences of youth violence in looking for work will be worse than those of armed conflict. That is why we are committed, more than ever, to the Global Jobs Pact. The risk of unrest is still very high in my country owing to 60 per cent youth unemployment, with many young people having no vocational skills. It is therefore clear that the ILO's instruments and policies are favourable to our country's development. But the population has a number of justified expectations, which are increasingly numerous and require cooperation and solidarity at the national and international levels.

In Comoros we believe that our main challenge is to transform the fate of the many young people around the world who are unemployed into a driver for growth, economic progress and social peace. In order to find a solution to this problem, my country has adopted an institutional tool and a number of programmes to build peace in the country, based on the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Decent Work Country Programme, as well as the Government's commitments to various international instruments, which place employment at the heart of its development and poverty reduction programmes. With the ILO's support, my country has developed a number of programmes and instruments in this regard. The key measure is the adoption of our Decent Work Country Programme, signed in 2010.

We also have a peace-building fund and a joint support project for peace-building through employment promotion for youth and women, initiated by the ILO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), with the following objectives: to support the implementation of employment management and guidance structures; promote youth employability through apprenticeship and traineeship to develop skills; develop youth entrepreneurship and facilitate young people's access to credit; and promote urban and rural employment for local development, with emphasis on a labour-intensive approach.

Another measure that has been adopted, with the honourable patronage of our Head of State, Mr Ikililou Dhoinine, and the ILO, is the Youth Employment Fair, held in February 2012, in the context of which a strategic and operational framework was developed for consultation and to seek solutions to employment problems. It was also an

opportunity for the Government to undertake to establish a National Youth Employment Fund. Finally, an employment office will also be established soon, with financing from the Government of Japan, which will be a showcase for the realization of the global Decent Work Agenda in the country.

All of these measures will allow us to improve the employment and youth employment situation. They will not only contribute to youth employment and dignity, but will also help us to achieve the goals of the Organization.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the gratitude of Comoros to the ILO for its technical and financial assistance, which has been unceasing in recent times, with a view to making decent work and social justice a priority objective. We call upon all development partners and countries dedicated to the situation of young children, who are the future of the world, to join and support us in implementing all of these programmes.

Mr BASNET (*Worker, Nepal*)

I am honoured to speak today. I bring greetings from the workers of Nepal and their great admiration for the ILO.

The ILO has always stood by our side in our struggle for democracy and human rights. I remember those difficult days, right after 1 February 2005, when the then King imposed emergency and suspended all fundamental rights. Political parties, including trade unions, were banned. I had to go underground, but it was the international solidarity of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the ILO that gave us hope. I want to record our gratitude to the Director-General of the ILO, Mr Somavia, for his untiring support and guidance in those dark days.

We succeeded in 2006 in restoring democracy with the heroic struggle of the Nepalese people. We not only restored democracy but we established a republic democracy. The monarchy had to depart. The Nepalese people's desire to choose the political system of their choice led to the election of a Constituent Assembly (CA) to draft a new Constitution; however, the experience of the CA is not that pleasant. We also concluded the peace process, ending decade-long violent insurgency.

I feel sad to inform you that Nepal's Constituent Assembly, which was the hope of all Nepalese, failed to produce a new Constitution even on extended time. The CA could not settle issues of federalism and state restructuring, as there were differences among the parties on basic elements of federalism and whether it should be based on single ethnicity or multi-ethnicity. The CA's constitutional time expired on 27 May 2012 and now we have a constitutional vacuum, as the CA also served as the national legislature. Political deadlock has emerged. The most dangerous fall-out is that politics have been discredited, as political parties could not fulfil their commitment to the people.

The issue of who will reinvent politics and restore its primacy is the current challenge that we face in Nepal. I feel this is a sad situation; however, we trade unions should unite to work together to restore the rule of law and constitutional democracy. We all know that only through the rule of law and democracy are our rights realized. Thus our immediate challenge in Nepal is to work on reinventing politics and democracy.

The past four years have been a period of challenges and opportunities. The transition to democracy in the shadow of violence is always riddled with uncertainty. However, our commitment to peaceful change and process is finally showing signs of change. People and forces that cherished violent methods and tactics are realizing that one can achieve more from peaceful, democratic means than from violent means. Changes brought by peaceful, democratic means and persuasions are more stable and durable.

Despite the major shift in Nepalese politics and society, newer forms of challenges are emerging which require newer, subtler understanding and analysis. Nepal today faces challenges of identity politics, which is a shift that we trade unions have to understand. Every claim in society is coming from a cultural identity perspective where the secular working class identity is in the shadow.

The economic growth propelled by contemporary globalization has created more inequality than ever before. This inequality has a strong social dimension which has further complicated and propelled economic inequality. Challenges that are ahead of us are: How do we create more jobs for ensuring growth? But the question is: How do we ensure growth, since the present model of growth is based on the excessive exploitation of natural resources? Do we have enough natural resources to gain the growth that we require? This means we have to go through a paradigm shift – a shift away from the excessive exploitation of natural resources to sustain natural resources for a longer term. We need to create decent jobs in areas of social services. This shift also requires more participatory forms of governance at every level, from government to corporate. Workers' participation in representation is a must in these times of shifts and crises. We in Nepal, through the Joint Trade Union Centre where all major trade unions are represented, are working together with social partners to ensure our meaningful participation. We want to contribute in addressing questions of inequality through participation in this decision-making process.

Another challenge that we face in Nepal, and elsewhere in South Asia, is the question of migrant workers. The paradox this phenomenon poses has helped many countries to reduce poverty, but our national economies are becoming more dependent on remittances and growth elsewhere. Migration for work has created social dislocation in much of our society, where the working population is out of the country, leaving vulnerable aged and young members of the population at home. Huge migration out of the country has also created political apathy, which is not desirable for any democratic society.

In this context, I call upon the ILO to have a South Asian tripartite meeting on migrant workers in the near future to debate and discuss addressing this emerging issue.

Mr PEIRIS (*Employer, Sri Lanka*)

I am indeed happy and proud to represent the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Sri Lanka, which is one of the oldest employer's organizations in Asia, having been in existence for the last 84 years.

Freedom of association and collective bargaining are fundamental standards that we not only respect, but actively engage in, on behalf of employers. We are happy that the 2012 session of the International Labour Conference has given due recognition to

these standards through the recurrent discussion on the strategic objectives of fundamental principles and rights at work.

In this context, it is extremely important that we closely examine the provisions of the two relevant Conventions and ascertain whether they are accurately perceived and interpreted in the light of what is happening in the world of work today. The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), clearly recognizes the right of workers to choose an organization of their choice. The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), clearly recognizes voluntary collective bargaining between employers and workers. Therefore, it is important for us to recognize the fundamental principles that underpin the two Conventions when we sit down to formulate a strategy to promote these standards in the world of work today.

We cannot ignore the interests of the most important people: workers and employers. Over the years it has been clearly demonstrated that over-regulation on these standards has only resulted in violations. Therefore, it is time for us to be introspective and address the reasons, rather than looking at impractical regulations which will not help in finding a solution.

Employers from our part of the world do business in harsh and inflexible conditions. They are subject to both internal and external pressures. Employers in Sri Lanka have not been an exception. However, notwithstanding this, Sri Lankan employers in the private sector have shown resilience and have driven the Sri Lankan economy forward to where it is today. Moreover, they have done so giving due respect and recognition to the fundamental labour standards. We are glad that the discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work is being held this year, to understand better member States' diverse realities and needs with respect to these standards.

At the beginning of its second century, it is time for the ILO to become more stakeholder-focused and less preoccupied with promoting bland concepts that could be far away from the practical world of work. The ILO needs to be sensitive to the peculiarities and vulnerabilities of its member States. We cannot have uniform yardsticks on universal standards. We need to respect our nations' diversity and cultures and consider each country on the basis of its practical realities and economic capacities in the context of promoting these standards.

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon, on behalf of employers in Sri Lanka, continues to require a more enabling environment for business. This does not mean a hire and fire regime; it does mean an environment which will allow flexible working hours, fewer restrictions on the employment of women and more attention to productivity and quality. In other words, what we require is an environment that strikes a balance between efficiency and equity.

I wish to thank the ILO for all the support and assistance it has given to employers, especially during times of crisis. Employers have been resilient. In moving to the future, which is unknown to all of us, the ILO needs to help all social partners to develop strategic resilience. This involves having the capacity to change before the case for change becomes desperately obvious. Let us, the social partners, unite to build these capacities. We would thereby

ensure future generations a fair and a more productive world of work.

Original Arabic: Mr KARA (Worker, Israel)

I would also like to congratulate the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General of the ILO for their reports on the issues submitted for consideration. I would also like to thank them for their work on building the capacity of the ILO in the promotion of the decent work programme to meet the challenges of globalization.

I would also like to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General.

It is true that labour and the value of labour have been in steady retreat as a result of globalization and the increasing use of high technologies. Similarly, the concepts of trade unionism, trade unions and labour rights need to be defended at a time when the world economy is changing. The forces of capitalism are frantically pushing for evermore flexibility in the labour market, financial transactions and production lines, at the expense of the trade union movement and workers in all four corners of the world.

Despite this, I am convinced that at this moment we are seeing a redefinition of the relationship between labour and capital and of the role of governments. The best example of this trend is the protest movement that has swept across the continents, and the renewed agreements between trade unions and workers' organizations, on one side, and capital and its institutions on the other.

Allow me to mention my country, Israel, as an example of this global development which is taking root with every passing day. In Israel, 2011 was a year of many different developments, in particular, in the workers' movement. I could cite the new labour agreements intended to put an end to the retreat of the place of labour, workers and workers' rights. I would like to mention some of these agreements, not in order to praise them but as an example and in a spirit of sharing of experience and expertise.

First, the Histadrut forum, as a general trade union of workers, reached an agreement with the Government and employers. The agreement became an Act which broadened the power to set a minimum wage in order to control abuse and guarantee a decent wage for every worker.

Second, an agreement was reached to increase the minimum wage above the level specified in current legislation. The minimum wage is currently 1,200 dollars per month.

Third, the Government adopted legislation to extend employers' obligations in different sectors so that they provide social guarantees to workers, especially when it comes to paying for retirement pensions and health insurance coverage for all workers.

Fourth, the Histadrut trade union has now managed to secure a labour agreement on the rights of domestic workers through human resources bodies. Ten per cent of workers in Israel fall into this category. This is a relatively high rate in comparison with Europe. For the first time, we were able to reach an agreement that guarantees wage increases and the protection of the social rights of those workers, and brings their status closer to that of other workers. Most importantly, the Government has committed itself to integrating some of these workers into the public sector.

Fifth, we have widened the civil, trade union and governmental system for the monitoring and enforcement of labour legislation and compliance with standards and fundamental principles in the workplace.

I would also like to mention some developments which have been beneficial to the workers' movement and workers' rights. In the case of marginalized categories, the State of Israel aspires to guarantee the well-being of all its citizens without discrimination of any kind, and to improve the standard of living for all.

Accordingly, priority has been given to improving services responsible for the employment of people in these categories, in particular Arab citizens, by eliminating barriers to employment, increasing job opportunities for these workers and supporting the education system.

As far as Palestinian workers are concerned, a plan has been put in place to give preferential treatment to Palestinian workers over foreign workers in the recruitment of foreign workers. I am proud to assure you that the Histadrut trade union is committed to respecting union agreements with Palestinian society, transferring the budgets stemming from those agreements, and providing advice and helping workers, as needed, in their interaction with the courts. The Histadrut trade union thus treats Palestinian workers in the same way as other Israeli citizens in order to strengthen ties and make peace an achievable dream.

As far as foreign labour is concerned, the Histadrut trade union has taken an oft-reiterated principled stand under which we are in solidarity with foreign workers because they are both a trade union and a human rights cause. We call for this cause to be considered in the light of principles that make it possible to strike a fair balance between hiring criteria and the domestic labour market.

We have always been opposed to the presence of unauthorized workers. We do, of course, understand the situations in the countries of origin of these workers and we are required to protect the rights of workers within Israel, whether they are citizens or foreigners. That does not mean that we do not consider the plight of unauthorized workers to be a humanitarian cause of the first order and that their rights must be protected in accordance with international charters and treaties.

Last year in Israel there was a large protest movement with demands that strengthened the achievements of the labour sector. This protest movement was a response to the decline of social rights based on a comprehensive system of labour rights acting as a safety net for the middle classes.

This movement has also confirmed the attachment of the middle classes to historic achievements, namely, a state of prosperity for the working class and the middle classes.

The movement also revealed an increased awareness in Israel and elsewhere of current realities and of the need to face up to the merciless pressures of privatization and the undivided rule of profit, the law that governs the market. This protest movement, Mr President, reflects the desire of societies to reverse the current trend towards a retreat of the position of labour and workers and move in a historic new direction for our time in which governments are made to step in to contain the forces of capitalism, the market and privatization and to protect the rights of workers.

This is the front line of our work at the ILO, which has a historic responsibility. I trust that we will be worthy of the hopes invested in us by the workers of the world and their trade unions.

Mr SHAREEF (*Government, Maldives*)

At the outset may I congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his appointment as the new Director-General of the ILO, while thanking Mr Juan Somavia on his leadership during his successful tenure at the helm of the Organization.

During our infant years in the ILO, the Organization offered us much-needed support and assistance in acquainting ourselves with international labour standards and ensuring that our commitment to the implementation of such standards were, in fact, complemented by policy initiatives.

As one of the younger member nations of the ILO, the Maldives is pleased to announce that in the coming months, the country will become a party to the eight core Conventions of the Organization. Our Parliament has indicated that after its ongoing review of the Conventions, they will be endorsed for passage and subsequent ratification during its current session.

We are pleased to highlight that the Conventions have already been incorporated into domestic labour legislation. I am pleased to note that the Government, through its Transport Authority, is also working towards the ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, which will further boost our efforts to bring our labour standards into line with international best practices. Furthermore, the Maldives hopes to enact human trafficking legislation in the near future which is being drafted at present with the support and assistance of the Australian Government's Attorney General's Office.

The Maldives is pleased that youth employment features among the issues on the agenda of this 101st Session of the Conference. Between 2006 and 2010 alone, the total labour force in the Maldives increased by a staggering 17 per cent. This increase had, unfortunately, not been matched by concurrent escalations in the creation of new jobs.

Unemployment and underemployment have subsequently become most prominent among youth. In recent years, large numbers of school leavers have remained unemployed and underemployed, either by choice out of a preference for white-collar jobs, or for a variety of other reasons such as a mismatch of skills and experience to the types of available work.

The problem of skills mismatch is being addressed by technical and vocational education and training. Similarly, additional resources are being allocated to programmes such as "Hunaru" for career training and "Youth Challenge" for job matching. We hope to complement the current programmes with the mass awareness initiative conducted jointly by the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, scholarship opportunities, student loan facilities and government training schemes are being expanded and enhanced to offer additional options to the younger generations.

The country's economy is today heavily dependent on its foreign labour force. In fact, a third of the entire workforce is composed of migrant workers. Having an expatriate workforce of over 75,000 in a country with a population of under 350,000 will undoubtedly bring with it additional challenges.

Foreign workers in the Maldives are mainly employed in blue-collar jobs. As a result, the attitude of the country's youth has been that such blue-collar jobs are demeaning and shameful. We need to find an urgent solution to this growing problem, as youth unemployment brings with it other social ills such as gang violence and drug abuse.

As one of the ILO's youngest member nations, the Maldives is heartened by the tremendous support and assistance we have been receiving from the ILO in strengthening our labour standards. Since September 2011, the Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports has been working in partnership with the ILO in implementing a US-funded technical cooperation project entitled Promoting Fundamental Rights and Strengthening Labour Market Governance.

The project aims to support tripartite constituents in harmonizing national legislation with international labour standards, in modernizing the labour administration machinery and in developing the capacity of employers' and employees' organizations to engage in workplace cooperation for greater compliance with fundamental principles and rights at work and business productivity. In May alone, the project trained all the inspectors at our Labour Relations Authority and provided technical expertise to adapt our inspection tools and forms to the new challenges of the world of work. In the coming months, the project will contribute to upgrading our national capacity, to preventing and to resolving labour disputes while providing support to our organizations in implementing action plans on their fundamental rights and obligations.

The Ministry is also committed to work with the ILO on reforming national labour legislation to bring it fully in line with ILO standards. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to thank the ILO for its technical cooperation and assistance since we joined the Organization. I am confident that we will continue to receive such support and assistance in the future. Once again I wish to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his appointment and assure him of our firm support in working closely with him over the next five years and in advancing our role in the ILO as a responsible member State.

(Mr Matthey takes the Chair.)

Original French: Mr RANDRIAMANANTSOA (Minister of Civil Service, Labour and Social Legislation, Madagascar)

It is a great honour and an immense pleasure for me as the Minister of Civil Service, Labour and Social Legislation, representing the Republic of Madagascar, to take the floor before this august body.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Director-General of the International Labour Office and to his team for all the efforts they have made for the impeccable organization of this Conference. I also extend my heartfelt and warm congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder, the new Director-General of the ILO, on his election by the Governing Body of the ILO. We assure him of our full support, along with our wishes for the successful fulfilment of his mandate.

As we all know, the world of work in its entirety is becoming increasingly tumultuous owing to the financial crisis which is afflicting all countries. More specifically, for my country, the crisis is having disastrous consequences on employment.

In the wake of the decision by the United States Government to suspend trade benefits granted under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) for Madagascar, more than 400,000 jobs disappeared from the labour market. This situation is exacerbated by slowing economic activities, which is a major hindrance to job creation.

As in all countries of the world, young people are the first to suffer. Given the relatively alarming climate, my Government is not standing by inactive; it is making efforts, particularly with social partners and with civil society.

Recently, job fairs have been organized in the industrialized cities of my country. The goal is to create opportunities for young people to familiarize themselves with the world of work. These job fairs are targeted at them specifically, given the number of young people who are looking for work. This is just one of many examples.

I would remind this august body that my country has ratified all of the fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organization. Tripartism is therefore the norm for everyone in issues related to the world of work. In every way, the State is endeavouring to foster a climate of permanent social dialogue with its partners.

Mindful of the fact that social protection contributes to economic growth by improving both the productivity of labour and contributing to social stability, my country is multiplying its efforts to improve the system of social security which is already in place. I would like to share with you, incidentally, that only 5 per cent of the Malagasy population is covered under the current social security system. To remedy this situation, the Social Protection Code is currently being revised. The aim is to provide a better level of social protection than that which currently exists.

The Ministry of Labour, of which I am currently at the helm, is undertaking studies to ensure that the rural population, which constitutes 85 per cent of our active population, is covered by the social security system. Exchanges of information have been carried out through visits to friendly African countries to be able to find a model that will fit the Malagasy context.

The time limit prohibits me from delving into all of the efforts made by my Government to improve the world of work in my country, but I hope that these few examples will enable you to fully appreciate the current situation of a developing country which is trying as best it can to overcome the adverse effects of a crisis.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore here that Madagascar remains open to all forms of technical cooperation with all countries and organizations, while always ensuring respect for the interests of all parties.

Mr ANTHONY (Worker, Fiji)

Let me thank the Director-General, Juan Somavia, for his commitment to the workers of this world and his unwavering commitment to achieving decent work. Let me also congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as Director-General of the ILO.

Fiji today remains a military dictatorship after the 2000 and 2006 military coups. It continues down the path of defiance and non-compliance with fundamental rights and freedoms for all its citizens. Decrees that continue to limit and deny these fundamental rights and freedoms remain in existence,

despite assurances to the Committee on the Application of Standards last year that positive steps would be taken in accordance with the People's Charter, which the regime itself drew up to ensure that freedoms would be granted. The People's Charter remains a propaganda document for the international community. Any talk of a transparent and accountable government is just that, only talk. Good governance principles are certainly not the order of the day.

The Administration of Justice Decree and its amendment continue to disenfranchise civil servants and all government workers of the basic rights to collective bargaining and of other fundamental rights. The amendment decree to the Civil Service Act denies the same group of workers recourse to address their grievances or disputes. The Essential Industries Decree completely disenfranchises workers in 11 corporations and four industries of freedom of association, collective bargaining and other fundamental rights. Other industries and corporations that are not covered by this Decree are guilty of imposing the same conditions applied by corporations under the Decree.

The Public Order Amendment Decree denies freedom of assembly, speech and grants extrajudicial powers to the police and the military. This Decree succeeded the public emergency regulations that were in place and is even more draconian than its predecessor. Powers vested in the police are excessive; the Commission and its regional commanders have powers to restrict the movement of any persons, either within the country or even from leaving the country. They have powers to detain anyone for up to 16 days without charge. The Decree gives prison officers and the military the same powers as the police. The Decree gives these officers absolute immunity from prosecution for any eventuality – even death – in the course of carrying out the duties under the Decree. Fiji has ratified all ILO core Conventions, yet it respects none at present.

Under these decrees, trade unions cannot and have not been able to carry out their normal function and responsibilities as would normally be expected of trade unions. Meetings are not permitted to be held without a permit from the police. Industrial relations as a whole are on the verge of completely breaking down.

For the first time in six years since the military coups, we are now witnessing increasing poverty with as much as 50 per cent of the population living either on or below the poverty line. High unemployment and underemployment levels are prevalent. For the first time, we have witnessed union members who are wage earners earning below the poverty line. This is partly because there have been no wage adjustments or increments in the last six years due to the absence of any collective bargaining. Real wages for these workers have fallen by up to 35 per cent over this period due to high inflation. The only people who have had adjustments are the military and the police.

Intimidation of union members and officials continues unabated. Often police demand minutes of meetings and information on union activity. Surveillance of union officials continues and in many cases officials themselves fear carrying out legitimate trade union activity. Media freedom remains as elusive as ever today in Fiji; even though the public emergency regulations have been lifted, me-

dia censorship remains in place. Press releases from unions or anyone who opposes the views of the regime are not published. The trade union movement is aware that fundamental and human rights can only exist in a democracy. Indeed, these rights can only be exercised in a free and democratic society. We continue our struggle for democracy and human rights.

Ms NWE (Employer, Myanmar)

I am Khine Nwe and I thank you very much for allowing me to deliver a message on behalf of the Employers' Association of Myanmar, recently established, freely and legally, under the new Labour Organizations Law. I thank the Government of Myanmar for making this possible.

Myanmar, in its second year of transformation, has reached several milestones. Rapid, drastic reforms in the political, economic and social structure let Myanmar stretch its legs along the journey, nurturing and encouraging the private business sectors to integrate more into responsive, caring, harmonious relations in the workplace, allowing the creation of a socio-friendly economic environment.

One of the many milestones is a conspicuous development – the establishment of the law that paved the way for the birth of free associations of employers, employees, farmers, seamen, etc. in the context of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87).

Another development emerged with respect to human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption: on May Day this year, Myanmar became the 136th member State to support the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact. Several business associations and several individual companies signed up on that day. The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the country's biggest employers' association, was the first in the line-up. We were all there for self-commitment, with keen determination to advance those principles within our sphere of influence. The event was honoured by the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon; that was an historical moment.

With our strong commitment to making the Global Compact and its principles part of our strategy to create a better future, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry has adopted a corporate social responsibility (CSR) concept. The CSR Unit was established in April this year, and the first private business sector initiative was taken on 14 May, by launching a business community charter on HIV/AIDS. The goal of creating a stigma-free, discrimination-free working environment moves us in the direction of building a stronger workforce, inclusive of workers living with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS. This auspicious event was again honoured, this time by the United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS, Dr Nafis Sadiq.

As much as Myanmar employers are complying with the universally recognized principles, we do acknowledge that tough challenges lie ahead of us in this transition period. Each country, influenced by its own culture, has different scenarios, different solutions. It is the duty of every citizen to take part in the reforms, in the building of a strong, united, peaceful nation. It is also the duty of the international community and organizations to make it grow. The political, economic and social pillars are

interrelated. Thus, contributing in one's own interests to each pillar should be kept balanced.

While participating in the building of a socio-friendly economic environment, we, the employers, may encounter huge, unavoidable challenges. We might solve them differently, we might err in pursuing the good directions for the better cause.

Nevertheless, there is much, much more for the employers of Myanmar to do for our people, such as creating decent employment, decent incomes, social protection and social development.

One cannot deny that limited, restricted access to international markets denies us our right to be part of the global market chain. Decent incomes come from decent jobs; decent jobs come from job creation. Sanctions and resolutions do not help create jobs. They can lead to massive unemployment. With our feet bound, how far and how fast can we run? How effectively can we work? So, from this platform of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, our appeal to the global community is to lift all the sanctions and remove all the barriers. We need you to trust in us. We need your support for growth. Share your experiences and knowledge, provide technical and financial assistance and cooperation, wherever it is needed. We, the people of Myanmar, deserve it.

With that, we want to move forward unwearingly, without any bindings, towards a socially responsive, brighter future. Only by being on even ground, only equipped with these strengths, can a stronger, inclusive working community of Myanmar, including the Government, employers, employees – the tripartite community of Myanmar – contribute to the global call for decent work, youth employment, social protection, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Mr CHEN (*Employer, Jamaica*)

I believe that we need a tripartite approach to the design and delivery of formal education at all levels.

The typical approach has been for governments, guided by academic theorists, to monopolize the design of the primary and secondary school curricula.

The other social partners, and particularly the employers, are usually brought into the process very late for vocational training and to ease the school-to-work transition.

This happens in spite of the fact that private enterprise is the primary engine of economic growth and the main creator of productive jobs.

This is just one more symptom of the widespread lack of appreciation for the nature and role of enterprise, even among policy-makers.

The result of this approach has been that our countries are operating at suboptimal levels, manifested in the low levels of employability of many school leavers, the mismatch between market needs and school output, and the widespread distrust of business.

Employers, especially experienced entrepreneurs, must have a greater input in the development of school curricula. If formal education is a tool of societal development, then we need to redesign it to enhance economic development.

If trust is built on understanding and distrust is a hindrance to enterprise, and thus to economic development, then we need to create greater understanding.

Teaching entrepreneurship would enlighten young people in the concepts of measured risk and reward, and the creation of value.

Teaching the skills and attitudes of entrepreneurship within the context of playing by the rules, respecting workers' rights and workplace standards, and recognizing the role of social enterprise, will enhance individual creativity and productivity; teach the values of personal responsibility, personal initiative and ownership; enhance the creation of sustainable enterprises and expand the opportunities for decent work; build the economic platform for more robust social protection, recognizing that the most robust form of social protection is a sustainable job; and ease the school-to-work transition by managing expectations.

Even with the best of planning it is difficult to predict the future demand for particular competencies. We can better prepare our young people by giving them a greater variety of options, a deeper level of understanding and the skills and attitudes that will enhance their employability, including self-employment.

Creating more entrepreneurs maximizes their individual economic opportunities and, as more business start-ups are created, then the greater the number of successful enterprises for society overall.

Even if relatively few young people become successful entrepreneurs, many will benefit from a new level of understanding that will change attitudes and improve social dialogue.

In many countries, entrepreneurship is the exclusive preserve of a few groups that have practised and learned over generations, leading to enterprise being largely controlled by closed elites.

Teaching entrepreneurship will promote social equity by opening up the potentials of enterprise to groups that have had low levels of participation.

Historically, there have been low levels of trust towards private enterprise by governments, workers, academia, and much of civil society. It is based on their fear that if left unchecked, business will practice ruthless exploitation. So there will always be tension between the profit motive and the regulators and laws that protect and enhance equity and fairness.

Our challenge will therefore be to ensure that this tension is creative, productive and ultimately beneficial to the wider society.

We need to actively find and maintain this balance while recognizing that harmony is easier to achieve where there is greater understanding.

Broadening the teaching of entrepreneurship is not a magic bullet, or a panacea, but it would be a significant step in the right direction.

Original Spanish: Mr SABORÍO (Worker, Costa Rica)

As reflection on the past actions of the ILO shows, the immense undertaking to achieve social justice must contain the key component of creating decent work in order to make progress towards the equality and social integration which are so necessary in our countries.

Unfortunately, positive steps and progress in response to these efforts in Latin America can only be seen in a few countries. Indeed, in order to achieve decent work a number of things have to be done by the State that the market economy controlled by the financial sector is not willing to relinquish. We can see how far removed things have become from the objectives of the ILO. The crisis has become severe

in the real economy, there is widespread unemployment, and workers' rights are being undermined in a number of developing countries where some progress had been made towards a better social model.

When it comes to our country, despite the economic growth that took place before the financial crisis of 2008 and the fact that the crisis can be said to have affected us less than some countries, poverty has not decreased in our country. On the contrary, statistics show poverty figures of 20.4 per cent in 1995 and 21.6 per cent in 2011. If we look at inequality indicators according to the Gini coefficient, we can see that there has been an increase from 0.467 in 1995 to 0.515 in 2011.

Moreover, when we speak of decent work, we think of work with rights, with stability, with social security, with the guarantee of freedom of association. This is something we cannot achieve when we have such a high level of informal employment in our countries, including Costa Rica. The ILO's 2011 Labour Overview shows that for our region our country has a level of informality of 43.8 per cent, which is, of course, related to outsourcing, subcontracting and other measures aimed at greater flexibility in the labour market.

We have got to remember that the creation of more formal jobs is more conducive to achieving decent work, and we need to try to formalize that which is now informal: this has been the subject of much discussion, even at summits of world leaders. Yet we see this goal receding into the distance, and the report previously mentioned indicates the existence of informal employment in both the formal and informal sectors.

Unfortunately, the feudalism and capitalism which marked the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the soulless globalization which has affected the end of the twentieth century and these early years of the twenty-first century, have given no thought to the value of work or to those doing it. So we are moving into the realms of exclusion, extreme poverty and destitution, we are seeing an erosion of rights in the face of greed, hoarding and the concentration of wealth because the market, which was supposed to fill the regulatory role previously occupied by the State, places no value on work or on those performing it.

We urge the ILO and the Director-General-elect not to lose heart in the face of the task of reducing poverty through the establishment of a new perspective on human development, one which regards people as the most important element in the economic and social model.

I would like to conclude by saying that on 26 June the workers in the ports of Costa Rica, our colleagues in Puerto Limón, and others employed by the Social Security Fund of Costa Rica, will be defending decent work with rights. We count upon your support.

Original Spanish: Mr ZEPEDA LÓPEZ (Worker, Nicaragua)

In Nicaragua, we have 5.6 million people in a country in Central America. We are constructing a new social model based on human development and Christian values, socialist ideals, and the practice of solidarity. We are working to restore the social, economical and political rights of Nicaraguans, rights which were taken away through the implementation of neoliberal policies.

In this new model, we, the workers, are actively involved in the processes of change. We have an opportunity to replace the exclusive model which exploited the resources of our countries with one that is inclusive, where we are all actively involved and in which the politics of consensus and tripartite agreement, promoted by the Government of Commander Daniel Ortega, have made it possible to achieve sustained economic growth and thus cope with the financial, environmental and food crises, and most of all to combat extreme poverty.

Social dialogue is possible only with strategic responses to difficulties and problems and that is why we would like to highlight the advance of tripartism in Nicaragua. An example of that is the regularity with which the minimum wage has been approved by the relevant statutory body. Over the past four years, consensus and concerted agreement have made it possible for there to be growth in employment and an improvement in the purchasing power of workers.

The National Labour Council, a tripartite body that discusses and reaches agreements on labour matters, was set up to streamline the processing of labour-related complaints through the oral labour-related administrative procedure. The Judicial Labour Procedure Reform Act was recently adopted as a mechanism for streamlining the processing of labour disputes.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recommended social security reform and promoted measures that have caused crises in other countries, but the Government has indicated that any reform will be a result of consensus among all Nicaraguans and it is up to the workers and employers to define the reforms.

The United States Government and the European Union are exerting pressure on our country by putting political conditions on development cooperation and economic aid. Although they recognize our advances and economic stability, they are proposing to build the road towards progress and development.

Clearly, there are problems and difficulties that we have to face. For example, in some sectors of the economy, outsourcing is being promoted as a way of avoiding obligations to workers and many entrepreneurs prefer the term "associate" rather than "worker". We have unemployment and we have low wages in some areas of the economy and high percentages of work in the informal economy.

We do not have much time to give an in-depth assessment of the advances, challenges and commitments made in Nicaragua. Our model of citizen participation and the restoration of rights makes it possible for us to make progress and achieve economic growth with equity, social justice and prosperity.

I cannot conclude without mentioning and repudiating the attitude of the Employers' group in the Committee on the Application of Standards. The Employers have been using a strategy of blackmail, boycott and veto to obstruct the work and the procedures that we have in the Committee on the Application of Standards to identify and process the cases that need to be reported to governments.

Therefore, we cannot accept the Employers' decision to boycott our work in the Committee on the Application of Standards, as it undermines and attacks all of the ILO's supervisory mechanisms.

I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder for being elected Director-General of the ILO. We wish him good health and success in his new, challenging assignment. We are looking forward to his strength, conviction and vision in leading the Organization to continue to be a responsive institution to the challenges facing the world of work today and in years to come.

On the other hand, allow me to say a few words as a vote of thanks to the outgoing Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia, for his commendable job and commitment in promoting the Decent Work Agenda. On this note, Tanzania wishes him every success in his future undertaking.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to Mr Charles Dan, ILO Regional Director for Africa, and Mr Alexio Musindo, the ILO Country Office Director for Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, for their continuous support and bestowed commitment to spearheading the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda in our country.

The youth employment crisis agenda requires our concerted efforts in addressing it promptly and strategically given the imposing danger on peace and tranquillity which prevails in our societies since youth cohorts in our population occupy a greater percentage than any other group. In Tanzania the youth employment challenges are not different from those of many other developing countries. In attempting to address such challenges, the Government of Tanzania, in collaboration with stakeholders, including social partners, has taken several measures, which include but are not limited to making employment creation a key priority component in the Five-Year Development Plan: investing in education and skills development; putting youth employment creation and decent work as a priority component in the second Decent Work Country Programme; and collaborating with the ILO and the Youth Employment Network (YEN) programme in forging youth entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Tanzania wishes to call upon the Office to continue taking measures to assist member States in this regard and to firmly assuming its role with a view to transforming the world of work, which today is full of uncertainties, into the world of optimism for young women and men. Yes, now is the time for action; let us all join our efforts to champion the course that will make it happen.

Tanzania welcomes the proposed Recommendation on the social protection floor. In this regard, we hope that the proposed Recommendation will complement the existing instruments on social security. Tanzania is committed to guarantee her citizens the provision of social protection as enshrined in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania. Recently, laws governing social security funds have been amended with a view to improving the benefits provided by the funds to their members, and extending the coverage to the informal sector, where the majority of our people are engaged in different activities.

Respecting fundamental principles and rights at work is another matter of importance as it ensures social justice in the world of work and governance of the global economy. We encourage the Office to continue providing technical cooperation to its con-

stituents on the effective application and implementation of these principles and rights.

Finally, I would ask the Office to continue assisting Tanzania towards the realization of the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda, namely, employment promotion; social protection; social dialogue and rights at work.

Ms LYNCH (*Worker, Ireland*)

George Santayana famously said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." He also said, "only the dead have seen the end of war". One of the lessons of history is that sovereign debt must be managed in ways that do not destroy the economy, dismantle labour and human rights, undermine democracy and threaten peace.

Since the onset of the financial crisis, trade unions in Ireland have warned of the serious and corrosive social and economic consequences of a prolonged slump caused by excessive austerity, particularly since the consequences of the austerity measures in Ireland are not evenly felt. The architects of the crisis, those who caused the economic crash through their dangerous obsession with personal wealth and unregulated capitalism, are managing to survive the recession pretty well, continuing to earn big bonuses or retiring from political and corporate life with handsome pensions. The contrast with the poorly paid and least protected among the Irish workforce could hardly be starker. Many working families fear the future, they struggle to make ends meet; we are experiencing mass emigration and record unemployment.

We have the fifth highest unemployment rate in Europe and young people have been particularly affected. The unemployment rate among young people in 2007 was at 8 per cent, it now stands at 33 per cent. The outgoing Director-General, Mr Somavia, has been highly critical of the damage done by austerity measures and has called for policies to be reconsidered in response to the crisis. Workers in Ireland support that call.

Austerity has not worked and it will not work. Thinking that austerity will work is like thinking that the Titanic would not sink. Last week, Irish people voted yes to allow the Government to sign the European Fiscal Stability Treaty. There should be no misunderstanding, this result was a call for growth in the European Economic Area, not austerity. It should not be forgotten that Ireland's present difficulties are rooted in a blanket transfer of private bank debt to sovereign debt; workers are being forced to pay a debt that was not theirs in the making. We are calling for help and not for another belt of austerity. Workers held and continue to hold the view that austerity begets austerity and is self-defeating. The European Central Bank (ECB) and other "austerocrats" have to come to their senses and adjust economic policy to prevent catastrophe. There is an urgent need for stimulus in Europe and Ireland. We deserve a better deal, we deserve measures to help us boost growth and create jobs, decent jobs.

A durable economic recovery will require consumer demand funded by employment income, not by borrowing and speculation. This is why the Memorandum of Understanding demanded by the troika – which attempts to include measures to restrict collective bargaining, to undermine minimum wages and wage-setting rates – is counterproductive and of great concern to us. All other countries with

high levels of unionization and high levels of social security, appear to be faring better in this crisis than Ireland, where the situation will be made worse by these memoranda. We welcome the commitment of the Irish Government to the ILO to give effect to the right to organize and collective bargaining. However, the time for nice words and hand-shaking is over, bold decisions and fresh solutions are now required to meet the demands for growth and decent jobs.

Earlier this year, Congress put out a set of proposals for a major investment programme that would help create 100,000 jobs, boost recovery and meet long-term infrastructure needs. Colleagues, many challenges lie ahead, the lessons from history provide signposts but our future is yet unwritten. The ILO Constitution begins with the words, "Whereas universal and lasting peace can only be established if it is based on social justice", setting out a liberating and life-enhancing vision of decent work intended to prevent war and protect people from the excesses of globalization. This applies both in good times and in times of crisis. By working together, our country can recover and working men and women in Ireland will be able to earn a living through decent work.

Mr POTTER (*Employer, United States*)

Initially, I want to express our appreciation to Director-General Juan Somavia for his dedication and service to the ILO and to congratulate Guy Ryder on his election as the next Director-General.

This leadership transition provides an opportunity for the ILO to shape its priorities for the coming five years. The ILO has done a laudable job of articulating its high-level objectives throughout the UN system. In our view, it is time to put these objectives into practice at the national level in all of the ILO member States through two essential strategies.

The first is to reinvigorate the energy of the Organization to implementation – that is, full effectuation of standards and rights, with particular emphasis on realizing fundamental principles and rights at work. The urgent need to do so is expressed most clearly in the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" human rights framework and guiding principles. Its first pillar is the state duty to respect and protect all human rights, including fundamental principles and rights at work. States must protect against human rights abuses within their territory by taking appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, punish and redress human rights and national law violations. States have a duty to protect and promote the rule of law, including taking measures to ensure equality before the law, fairness in its application, and by providing for adequate accountability, legal certainty, procedural and legal transparency, the absence of corruption, freedom of association, security property rights and enforceability of contracts. In order to meet their state duty to protect, States must start by making a commitment at the highest political level and have in place a well-funded system of labour administration, an adequate and serious system of labour inspection, and an independent judiciary.

During this Conference, the ILO released updated forced labour statistics that put this discussion in bold relief. The data shows that a substantial majority of the 21 million in forced labour are trafficked persons in all regions of the world. The ILO must

place a priority on the elimination of trafficked persons and all forced labour, particularly in the private economy.

The second strategy is to unleash the power and dynamism of the market economy within the work of the ILO. Private enterprise and investment have created millions of jobs and pulled millions out of poverty. Productive and sustainable employment is the prerequisite for decent work, wealth creation and social justice. The ILO needs to enable sustainable, competitive and productive enterprises, including by helping member States to create conducive environments in the formal and informal economy that enable private enterprises to be formed and to grow.

As Guy Ryder said in his recent meeting with the General Council of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), the success of an enterprise is also a success for a worker. Indeed, there cannot be a sustainable business without a sustainable community, just as there cannot be a sustainable community without sustainable businesses to generate jobs and income.

Experience shows that the vast majority of new jobs in every country are created by new enterprises, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises. SMEs succeed not only because they have a great idea for a product and service but because they are flexible and nimble. Without sustainable SMEs, there will be no sustainable jobs recovery in the current economic circumstances.

Expanding economic opportunity, raising productivity and increasing growth are crucial for alleviating poverty and are especially crucial now. In many developing countries, achieving these goals requires the creation of more inclusive business models that directly integrate low-income people as entrepreneurs, suppliers, distributors, retailers, employees and consumers. It also requires more collaborative approaches between large companies, small enterprises, public sector entities, civil society organizations and the poor themselves.

These are necessary to address the market failures and the governance gaps that currently exclude or disadvantage many small enterprises and low-income households from prospering. In my own company, we have a "Project 5 by 20" that has the goal of enabling 5 million women entrepreneurs by 2020.

In conclusion, at this pivotal moment, the ILO has an opportunity to up its game and to become more visible and relevant as an organization that truly makes a difference in the lives of working men and women, whether they are in the formal or informal economy.

Finally, I want to remember by friend Bill Brett who was my worker counterpart for the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Bill lived large; may he rest in peace.

Original French: Mr LEEMANS (Worker, Belgium)

Allow me, on behalf of the Belgian workers and the CSC, to pay tribute to the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for the way in which he has directed the ILO and established dialogue with other international institutions, with governments and with the social partners. He has placed decent work on the agenda and defended trade unionists who are threatened because of their commitment.

I should also like to thank Mr Somavia for the constant, courageous signals he has given to Euro-

pean bodies and member States. He has often reminded them of the ILO's Conventions and of the role of fundamental labour standards. I also pay tribute to the remarkable work of the Brussels section of the ILO in this area.

Europe has become unrecognizable. In the past it was a reference for the world, and several countries adopted our social model for its combination of economic and social progress.

Yet today, under the guise of economic governance and budgetary discipline, European countries are undermining freedom of association, including the right to strike and the right to free collective negotiations. They are endangering social security and labour protection under the influence of the dictates of the European Commission.

There are more and more complaints from European countries, especially compliant of the violation of Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Even the ILO's standards are completely ignored, as the recommendations of the European Commission showed once again last week.

First of all, there has been interference in negotiations on wages which, as in countries that have impoverished their workers, are systematically held back.

Second, we can point an accusing finger at the automatic indexing of wages and allowances, even though – as in Belgium – it is based on freely negotiated collective agreements.

Third, there is downward pressure on countries where minimum wages are higher.

Fourth, centralized negotiation is being undermined by encouraging opting-out clauses in order to avoid inter-occupational and sectoral collective agreements.

We call on the ILO to follow closely developments in Europe and to take action in countries where ILO standards, and especially the fundamental standards, are jeopardized.

As the Worker spokesperson in the Committee on the Application of Standards, I wish to emphasize the unique role of our supervisory machinery, which has been sorely tried at this session of the Conference. I am extremely disappointed at what has occurred. And many Governments share my disappointment that our Committee has been unable to adopt its list of individual cases to be examined, as it has done each year for over 85 years.

The Employers are challenging the legitimacy of the observations of the Committee of Experts and of the Experts themselves by attacking the right to strike and its relevance to Convention No. 87. The right to strike derives from Articles 3 and 10 of Convention No. 87 taken together, but also from the jurisprudence of the Committee on Freedom of Association. This we shall continue to defend in all appropriate forums.

Mr RAMME (*Representative, Confédération européenne des cadres*)

When I come to Geneva to represent an organization of managers at the ILO, I can sometimes perceive some objections or prejudices against a managers' association, but let me tell you that there is no need for such fear. I will explain to you that our organization is beneficial for a decent workplace for all and for our mutual aim to strengthen the rights of workers at all levels.

Therefore, let me come back to the roots of our organization. Let me go back to the year 1951.

More than 60 years ago, Europe was still in ruins after the Second World War, but people had hope. They wanted to work to rebuild the continent and they wanted to ensure that such a disaster, where neighbours were slaughtering their neighbours, would never happen again.

In this spirit, managers and experts in companies felt the need to unite. They wanted to contribute to a peaceful world and a decent workplace for all people worldwide. They felt that they, as managers, could support the work of the general unions by attracting senior employees for collective representation. Managers, as part of the staff, are on the workers' side in labour relations. They are the bridge builders within companies and institutions. They are on the workers' side and they can communicate on equal footing with employers. Employers need managers to enforce their wishes. Workers need to trust their managers, who have an important responsibility to the members of their teams.

So today, our mission follows our responsibilities. Managers have a responsibility in terms of economics, social affairs, ethics, environment, corporate social responsibility and communication with other stakeholders. We are therefore representing managers' interests at the international level in order to build a managers' network, to sign transnational agreements, and to monitor issues of social dialogue at the international and European level.

In accordance with these goals, I can directly tell you about how we can contribute to the ILO's concerns. Most importantly, we need to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. If we cannot give hope to the young generation, then our societies will have no future. This is why we have to bring our labour markets into balance. We have to invest in good education and properly prepare young people for the workplace. Leave no single child behind. We must provide better support for those children who have the worst start-up conditions. Every investment in early childhood will save higher costs in the later life of an individual. Managers have a responsibility to make this connection known in their companies and in their communities. François Mitterrand, former French President, once said, "If young people are not always right, the society which ignores and knocks them is always wrong." Young people today are hit particularly hard by the recession with regard to employment prospects. We deplore this situation. The situation is even harder for young people who fall under the category of NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Being NEET is not just a problem for individuals but also for societies and economies as a whole. Being NEET may lead to a wide range of negative social conditions, such as isolation, insecure and underpaid employment, crime, and mental and physical health problems.

Managers have a responsibility to make this connection known in their companies and their communities. This is why managers should also have the right to create their own independent associations and unions. However, this universal right is not respected in every country and although managers have, on average, better working conditions than other workers, we are still asking the Labour Office to keep an eye on the right of all groups of workers to create their own associations and thus give a voice to their group.

To conclude, we, as associations of managers and unions worldwide, are assuming our responsibility

as collaborators in forming a single world in which everybody has the opportunity to participate. This will include intensifying our own focus on social justice in all aspects of working life and beyond. In

this respect, we will support the work of Mr Ryder and the International Labour Office in the future.

(The Conference adjourned at 1.20 p.m.)

Seventh sitting

Thursday, 7 June 2012, 2.30 p.m.

Presidents: Mr Atwoli and Mr Matthey

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

The PRESIDENT (Mr ATWOLI)

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

Mr DOAN (*Deputy Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam*)

We highly appreciate the Reports entitled *Giving globalization a human face* and *Fundamental principles and rights at work: From commitment to action*, which depict a global picture of law and practice on fundamental principles and rights at work in member countries, draw on experience and share the best practices worldwide.

In Viet Nam, fundamental principles and rights at work are guaranteed by the Constitution, law and practice. Despite limited resources, the Government has already committed and allocated adequate resources for national programmes to promote fundamental principles and rights at work, including the National Action Programme to Combat Human Trafficking; the National Programme on Occupational Safety and Health; the National Action Programme for Vietnamese Children; and the National Programme on Gender Equality. Many other measures have been taken to strengthen the capacity of trade unions and employers' associations to promote collective bargaining and harmonious industrial relations.

Employment has always been at the top of our agenda. As in other countries, the global economic downturn has worsened unemployment and underemployment in Viet Nam, particularly among young workers. To confront this emerging issue, the Government of Viet Nam has adopted a National Youth Development Strategy with a view to developing a high-quality young workforce to meet the demands of socio-economic development. Creating employment, improving the quality of education, building employability and business start-up skills, improving vocational guidance, reducing unemployment, and improving the system of employment service centres are key objectives of this strategy.

Moreover, to promote the development of policies and programmes on employment, including youth employment, I have the pleasure to inform you that the President of Viet Nam recently ratified the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122). We

are also speeding up the process of drafting an employment law to submit to the National Assembly for approval in 2013.

The consistent goal of Viet Nam is economic development in tandem with social progress for all people. Over the past years, Viet Nam has made a concerted effort to expand the coverage of our social protection system. Despite the negative impact of the economic crisis, the Government of Viet Nam never cut down expenditures on social protection. In addition to the compulsory social insurance scheme, we have introduced a voluntary social insurance scheme, unemployment insurance, and many other cash transfer schemes for disadvantaged people. Therefore, we appreciate the discussion at this Conference of the possible adoption of the Recommendation on the social protection floor. The topic of the social protection floor will also be discussed at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference on the theme of "Social Protection and Employment – A Key to Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" that will be held in Hanoi in October 2012.

This year, 2012, marks the ten-year anniversary of the establishment of the ILO Office in Hanoi. This ten-year cooperation between Viet Nam and the ILO has achieved impressive results. We have successfully completed the first Decent Work Country Programme for 2006–10, and recently in Hanoi, the Vietnamese Government, social partners and the ILO decided together on the second Decent Work Country Programme for 2012–16.

On this occasion, I would like to express the sincere thanks of the Government of Viet Nam for the valuable technical assistance from the ILO in the past, and I do believe that the cooperation between the ILO and Viet Nam will further develop as we implement the Decent Work Country Programme for the next five years.

Before concluding, on behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, and as authorized by the other ASEAN member States, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, I have the honour to express our appreciation for the extraordinary contributions of the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, to the ILO, especially to promote decent work and social justice. We would like also to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General of the ILO. We believe that Mr Guy Ryder will continue to bring his leadership, expertise and dedication to continue the quest of the ILO. In the

past, ASEAN countries have been working closely with the ILO on many initiatives. We will continue our engagement in the work of the ILO and we do hope that the ILO will continue its effective cooperation with ASEAN.

Mr SASOMSUB (*Minister of Labour, Thailand*)

It is my privilege to commend the Report of the Director-General, A new era of social justice, which remains significant for this session.

I recognize that, today more than ever, policies at the international and national levels need to be coherent. The Government of Thailand has pursued the vision of sustainable development for social justice as one of the most important driving forces bringing prosperity to our nation. I give high value to advancing basic rights at work, social protection floors, social dialogue and greater employment opportunities, especially for our youth.

The Government has made the expansion of social protection a key target of the current National Economic and Social Development Plan with the objective of creating more justice in our society.

In my country, there is a growing connection between citizens and the Government. We also recognize that social protection measures are fundamental tools for the economic recovery effort. They serve as economic stabilizers and at the same time protect and enable people to move into the labour market. In moving towards the provision of social protection floors, the Government extended the coverage of the social security scheme to the larger number of the total labour force who are becoming insured persons. The larger number of workers in the informal economy, approximately 21 million, are the main target. Since its first launch in May last year, more than 700,000 informal workers have enjoyed their rights and benefits under the scheme.

We truly believe that social protection for the most vulnerable groups can have an immediate impact on people's lives, as demonstrated by our efforts in relation to the new Ministerial Regulation on the employment promotion of people with disabilities, which came into force in April this year. The Regulation states that all employers or entrepreneurs with 100 or more employees are obliged to recruit persons with disabilities according to a quota of one disabled person for every 100 employees.

To enhance the inclusive growth and fairness of our nation, the Government is also doing its best to close the gap of income inequality. We have therefore introduced a new minimum wage rate policy. Since April this year, the Government has raised the basic minimum wage rate to 300 baht per day in seven provinces. As of 2013, this will be rolled out nationwide.

Over the past few years, the Government has been making a full attempt to develop our national Decent Work Country Programme, and concrete progress has been made based upon the consensus of the national tripartite constituents.

In closing, my delegation wishes to commend Mr Juan Somavia, the ILO Director-General, for the valuable initiatives and work he has done. Once again, on behalf of the Government of Thailand, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to him for a great contribution he has made to the world of work.

Mr WOJCIK (*Worker, Poland*)

It is my privilege, speaking on behalf of the Polish workers' delegation, to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their election to this post of responsibility. I extend my congratulations also to Mr Guy Ryder. We wish him many successes, especially in the forthcoming very difficult period for working people. I thank Mr Juan Somavia, the Director-General, for his outstanding work during the last 14 years, particularly for his fight for decent work.

The world is struggling against increasing economic and employment crises, and social dialogue is widely recognized as indispensable in combating them. It is with great regret that I have to communicate to this august assembly that, last year, social dialogue in Poland turned out to be a myth. The Polish Government disregarded the opinions of the National Tripartite Commission, presenting bills to the Parliament that were entirely different from those accepted by the Commission, or completely lacking an opinion from the Commission.

Some weeks ago, the Polish Parliament passed a new law on extending the age of retirement up to 67, strictly in line with the Government's plan. Men now have to work two years longer than before, and women, seven years longer. This law was adopted without any social consultation, despite the fact that over 2 million Polish citizens signed a petition demanding a national referendum on the matter.

We raise objections, not only to the violation of the essence of social dialogue, but also to the entirely false solution of extending the age of retirement. This takes no account of the unemployment rate, which is in excess of 13 per cent, or of the fact that the extension of the retirement age does not contribute to the creation of a single job. In practice, it seriously threatens to increase youth unemployment, which is currently dramatically high – around 30 per cent, and even as high as 60 per cent in some regions.

In the opinion of workers, the lack of real social dialogue in Poland is caused, first of all, by universally poor observance of the right of freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. In spite of legal guarantees, bad practice at enterprise level is widespread and ultimately results in eliminating trade unions. It also leads to new, poor employment conditions, especially for young people, without any social protection, thus in practice preventing workers from organizing.

Furthermore, one has to note constant anti-trade union propaganda and an absolute lack in the educational system of any information on workers' rights and the roles played by trade unions.

A vast number of cases referred to prosecutors' offices concerning violations of the right to freedom of association have been dismissed on the grounds of the legal interpretation of the low social harmfulness of the offence. This breeds additional frustration and convictions of the inefficiency of Polish law. We hope that the ILO will intervene on the specific aspect of the lack of freedom of association in Poland.

It was with real satisfaction that I found that my suggestion concerning statistics on the proliferation of the fundamental ILO Conventions has been implemented on page 18 of Report VI to this Conference, *Fundamental principles and rights at work: From commitment to action*. In view of the fact that

the provisions of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), do not cover nearly 55 per cent of the world population, the International Labour Office should provide appropriate funds for more effective promotion of its ratification, as well as that of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). I encourage the Office to include these statistics in Report III (Part 2): *Information document on ratifications and standards-related activities*.

Ms MUGO (*Employer, Kenya*)

I wish to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents on being appointed to lead this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

I also commend the ILO Director-General for ably leading the Organization to realize the achievements highlighted in the Report which covers the activities implemented during the 2010–11 biennium. The achievements were realized against the backdrop of unprecedented global, social and economic challenges which continue to cause uncertainty about the future of the world of work. The Report also comes at a time of change in the leadership of the ILO and ongoing reforms in governance. A strong foundation has been laid for the next Director-General to take the Organization to a higher level. However, with change come higher expectations.

Whilst the Report gives quantitative information about what the ILO has done, the quality of these achievements will need to be further examined to ensure they have a lasting impact. Employers expect the ILO to remain constituent-driven and focused on meeting Members' needs. A key occupation of the ILO should be to create capacity amongst its Members to implement activities and programmes that enhance the ability of employers' and workers' organizations to provide demand-driven services to Members and to participate effectively in policy formulation forums. In this regard, the Turin Centre, which has been a major partner, should be recognized as the ILO training arm and fully resourced and integrated into the ILO delivery plans. Furthermore, the recognition of the role of the private sector remains lukewarm. More needs to be done to resource programmes that support employers in improving productivity and competitiveness and to build sustainable enterprises for job creation.

Employers expect that the ILO will position itself as a resource and a market leader in its niche areas to remain relevant and useful to the constituents who look for workable policy responses and information to support decisions and efforts to address the jobs crisis and other emerging challenges.

Programmes should also be mounted by the ILO to reduce rigidities in the labour market that hinder full participation in work and to improve labour market administration to enhance the rule of law. The concept of decent work entrenched in the ILO agenda is all about putting human and social capital at the heart of sustainable development. To achieve this, Kenya aims to drive the country into a globally competitive and prosperous economy with a high quality of life through its Vision 2030 strategic plan. For the Vision 2030 strategy to transform Kenya into a thriving modern economy, efforts towards more investments, improved efficiency and greater productivity will have to be made to sustain an annual economic growth rate of 10 per cent.

The changing nature of the global economy calls for new collaborative approaches to replace confrontational ones in addressing emerging challenges in tripartite relations. This requires social partners to dialogue when formulating policy packages to inform country priorities. The ILO will need to assist in implementing measures to strengthen social dialogue, collaboration and consensus building.

In summary, the challenge facing the ILO is to help constituents adapt to the changing global labour market, to reduce poverty, to promote education, training and lifelong learning, and to create more and better jobs. The ILO, as an organization, will need to integrate into its work broad acceptance of the market economy and recognition of the job-creation role of the private sector. More will need to be done to ensure that the policies and programmes of the ILO reflect modern workplace realities in both unionized and non-unionized workplaces and mechanisms for the organization and regulation of work.

In conclusion, I wish the Director-General well in his retirement and thank him for his commendable service to this Organization during his tenure. I also welcome the Director-General-elect as he aspires to fulfil the noble objectives of this Organization.

Mr PEHIN DATO (*Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Brunei Darussalam*)

On behalf of my delegation, please allow me to convey our sincere congratulations to the President of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that under your wise guidance this Conference will lead to promising results.

After the global financial crisis in 2009, the world economy is continuing to stabilize. The road to economic recovery is still ahead of us and we should not be complacent in our approach. While faced with such challenges, the ILO continues to promote the importance of decent work and social protection for all types of workers. Hence, it is timely that our Conference focuses on youth employment. Young people are assets and future leaders. Their ingenuity and their capacity for innovation should not be ignored. Every opportunity to access employment should be made available to them.

In Brunei Darussalam, youth's contribution to the national work process is held in the highest regard. Education, training and guidance through skills development programmes, job placement incentives and scholarships ensure that the potential of our youth is fully harnessed.

We have introduced several programmes to improve the skills of the existing and the future local youth workforce. Hoping to promote employability, the establishment of the Local Employment and Workforce Development Agency (APTK) under the Ministry of Home Affairs in April 2010, showed a strong commitment to assist in creating a better-skilled local workforce in the country. Besides providing assistance to local jobseekers to obtain jobs in private sectors, the Local Employment and Workforce Development Agency is also responsible for developing needed skills.

In addition, we also have introduced the Training and Employment Scheme and the Human Capacity Building Scheme. All of these schemes are aimed at providing job opportunities for local jobseekers and developing their skills in accordance with the Brunei Vision 2035 in which we aspire to create a

very prosperous nation with skilled citizens, and also to change the mindsets of local jobseekers.

The Human Capacity Building Scheme was introduced by the Department of Economic Planning and Development under the Prime Minister's Office, aiming to provide youths with opportunities to further their studies in related fields.

In addition to the aforementioned programmes, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has set up the Youth Development Centre. This Centre admits unemployed citizens or students who did not excel academically, provides them with the skills they need and helps prepare them to become skilled workers.

We understand the importance of thoroughly reviewing these issues and we are pleased to note that the International Labour Organization is giving us its full support in this area.

With reference to the agenda, we have arrived at this year's standard-setting discussion on a possible Recommendation on the social protection floor. While improving our social protection, we must also continue to stress the importance of self-reliance. At the same time, we strongly feel the need to take advantage of the potential for our human resources. Equipping people with knowledge and skills is vital, not just for individuals to achieve career success, but also for enterprises to be more adaptable and competitive in a world of rapid technologies and industrial structuring.

I am confident that the 101st Session of the Conference will bring viable and positive developments that will further strengthen our awareness of workers' needs.

In conclusion, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to express my gratitude to the International Labour Organization for its enduring efforts and achievements, and for its continuous support in the betterment of the quality of working life. We look forward to following this auspicious Conference.

Mr THAILUAN (*Worker, Thailand*)

I would like to report on the progress under the *Fundamental principles and rights at work: From commitment to action*. Although Thailand has yet to ratify the International Labour Organization's Conventions Nos 87 and 98, the Thai Government has been following the guidelines since 1975. As of today, Thai workers have the right to form labour unions under the Labour Relations Act 1975 without any obstruction from the Government. The only exception is that government officials are not yet allowed by the Government to form a union, even though they have the right to do so under the Constitution.

With regard to freedom of negotiation, Thai workers can submit a request to their employers for an increase in wages, an increase in welfare, or an improvement of working conditions. Workers have the right to call a strike, which can be done legally. However, labour rights violations have been severe and persisting. Violations are typically caused by multinational companies that invest in Thailand or in other developing countries only for short-term profits. These companies do not accept the association of labour unions, for fear of higher labour costs. Although workers have tried to establish unions, employers have tried to lay off the union leaders. The employers may continue to hire those leaders to work outside of their premises, pay only

wages and no other benefits. This is a clever way, advised by some lawyers, of laying off union leaders without violating labour laws.

This practice has been widespread, especially among companies in the automobile, electronics, textile and garment industries. An example is Thai Progress Garment, a manufacturer of brand-name products such as Victoria's Secret, Marks & Spencer, and Calvin Klein, owned by an Israeli. This company is known for continuously laying off union leaders, most of whom are female. As I am reporting this to you, there are two female union leaders who were laid off without giving an explanation of any wrongdoing.

When I stood here in 2011, I reported a serious case involving a company called Nissin Brake Company Limited. The company, which produces brakes and parts for cars and motorcycles, has violated the rights of workers to form unions and has laid off union leaders. After I reported the case to this Conference, Honda Automobile, which is the shareholder of Nissin, stepped in to solve the problems and ensure fair treatment of workers. I take this opportunity to thank Honda for its actions.

Violations of labour rights will continue in Thailand and in other less developed countries unless we take it seriously. I hope that as long as I am able to continue to do my duty as a leader and to attend this Conference, the ILO will succeed in eliminating labour rights violations. I continue to provide my strong support and hope that Thai workers will be willing to coordinate with any efforts from the ILO.

On behalf of Thai workers, I thank the President once again and hope that, under your leadership, the Conference will lead to fruitful results.

Original French: Mr THIBAUT (Worker, France)

For four years the crisis has been ravaging social and trade union rights, and its devastating effects have compounded those of the state of war which is ongoing in too many countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. How can we attain the objective of social justice when bullets are whistling through the air as in Palestine? How can the rights of workers be defended when they are victims of murder as in Colombia or Guatemala? How can we talk of social peace in situations of latent civil war as in Côte d'Ivoire and Syria?

What about my own continent, Europe, which, as the Director-General, Juan Somavia, said in his inaugural address to our 101st Session of the Conference, is following a path which is contrary to that of social progress, and may be even contrary to certain international labour standards as well. Let me recall his words, "The most affected countries of Europe subject to direct or indirect conditionalities are backsliding on the ILO's core values on which the region was a leader. While trying to reduce the public debt – unsuccessfully, by the way – a social debt is building up that will also have to be paid." Within the European Union, most governments of Member States, in opting for austerity instead of employment and recovery through demand, are striking a severe blow against the social Europe to which the workers of Europe and the European Trade Union Confederation are viscerally attached. Many countries are being subjected to policies of cutbacks in social expenditure, wage moderation, attacks on essential public services, restrictions on collective bargaining and reforms of retirement and national solidarity systems, and their peoples are experiencing a period

of unprecedented social recession of which young people are the main victims, being treated as an adjustment variable who can be made to pay the price for upheavals in the labour market. The 101st Session of the International Labour Conference has rightly focused part of its work on the issue of youth employment. This choice has proved to be especially timely now that governments and of employers' and workers' organizations are the targets of the discontent of young people in many countries.

In the Arab world, in many countries in Europe, in the Americas, young people are demonstrating and demanding answers to the problems which plague them: young people are rebelling against the unemployment in which they are trapped or into which they are driven by the crisis. Young people are rejecting precarious work, which for them has become the rule, while access to open-ended labour contracts has become the exception. Going back to the origins of the International Labour Organization, the Declaration of Philadelphia stated that labour is not a commodity. Young people feel insulted by the mismatch between their level of education or training and the quality of jobs and level of wages they are offered. Young people feel abandoned by the public authorities, governments and other forces in society, and this is a conundrum also for the trade union that I am representing here. There cannot be a satisfactory level of youth employment unless there is a satisfactory level of employment overall. Young people are a magnet for all the ills which affect workers in crisis periods and, to make things worse, they face them all at the same time: unemployment; barriers to escaping from the informal economy; job insecurity; unstable social situations; student debt; difficulty finding housing or training; the younger the person, the worse the problem. Young people were among the first victims of the crisis. They will remain in a very precarious situation unless the recovery from the crisis creates large numbers of jobs. The role of the public authorities is therefore key to providing training to young people to shield them from the vicissitudes of life and help them enter the world of work. The point is to have proactive and energetic policies opting for the establishment of protections and not for deregulation. The ILO and the body of international labour standards which it guarantees provide many resources and tools. We should promote international labour standards, find ways to improve monitoring of their application, and acknowledge the essential role of the ILO. I can only express concern about the current offensive by the Employers, which has blocked the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

In conclusion, I should like to warmly welcome, with emotion, the election of Guy Ryder to the post of Director-General of the ILO. I am sure that he will succeed in satisfying the requirement for social justice in the spirit of the tripartite functioning of our beautiful, great Organization.

Original Arabic: Mr ABU ERAGHEB (Employer, Jordan)

It is my pleasure, both personally and on behalf of the employers of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, to express my gratitude and appreciation to the ILO and its departments and regional offices, and especially the ILO Regional Office for Arab States in Beirut, headed by Ms Nada Al-Nashif, for the efforts it has made in the service of governments and the social partners with the aim of realizing our

common objectives of promoting the fundamental principles of decent work, and for the successful organization of this Conference, to which we wish every success in our deliberations as we strive for the greater prosperity of the international community.

I would also like to convey our thanks to the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, and to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the forthcoming Director-General of the ILO. I wish him and his staff every success. I would also like to thank the Chairperson of the Employers' group, Mr Daniel Funes de Rioja, and the members of the group for their efforts to make employers effective and influential partners in social and economic development.

The employers in Jordan have studied the Report of the Director-General on the achievements of the ILO and the services it has provided to the international community in regard to the elimination of; child labour, human trafficking and forced labour; social protection; social dialogue; occupational safety and health; collective bargaining and other activities to enhance the administrative and technical capacity of our national institutions. We employers value these efforts and affirm our support for them, in the hope of further continued cooperation to assert the Organization's message, and in our country's conviction of the importance of such cooperation.

We in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, under the guidance and direct supervision of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, have deepened the concept of public-private partnership as part of our social and economic responsibility. We have adopted effective mechanisms to develop our production, service and educational institutions. We have established a tripartite commission in which Government, employers and the trade union confederations participate, as well as a number of committees such as the National Committee against Child Labour, the Technical Committee on the Protection of Migrant Workers, the Committee against HIV/AIDS and the National Committee on Occupational Safety and Health. Social dialogue and collective bargaining initiatives have become standard practice between the social partners. The Economic and Social Council is developing a number of social, educational and economic studies in collaboration with the social partners.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO to launch a decent work project in Jordan, as well as a project to combat child labour, in collaboration with the ILO Office in Beirut.

As regards employment and vocational training, my country is currently implementing a comprehensive reform and restructuring plan for this sector, led by the Employment and Vocational Education and Training Council headed by the Minister of Labour. Its key areas of concern include governance, financing, quality, guidance, training of trainers, vocational qualifications, examinations and evaluation. My country encourages the establishment of training institutes in the different sectors with public-private partnerships. The employers participate in all the councils, bodies and technical committees working to provide training and employment opportunities to young people to meet the needs of the labour market.

Social security coverage has been extended in our country to cover a large number of categories of the

population, and the range of branches has been increased to include health insurance, occupational injury, retirement and unemployment, among others. All of this has contributed to ensuring stability for our workers through a package of policies and measures.

I cannot fail to mention the suffering endured by citizens and workers in the occupied Arab territories at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces. In the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan they are subjected to flagrant violations: workers' and employers' rights are flouted, houses are demolished and trees are uprooted.

All of this constitutes a violation of international standards and reflects Israel's disregard of what is happening in this and other international organizations.

The most important evidence of this is the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, where 2 million persons live in a narrow area suffering from a shortage of resources, with the result that its electricity supply is cut off, transport is interrupted and authorization to bring in goods to meet basic needs is denied.

From this rostrum, I call on the ILO and other organizations to raise the alarm concerning the pressure, humiliation and discrimination suffered by the citizens in the occupied territories and to ensure the application of the fundamental principles at work enshrined by these organizations.

Original Russian: Ms NARBAEVA (Worker, Uzbekistan)

It is a great honour for me to represent the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan at this august forum.

The ILO Director-General's Report notes that, through the joint efforts of the tripartite participants of the ILO, it is possible to ensure employment and increase income, to expand the coverage and effectiveness of social protection, to consolidate tripartism and to achieve fundamental principles and rights at work.

By implementing the fundamental ILO Conventions, Uzbek trade unions, which comprise around 6 million people, have been able to ensure that rights and powers reflecting international standards are represented at the legislative level.

In Uzbekistan we have the principle of freedom of association with trade unions. The country's legislation guarantees workers in practically all sectors of the economy the "triple right": the right to form trade unions, the right to collective bargaining and the right to negotiate collective agreements.

Uzbekistan has measures to assist collective bargaining and to make them genuinely free: First, collective bargaining is permitted in virtually all branches of economic activity, including in the public sector and areas that are financed by the state budget; secondly, enterprises are required to report on their fulfilment of collective agreements; and thirdly, the economic independence of enterprises has been expanded, which ensured total freedom of collective bargaining at the enterprise level.

On the trade union's initiative, general, territorial and local agreements include matters relating to the development and implementation of a programme at all levels for encouraging employment, job creation, creating decent work and ensuring social protection for citizens.

A general agreement on socio-economic issues for 2011–13 has been signed by the Cabinet of Ministers, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and

the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions; it provides for full assistance and job placement for citizens, especially for young people and those people who fall under the socially vulnerable category.

In order to achieve this, local state authorities draw up a list of enterprises required to allocate a minimum number of jobs to these categories of citizens. Reducing or eliminating these jobs is only allowed with the consent of the unions.

From the Report of the Director-General it is clear that countries have to carry out well designed national policies in the field of youth employment, taking the following into account: the macroeconomic aspect; measures on tax incentives for companies which hire young people; state programmes for training young people; and the provision of targeted social protection for young people.

Given that young people make up 65 per cent of the population, Uzbekistan is carrying out a number of measures aimed at providing them with strong social protection. In all collective bargaining agreements, trade unions and employers include a special section providing for additional benefits and guarantees for young people. A system has been introduced for on-the-job training leading to employment for graduates on the basis of tripartite "college-employer-student" agreements.

Trade unions carry out community monitoring by providing safety training, work clothing, work shoes, protective equipment and hot meals.

The new paradigm requires new approaches to education standards. The starting point for developing the standards must not be study curricula but occupational standards. In addition, we need to find ways of informing teachers of the employers' requirements and also to help them to update their teaching standards and programmes, to keep pace with changes in demand from the formal economy.

In our view, in carrying out specific measures to introduce fundamental rights and principles at work, particular attention needs to be given to the following, for example: enhancing national labour legislation in accordance with ILO standards; promoting effective employment for men and women, and especially young people; improving national social protection systems and expanding social protection coverage for vulnerable groups; introducing occupational safety and health management systems in jobs with higher levels of risk and in small businesses; effectively regulating labour migration and countering human trafficking; improving the effectiveness of social dialogue and enhancing the status of tripartite commissions; and carrying out effective public-awareness campaigns among the various age groups, publishing brochures, posters, commercials and holding seminars on the activities of the ILO and the implementation of its Conventions in the national legislation of countries.

Original French: Mr SY (Minister of Civil Service, Labour and Institutional Relations, Senegal)

It is with great pleasure that I address this august assembly which has been putting its intelligence and competence at the service of our Organization for more than 90 years in order to achieve lasting universal peace based on social justice, freedom and collective well-being.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Senegal, the delegation that I have the honour to lead and, on my own behalf, I would like first of all to express my sincere congratulations to the Presi-

dent on his brilliant election to preside over this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to express my congratulations to all the other Officers. You have our support and we wish you every success, Mr President, in accomplishing the enormous and honourable task the Conference has conferred upon you.

I would also like to thank Mr Juan Somavia for the work he has accomplished within our Organization and address my sincere congratulations to his successor, Mr Guy Ryder, who has just become Director-General-elect of the International Labour Organization. I would like to reassure him of the support and cooperation of Senegal.

As is the case at this time each year, the International Labour Organization offers Government, Employer and Worker representatives an appropriate forum in which to consult and exchange views on the problems facing the world today. This forum is all the more necessary today against the backdrop of the current economic crisis, which is having disastrous repercussions.

On behalf of my delegation, I would therefore like to welcome the relevance and topical nature of the items on the agenda of our session, thank the Governing Body and congratulate the Director-General and his experts for the high quality of the documents that have been prepared and proposed for discussion. The delegation of Senegal would like to address briefly the technical items on the agenda of the session.

I shall start with the item concerning the adoption of a Recommendation on the social protection floor. The adoption of such an instrument constitutes an economic and social necessity. Indeed, investing in a social protection floor means investing in social justice and economic development. Social protection contributes to economic growth by improving labour productivity and strengthening social stability. It thus contributes to poverty reduction. In times of crisis, a social protection floor has the effect of an anti-cyclical stabilizer on the economy by lessening the impact of the drop in aggregate demand.

With respect to the youth employment crisis, this item is extremely timely and of real interest to all States. Indeed, in countries that are seriously affected by the global economic crisis, youth unemployment has reached alarming proportions. My delegation would also like to call for improved coordination of macroeconomic policies and more justice in international trade in order to allow our economies to achieve sufficiently high growth rates to promote development and full employment.

My Government believes that the preparation and implementation of a national employment policy or the establishment of an instrument such as the Decent Work Country Programme constitute two sure ways of reducing unemployment, eradicating poverty and facilitating all jobseekers' access to productive and remunerative employment. In other words: decent work.

In this connection, it may be hoped that our current deliberations will help shake up everyone's conscience and make us take the necessary steps towards more justice in our economic and trade relations.

With respect to the recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of fundamental principles and rights at work as part of the follow-up to the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the follow-up to the 1998 ILO Declara-

tion on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Senegal is convinced that there cannot be any sustainable socio-economic development without peace and social justice.

Turning to the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, I would like to say that we share the concerns highlighted in the Report. We express our solidarity with those workers and call on the international community to accept its responsibilities in the face of that situation.

The Report's significant achievements are a source of great satisfaction, which makes us proud of our Organization, which works tirelessly, patiently and resolutely in pursuit of its noble ideals.

This is why, at the end of each of our sessions, there is always renewed hope of a better future and that the conclusions of our discussions and exchanges will contribute to the full development of people throughout the world. Let us do everything we can not to dash this great hope.

Ms RIDDERVOLD (*Employer, Norway*)

On behalf of the Nordic employer federations from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden present here at this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, I am honoured to have this opportunity to present our views.

First, on the Director-General's Report, *ILO programme implementation 2010–11*: We appreciate and acknowledge the work done by the Organization over the last two years. The Nordic governments are substantial donors to the ILO's regular budget as well as to technical cooperation programmes. The employers' organizations stress the need for even greater focus on social dialogue in the Decent Work Country Programmes. The gender equality aspect has, as you know, had the full support of the Nordic countries for many years. Social dialogue and tripartism are, and will always be, a main pillar of the ILO's work, both within the Organization and in the field, and we must continue to keep this at the forefront.

The Director-General's Report gives a good overview of the activities performed. However, for the next Report, we would have liked to see some more about the quality of the activities. Some measurement criteria would better reflect quality, costs and scale of ILO interventions.

It is our firm belief that ILO projects must remain constituent- and recipient-driven and tailored to individual needs. In other words, there should be no "one-size-fits-all" approach. It is obvious that this would be impossible to implement within an Organization like the ILO that serves constituents in all parts of the world.

Today we write 7 June, 2012 – and it is time to look forward!

The Nordic employers' confederations would like to congratulate Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General of this House. We very much look forward to cooperating with him through the Employers' group of the ILO. The ILO's relevance and usefulness to business are crucial for us in the years to come.

For us, it is important that the ILO helps to promote sustainable, competitive and productive enterprises. Sustainable enterprises in the formal sector are key to achieving employment growth, which we so dearly need today in the recovery after the economic and social crisis.

The needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their importance in employment creation should also be given great attention and, at the same time, help promote formalization of the informal economy, which is unfortunately where, today, we find most of the SMEs.

Promoting entrepreneurship, including women's and youth entrepreneurship, which has been widely and constructively discussed in one of the committees of this year's session of the Conference, is also a key element for employment growth.

Other priorities for the next years as seen from a Nordic point of view should be the modernization of ILO labour standards policy. New standards, when necessary, should be widely ratifiable and implementable in the countries that really need them. We also find it urgent to consider some of the existing standards against the needs of modern economies with rapidly changing labour markets.

We have seen a recent reform of the ILO Governing Body and appreciate that it is still ongoing to make it even better. Now it is time to reform also the International Labour Conference, which involves so many thousands of people from all over the world, to make it more flexible and adaptable to the twenty-first century and to the needs of the constituents.

The ILO has, over the last few years, extended its work also to collaboration with other international organizations. We think that when such collaboration takes into account the comparative strengths and differing policy perspectives of each organization, it will be mutually beneficial and will strengthen the ILO in the future.

Greater transparency in all activities and decision-making is essential to attain the objectives set out in all ILO activities and processes, of which I have only mentioned a few.

To conclude, I would dare to say that we, the Employers, will on our side engage in the spirit of the ILO, through dialogue and collaboration, to achieve the best possible results for the Organization in the years to come.

Original French: Ms CAMARA TOUKARA (Minister of Labour and Public Service, Guinea)

In taking the floor before this august assembly, it is my pleasant duty to convey to you, as well as to your fellow officers, the warm greetings of the people and Government of Guinea, especially those of our Head of State, Professor Alpha Condé.

This session has marked a new stage in the life of our Organization, namely, the election of a new Director-General of the International Labour Office, Mr Guy Ryder. I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate him most warmly on behalf of the Government and social partners of Guinea.

Furthermore, the delegation of Guinea pays tribute to His Excellency, Juan Somavia, and we reiterate the great appreciation and profound gratitude of the people and Government of Guinea for the unstinting efforts of the Director-General and the ILO to keep peace and achieve change and democracy and respect for fundamental rights in Guinea.

We will always remember him as a great visionary, calm and determined. He was always ready to listen to others and his personal contribution and involvement during his term of office in the great changes in the international community have given the ILO a strong voice and helped to foster understanding between States. For all these reasons, we

thank him most warmly and wish him all the best in his new life.

There are items on our Conference agenda which are of crucial importance to the world of work, including the social protection floor, youth employment and the promotion of fundamental rights at work.

All of these items constitute challenges for our countries because of the weak or inadequate responses from our States to resolve these thorny issues, which are affecting the lives of millions of young people and women throughout the world. That is why we need a greater level of national and regional cooperation so that we can find solutions commensurate with the scope of the challenges and the expectations of our people.

Thanks to changes in Guinea, the new authorities of the state have set priorities and launched a number of initiatives: we created, in 2010, a department for the promotion of youth employment, which has devised a national policy paper for young people and sports, and a strategic ten-year plan relating to it; we have an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which includes youth employment; we have set up a youth support fund with 30 billion Guinean francs.

Nevertheless, despite these non-negligible efforts and because of the domestic constraints of our country, my Government calls on the international community to help us consolidate what we have achieved and to offer new prospects and responses to the needs of our people.

Such support could include the organization of a conference of donors for youth employment, the establishment of a youth employment database management system, vocational training and the promotion of local employment through labour-intensive technologies and microfinance.

As regards the social protection floor, Guinea endorses the ILO initiative to draw up, as soon as possible, a framework document for a national social protection policy and Decent Work Country Programme to aid the Government in implementing the commitments it has made to help the workers of Guinea.

The promotion of fundamental rights at work remains the cornerstone of sustainable social progress and throughout its life, our organization has enshrined this as a creed for all nations which love peace and social justice.

That is why my country is making every effort to strengthen social dialogue in a spirit of partnership and we are holding numerous consultations with social partners.

During this session of the International Labour Conference we must note with regret that peace is still weak and under threat in several regions of the world, especially the Middle East and Africa.

My delegation believes that peace is an issue which should be important to all of us and remain at the centre of our concerns because it goes hand in hand with our common aspiration for development and social progress.

My country is very concerned by the recent events which have occurred in the Middle East and the West African subregion, especially in the Republic of Mali where peace and stability are seriously threatened by violent changes in the north of that country.

In conclusion, my delegation feels that the international situation as regards the economic and fi-

nancial crisis underway, calls upon us to rethink our governance policies and our responses to the various problems which we are discussing to promote new synergies and partnerships which can lead to genuine development.

This is only possible if the ILO and different stakeholders, including the States, define and adopt a global action plan so that we can fight together to emerge from the crisis and give millions of young people, women and workers, decent work which will lead to economic and social progress.

The ILO can be sure that in this it has the total support of our Government of Guinea.

Original Spanish: Mr PEREIRA (Worker, Uruguay)

It is a great honour to address this distinguished audience today on behalf of the workers of Uruguay.

First of all, I would like to extend a warm thank you to Mr Somavia for his remarkable work at the helm of the International Labour Office. We shall remember the kindness and consideration he showed to our Confederation (PIT-CNT) and also his tireless efforts to defend basic rights at work.

I also congratulate Mr Ryder on his election and wish him the best of luck as future Director-General of the ILO. I assure him that he can count on the understanding and cooperation of our Confederation in everything he does to bring more dignity to the lives of workers and our peoples.

The trade union movement in Uruguay views the crisis affecting the leading economies of the world with great concern. The situation in Greece, Spain and Portugal and other European countries augurs very difficult times for millions of wage earners. The economic and financial crisis did not happen spontaneously, nor should it be attributed to one-off causes. It is a structural crisis, a crisis of the neo-liberal model in place.

Unfettered globalization led by laws of the market which resulted in a period of permanent speculation and dominance of financial capital over work and production, has condemned us to live from one crisis to the next.

Each economic crisis causes, among the working classes in particular, a backtrack in their rights as well as great suffering. It harms democratic life and deepens social injustices. It causes unemployment, impoverishment and marginalizes many sectors of society.

Therefore, we are concerned because experience has shown – it is necessary only to look at Spain and Greece – that when there are crises, outdated mantras are repeated by multilateral finance agencies as if they were magic formulae, but in fact these are completely worthless.

Diminished working and social rights, insecure employment, lack of social protection and a decrease in wages leads to stagnation and widens the gap between rich and poor, which inevitably causes tensions and social conflict. So to face this harsh crisis which has no clear end, we need to explore new modes of action. It is not through lowering wages and reducing rights that this crisis, which affects a major proportion of the world, will be resolved. We need active policies promoting production, job creation, decent work, social protection and decent wages and, above all, we need to guarantee the right to organize, to collective bargaining and participation. We need to have a fairer distribution of wealth!

The positive experience of the majority of governments in Latin America over the last decade has meant that they have worked in favour of their peoples by using anti-cyclical measures for social protection and state investment; supporting the more vulnerable strata of society, promoting domestic production and consumption. We feel that collective bargaining and social dialogue are essential tools for building societies which are more integrated, more democratic and more just.

We would also like to refer to the situation faced by workers in Guatemala. Their fundamental rights are being systematically violated, including the right to life. And we would also like to denounce the permanent and unfair blockade inflicted on Cuba and the serious consequences thereof.

The situation in the Committee on the Application of Standards must be mentioned; I would like to point out that this is a very dangerous precedent for the future of the ILO.

The Employers' group has more or less blocked the work of the Committee with a proposal that is unacceptable in every sense because it explicitly questions the legitimate right to strike, to tripartism and also questions the supervisory bodies of the Organization. We defend the right to strike which, as well as being set out in Convention No. 87 (as testified by the recurring jurisprudence of the Committee on Freedom of Association), is a fundamental human right which is enshrined in the highest international legal instruments.

We are firmly against any deterioration in the rights and the actions of the supervisory mechanisms of the ILO because this would mark the start of the demise of the Organization; the only tripartite international forum.

Ms SUFIAN (State Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh)

I congratulate the President on his election. I am sure his wisdom and experience will guide this Conference to a successful conclusion. You can count on my delegation's support and cooperation. I commend Mr Somavia for his services to the ILO. We thank him for his commitment and efforts to promote decent work around the world. I also congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General.

Since the last session of the Conference, we have some important developments in the labour and employment sectors in Bangladesh. In line with the Government's "Vision 2021", we have adopted our national labour policy. Our aim is to promote economic growth, ensuring social justice and equality. We have also made progress with the revision of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006. We wish to finalize the work through consultations with our social partners considering our national context.

We are working on trade union capacity building. The ILO has helped us with gap analysis at the legal and enterprise levels. We are also working on the automation of trade union registration.

The Government is planning to train our workers and management-level officials about the rights of workers under the Better Work Programme. We are also planning to enhance our inspection capacity.

Bangladesh is committed to protecting women's rights at work. An awareness-raising and training programme to help end violence against women in the workplace is under implementation. We are working on improving our technical and vocational

education and training programme with special attention to train young female students.

We had a series of national consultations to develop a plan of action in line with our National Child Labour Elimination Policy of 2010. A tripartite council has finalized the list of hazardous jobs for children. The Government is running a programme on child labour with its own funds.

Our Government is implementing projects on green jobs with ILO technical support. We are training young people to work on solar energy in remote areas, which will promote sustainable development.

We are also working on ratifying the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. The ILO has done a gap analysis of our existing laws. We are considering further steps in this regard.

This year we have a number of important issues on the Conference agenda. We take note of the ILO's work on social protection floors. It seems possible to ensure minimum social security guarantees even in low-income countries. There is, however, no "one size fits all" solution. Each country will have to define its own national social protection floors.

We expect the ILO Recommendation to be developed this year to give us broad and flexible guidance on that. The Recommendation should promote social inclusion and solidarity.

Our Government invests around 2.5 per cent of our GDP in social safety net programmes. These programmes provide income and basic services to poor women, children, the elderly and disabled people. We need to see how this could be built into a national social protection floor.

Youth employment is one of the most pressing issues of our time. In Bangladesh, 1.84 million young people enter the job market every year. Most of them are absorbed by the informal economy. We need to give them the means to find gainful employment and decent work. Our Government has the long-term vision to guarantee one job per household, targeting young people. We have joined the ILO's Youth Employment Network.

We need to give special attention to our migrant workers, who are mostly young people. Our Government has started giving easy loans and training for our migrant workers for their better protection and employment. We urge the ILO to look more at the youth aspect of migration.

Bangladesh remains committed to the fundamental principles and rights at work. We look forward to the adoption of the ILO's action plan for the next five years, which will promote fundamental principles and rights at work. Bangladesh has ratified seven of the eight core ILO Conventions. We are working on ratifying the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), considering our socio-economic realities.

We value the ILO's support and suggest that it be tailored to our national situation. The ILO must channel its work through the Ministry of Labour and not bypass it. We see some trends to the contrary that worry us.

Global economic recovery is still weak. We need to have jobs-rich growth to make the recovery hold ground.

Our economy is now part of the global value chain. What happens in one part of the world directly affects our workers and employers. We have limited fiscal space to save them from these shocks. We come to the ILO to find answers to these chal-

lenges. The ILO must remain the last resort for the world's poor to seek social justice in the global world. Long live Bangladesh!

Original Arabic: Mr JERAD (Representative, Union of Workers of the Arab Maghreb)

At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Director-General-elect, Guy Ryder, on his election. On behalf of the Union of Workers of the Arab Maghreb, I wish him every success in his duties in order to ensure more justice, equality and trade union freedoms, individual and collective freedoms in all parts of the world. Allow me at the same time to extend my thanks to Mr Juan Somavia for all his efforts for the application of international labour standards, and especially the principles of decent work.

The aftermath of the global economic crisis is still affecting the everyday lives of different social categories, especially and in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded from the cycles of production and consumption. These are the urgent issues mentioned in the reports submitted on social protection, justice, the youth employment crisis, domestic workers and international labour standards. The Report of the Director-General this year highlighted the extent of the progress made in achieving the targets set out in the reports of previous years, especially those regarding decent work.

The Arab Spring revolutions which we have experienced, and are still witnessing in our Arab region, have demonstrated the failure of options previously adopted in establishing security and stability through a situation of social injustice; rising unemployment levels, especially among working women and university graduates; the absence of social protection in the full sense of the term; the attempts made by the Government to control trade unionism, and to deny the right to organize; the adoption of vulnerable patterns of work – all factors which led to widespread popular uprisings, and to the revolutions which overthrew several political systems.

The path to ensuring the minimum level of stability has to be followed through the application of the eight fundamental international labour standards, led by the Conventions related to social dialogue, which are aimed at achieving sustainable development that is also fair. But dialogue will not be an effective mechanism if a set of key conditions are not met, such as the right to establish trade unions; ensuring the independence of trade unions and freedoms; and ensuring the participation of workers' organizations in decision-making. Restricting the work of trade unions to mere collective bargaining is wrong, as trade unions are concerned with development, and with its social, economic and political dimensions.

The time has come to move from the phase of preparation, planning and programming to the phase of working in the field with ILO assistance so as to help poor people in the developing world. The aim is to reduce unemployment, which has reached unprecedented levels in some of our Arab countries, especially in the Maghreb region; develop social protection programmes so as to ensure the right to occupational health and safety at work; the right to pension and old-age benefits; the right to protection from unemployment for the sake of decent working conditions, in addition to protecting young workers and working women from discrimination in all its

forms, and to translate equality effectively in all its aspects.

The people of the world are expecting progress so as to avoid the dangers of the suffocating economic crises, and their impact on workers, especially in the Maghreb region, which needs, more than ever before the strengthening of the mechanisms of employment, of health and social protection coverage, and the promotion of dialogue in its social, economic and political dimensions.

Security in the Arab region hinges on the ability to remove pockets of conflict through the elimination of the continued injustice which is affecting our people in Palestine. On behalf of the Union of Workers of the Arab Maghreb, we would like to express our appreciation of the Report of the Director-General, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. We believe that there is a need to bring more serious and forceful means of international pressure to bear on Israel so as to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, and to enable them to realize their legitimate right to establish their independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital, and the liberation of the Syrian Golan, and the Shebaa farms in Lebanon.

Original French: Mr GUIRO (Worker, Senegal)

It is with great pleasure that I am taking the floor on behalf of the men and women workers of Senegal to congratulate the Mr President on his election to the presidency of this current session.

These congratulations are also extended to the Vice-Presidents and Officers of the Conference. To them we renew our support and our encouragement, wishing them every success in the accomplishment of their noble mission.

The last session of the Governing Body of our institution elected a new Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder, who will very soon replace Mr Juan Somavia.

During 13 years, and in a difficult situation, the Director-General, Juan Somavia, committed himself with determination, intelligence and vivacity to defending and strengthening the place of the ILO on the international stage, working with international organizations and he placed the principles, values and objectives of our Organization at the heart of the debates.

I should also like, from this lofty rostrum, to pay tribute to him for the immense work which he carried out. I wish him a happy retirement with his family and friends.

The choice of Mr Ryder to lead the ILO is symbolic in many ways. For the first time in its history our prestigious institution will be led by a person who has represented and defended the interests of workers throughout the world for many years. He has also held several important positions in his career and therefore has the knowledge and the experience to lead our institution.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Governing Body who allowed us to make this historic choice. I have known Mr Guy Ryder for many years, and I am convinced that he will hold high the torch of the ILO and that he will have the full tripartite support that is necessary for him to complete his difficult mission.

This Session is taking place against the backdrop of the economic and financial crisis, which has had disastrous social consequences which risk upsetting the balance patiently built up since the end of the

Second World War. In spite of the soothing speeches about the overriding need to change global financial and economic governance, neoliberal policies continue to drive humanity into the abyss.

From north to south and east to west, the crisis is increasing job insecurity, unemployment and poverty before the eyes of powerless governments, some of which have proved unable to define new policy directions, essentially because they are accomplices of financial powers obsessed with maximizing short-term profits.

Only three years from the target date of the global commitment to achieve the MDGs, some 75 million young people across the world are unemployed, according to the ILO report.

We commend all the efforts made by our Institution to promote decent work. A perfect example of this is the Workers Symposium on 'Policies and Regulations to Combat Precarious Employment', held in Geneva in October 2011.

The agenda of the current session of the Conference, focusing on youth employment, social protection and rights at work, provides a framework for reflection, dialogue and the creation of recommendations on these three major issues. This will inevitably require a change of approach and a paradigm shift in global economic and financial governance.

My country, Senegal, has just conducted, on 25 March, a presidential election which was held under peaceful, transparent and democratic conditions praised across the world. This election led to Mr Macky Sall being elected as fourth President of the Republic of Senegal.

The workers of Senegal have been reduced to poverty by exponential inflation in the prices of everyday foodstuffs and services, excessive income taxes, alarmingly high job insecurity and unemployment, and limited social protection, and they have high expectations of the new authorities whose initial measures and promises regarding the major concerns of the world of work are reassuring and give grounds for hope. I fervently hope that the new authorities of my country will very soon sign the Decent Work Country Programme – Senegal and ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) by the end of 2012.

One of the strategic priorities of our Organization is the strengthening and promotion of dialogue in poor countries such as ours which aspire to economic and social development. Unfortunately, for several years key sectors such as education and health have been hit by recurring social crises which undermine the country's efforts to achieve the MDGs.

I thus hope that the new authorities of Senegal will attach great importance to social dialogue by strengthening the resources and powers of the National Social Dialogue and Labour Administration Committee, respect signed commitments and organize national and sectoral discussions to address the economic and social problems faced by Senegalese society.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that the implementation of the conclusions on the minimum social protection floor and youth employment will make it possible qualitatively to change the lives of millions of people around the world.

On behalf of the Eritrean delegation, let me take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome the newly elected ILO Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder, and thank Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, for his immense efforts, guidance and leadership in implementing the ILO principles, and wish him all the best in his future career. I am delighted to deliver a speech on behalf of my Government at this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

The Government of Eritrea, in its quest to create a prosperous nation in which every citizen enjoys a high standard of living, is undertaking massive development programmes. Thus, the level of different social services in Eritrea has significantly increased, including in education, health, agriculture, mining and rural development. These sectors all contribute to employment creation.

The Government of Eritrea is accelerating its efforts to achieve sustainable development through improved food security. Thanks to the efforts made to achieve food security over the last ten years, the State of Eritrea is now experiencing stability in the food supply chain. This decision on the Government's part, despite the significant challenges it posed, has proved to be the right one. We can affirm with certainty that Eritrea is now free from the paradox of cyclical aid.

The current Strategic Plan of Eritrea has been developed at a time when the world is confronted by global economic turmoil, which has already posed a devastating threat to our employment services. However, we are persistently committed to improving our employment services and providing services that respond to the needs of the people. In addition, the Government has outlined how it will face its new responsibilities associated with the current economic crisis and emerging social problems. For that reason, our national development programme is not only riding the storm, but it is also preparing its people for similar calamities in the future.

In the current economic downturn, global trends indicate that young people are suffering disproportionately from the lack of decent work opportunities. If our world continues on the current path, there will be massive unemployment among young people and unskilled workers. More young people than ever before will be compelled to work longer hours under informal, insecure work arrangements, characterized by low productivity. For our part, we advocate both social and human development programmes which rely on the vision of social justice that facilitates job creation and improves the quality of life of young people.

In conclusion, I would like to inform you that all our development programmes are formulated in line with our key international commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, Eritrea is registering tremendous achievements in the social and health indicators. While the Government of Eritrea is investing all its efforts to achieve social justice in the country, the United Nations has reinforced sanctions against the people of Eritrea. The groundless and unjust Security Council resolution 2033 (2011) will prolong the plight of the people in general and that of workers and young people in particular. Hence, in order for the people and Government of Eritrea to achieve sustainable development without being derailed from their path, we

kindly call upon the ILO and its member States to denounce this unfair sanction.

Mr VAN LEEUWEN (*Representative, Education International*)

Education unions around the world are very thankful for the inspiring leadership shown by the Director-General, Juan Somavia, who succeeded in increasing the ILO's influence in the international community.

Thank you, Mr Somavia, for standing by us all these years. Suffice to say that we are delighted with the election of Mr Guy Ryder as his successor. He can count on Education International. We bring together 30 million teachers and education workers worldwide. We are confident that our new Director-General will carry forward the crucial work of the only tripartite body of the United Nations, and that he will double ILO's efforts to promote and protect the rights of hundreds of millions of workers.

We have been painfully reminded of the urgency of such effort last week when the Employers' group contested the independence and impartiality of the Committee of Experts.

Obstructing the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards is in total contradiction with the spirit of social dialogue which, I thought, we had decided would prevail in this house.

Let us say it one more time, the trade union movement is a cornerstone of any democratic system. In the last five decades the education unions that we represent here today have greatly contributed to the democratic, social and economic development of their nations.

But it seems that with the global economic crisis, the hunting season has been declared open. Attacking unions, or, at least, reducing or even revoking their collective bargaining rights, has become all too popular amongst certain employers and politicians.

In the United States, and in several European countries, budgetary constraints are the pretext for restricting the rights of our membership.

Other countries give equally unconvincing explanations for not abiding by international standards, but the underlying factor, I am afraid, is ideological. It is contempt for democratic standards and if budgetary constraints, the mood of financial markets, or, why not, the weather conditions, are going to determine the democratic nature of our societies, we need to ring the alarm bell and that is what we do today.

The current aggressive stance of the Employers' group in the Committee on the Application of Standards demonstrates the little weight the rights of workers and democratic values, in general, seem to carry in times of crisis.

As I speak, we have teachers' leaders in Bahrain – to give you just one example – sentenced to jail for exercising their rights. They have vested their hope for justice in our Committee on the Application of Standards and I guess they will have to wait until the Employers come to their senses.

Later this year, we will produce evidence to the ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations concerning teaching personnel that teachers' rights are widely ignored, while employment conditions are deteriorating.

Our sector is suffering from what we call de-professionalization, the influx of unqualified teachers and the restriction of our professional freedoms and autonomy is directly affecting education quality.

May I remind our governments that countries with the best performing school systems are countries with strong professional unions, where teachers are respected instead of underpaid, attacked, or even locked up behind bars.

We stand for quality education as the basis of democracy and social justice. The public school is a crucial element of any social protection floor. It is also the most powerful tool to confront the global crisis, to achieve sustainable growth and to give hope to young people.

All the key global institutions agree that there is a big gap between words and action. We therefore place special importance on the ILO's sectoral activities which can help close that gap. For the same reason we welcome the ILO's initiative to organize a Youth Employment Forum.

Before anything else we expect the ILO not to allow itself to be distracted from its prime mission to protect our labour standards. We expect a new Director-General to stick to his guns. We gladly provide him with all the ammunition he may require.

(Mr Matthey takes the Chair.)

Original Spanish: Mr TOVAR ARRIETA (Worker, Colombia)

On this occasion, I would like to focus on three main topics. Firstly, the importance of the ILO's supervisory bodies in terms of the development and protection of labour rights. Secondly, the importance of Conventions and bodies of the ILO for constitutional justice in Colombia. And finally, I would like to focus on a general concern about the problems encountered this year on the Standards Committee.

When we look at the results achieved by the ILO's Decent Work Programme, not only over the course of the past year but also since 1999, it is important to stress the importance of participation by trade unions in Decent Work Country Programmes. Guy Ryder has already, as Director-General-elect, declared in his statement of intention that the ILO has to be a resolute actor, not merely a moral commentator. In the ILO, we are not here to talk about philosophy. Rather, we are here to contribute to the development and protection of labour rights in the world of work.

We thus believe that the attack mounted by the Employers at this Conference against the Committee of Experts, the ILO, the Director-General and the Committee on the Application of Standards constitutes a failure to comply with the Employers' commitments, since it includes a proposal that ignores the major progress which has been achieved through many years of work in the area of strikes. This can have major negative consequences for the legitimacy of the whole system of labour law, both in international and domestic law. The strength of international labour standards depends on universal agreement by governments, workers and Employers around the world to accept the ILO and its supervisory bodies.

The ILO's work has been accepted by governments for more than 80 years, but the irresponsible attitude of some employers is now threatening one of the most democratic, participatory and inclusive forms of supervision, which has achieved so much in support of social justice and the effective exercise of fundamental labour rights in many countries.

In Colombia, the ILO bodies responsible for the application of standards have been an essential tool

for keeping Colombian trade unionism alive. In particular, the Committee on Freedom of Association has prevented the consolidation of impunity in cases of murders of trade unionists. The Committee of Experts has prevented the emergence of interpretations that are incompatible with trade union and labour rights. The Committee on the Application of Standards has been a forum for social dialogue where Colombian trade unionism has made its voice heard without restriction or betrayal.

The Constitutional Court of Colombia has indicated that international human rights Conventions ratified by Colombia are explicitly part of the Colombian legal regime, and the recommendations and interpretations of ILO bodies are therefore mandatory. On 17 occasions over the course of the past 21 years, Colombia has been called before the Committee on the Application of Standards over serious violations of the right to freedom of association. It has also received technical assistance and one high-level mission. In spite of this, there are continuing serious violations in Colombia of the conclusions and recommendations of ILO bodies. It will take many more years of work to overcome a culture of hostility to trade unions in Colombia. We need strong institutions which can efficiently and effectively protect rights not only through judicial processes but also – and especially – through preventive measures and deterrent sanctions. Unscrupulous employers must not be allowed to gain from failing to respect rights and routinely using non-standard or junk contracts. It should be impossible to ignore young people and women or discriminate against victims of anti-union violence or the millions of unemployed who have no social security.

Ms WILLIAMS (Government, Barbados)

First, I wish to congratulate the Chairperson on a very succinct document. I would like to comment on two areas, principally on the promotion of sustainable enterprises, and by implication, youth employment, and to link this to the section of the Report which speaks of "staving off renewed crisis". I note also that the ILO proposes to have further consultations and dialogue on some outstanding issues.

I congratulate the ILO for the work that it has done on the promotion of sustainable enterprises and I would urge that efforts be not only continued but intensified.

In an almost perverse manner, the advance of technology, which is constantly breaking new frontiers, has served to displace a number of activities that were delivered using greater human intervention. In other words, there is disintermediation in almost every sector and a greater direct link from producer to consumer, bypassing intermediaries and therefore eliminating jobs. Also, as corporations get larger, absorbing smaller companies, they look for economies from consolidation and this, too, results in lay-offs. Resumed growth is likely to result in a resumption of these developments, with implications for employment, particularly youth employment, unless action is taken to achieve a different outcome.

Resumed growth will not solve the inexorable impact of employment resulting from technology. It will therefore be important for the ILO to continue and, if possible, enhance its efforts in encouraging enterprise development and youth entrepreneurship.

Governments must be encouraged to use tax and incentive systems to assist in enterprise develop-

ment and to support youth employment. It is important that the message be sent to corporations and businesses that maintaining employment levels is important for maintaining demand and for ensuring future sales. The ILO is well positioned to continue sending this message of the interrelationship of the welfare of the worker and the welfare of businesses. Without purchasing power, markets will shrink. Without employment, purchasing power will shrink. By helping maintain incomes, corporations will benefit from resulting greater demand. Youth represents that future demand.

We need now to focus on the long term. Incentive schemes, once seen as schemes for start-up operations, may now need to be continued by governments for longer periods, and may well need to become part of the normal package offered to entrepreneurs. Similarly, credit guarantee schemes may need to become more easily available so as to permit businesses to access credit more easily. Young entrepreneurs in particular often have very little savings and very little collateral. Credit guarantees are therefore important in this regard. The ILO can play a continuing advocacy role in encouraging such facilities to be established.

The enterprise development effort must recommend changes in the type and level of government involvement in enterprise development, corporate organization, business incentives, and a refocus on educational institutions. The results could be very positive for employment in general and for youth employment in particular. Start-up businesses, for example, take time before profits become stabilized. Enterprise development cannot therefore be a temporary initiative or a short-term initiative. It needs to be sustained, particularly in today's environment.

It is important that the educational system continues to support these efforts and that youth be prepared to embark on taking on the risk of self-employment. They must understand risk-taking and the ILO can play an advocacy role here in encouraging the changes in educational emphasis that may be necessary.

If I might link these comments with the strategic policy section of the Report, I would like first to commend the ILO for work conducted by the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the Global Jobs Pact. While global growth is expected to be in the region of 3.5 per cent in 2012, some countries and regions are expected still to register negative growth. Slow growth will continue to produce challenges for employment. The future of all youth is at stake and action is therefore necessary.

As was mentioned yesterday, job sustainability must come from the private sector. However, the ILO is well placed to actively continue advocating this approach. I commend the ILO for its efforts and urge that, though the crisis may be abating, the problems remain. Sustainable enterprise development and youth entrepreneurship are key to tackling youth employment. Much is at stake.

Original Spanish: Mr LUCAS (Worker, Guatemala)

It is a pleasure for me to congratulate you from this podium on your Report which has been submitted at this important and unique tripartite Organization.

As a worker and a Guatemalan citizen, I regret the situation which has arisen at this Conference in the Committee on the Application of Standards, par-

ticularly the position which has been taken by the Employers' group. I would urge them to reflect and to take account of the fact that production depends not just on capital but also on labour; they are both equally indispensable, and that if social dialogue is to yield results then it should be based on reality and not on blackmail which we have seen on this occasion.

We Guatemalans live in the midst of violence and impunity. This is the result, among other reasons, of the lack of a serious and objective state policy to tackle the situation. The very little investigation into the countless cases of murders and reports of human rights, labour rights and union rights violations, reveals the expansion of networks which are linked to organized crime from the economic and political elite of the country.

Cases of malnutrition, hunger and infant deaths are on the rise. This is according to the reports of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In this context, we must mention Guatemala's social and labour problems. Economic, social and political problems have worsened. This is the result of special interests and particularly those which exploit labour and plunder our natural resources, among others.

There are some businesspeople who ally themselves with various local governments and they develop strategies for providing public services in energy, health and education through their foundations. They describe this as corporate social responsibility (CSR), when in fact it is simply a way of evading tax.

Unemployment is one of the structural problems facing workers and particularly young people and women who can find no alternatives or opportunities for work. Conditions for decent work of the sort promoted by the ILO are a dream. In many cases, not even the minimum wage is paid and in the meantime the cost of living has risen systematically which has led to a dramatic worsening in the quality of life and standard of living for workers.

Temporary contracts in the public and private sectors have accelerated the outsourcing of labour, bringing with it job insecurity, human and labour rights violations, disrespect for collective bargaining and freedom of association, unfair dismissals, failure to pay statutory entitlements, changes in labour conditions, lengthy work days, sexual harassment in the workplace, repression, persecution, discrimination and fear of freedom of expression and of organization, and murders of trade unionists.

Exclusion of indigenous peoples can be seen at all levels, including in land ownership, access to basic services, labour conditions, access to the formal economy and justice, etc. The judiciary has given 44 eviction orders and 14 of these were carried out as of August 2011. These land seizures are inconsistent with international human rights standards and the provisions of ILO Convention No. 169 in the way in which they were executed, the use of public security forces, the lack of prior notification, the infringement on the right to a defence and due process, and the participation of non-state actors in the eviction acts.

On 1 May, 2012, in Santa Cruz Barillas, Huehuetenango, a farmer was killed and two more were wounded for refusing to sell their land to a multinational company, Hidro Santa Cruz. These events are connected with the activity of companies exploiting natural resources which cause violence due to the

vacuum of legal authority. This company had been rejected by the local people, which led to a confrontation between local people and representatives from that company.

The Government's response to these events was to mobilize hundreds of army personnel and the national police and to declare a state of siege, thus violating the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and causing fear and terror in the local people.

We are very concerned and indignant at this action by the Government in favour of the security of a company rather than in defence of the interests of the Guatemalan people. These are parts of our national context, so it is not surprising that laws are being applied in favour of powerful sectors which are influenced by groups on the margins of the law. In this connection, we believe that our Constitution and peace agreements that have been concluded are not being practised.

Original Spanish: Mr LÓPEZ (Worker, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

On behalf of the workers of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we extend our greetings to all delegates in this Conference, and our heartfelt congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder on his election as Director-General. Greetings as well to Juan Somavia, the outgoing Director-General.

We are greatly concerned by the situation on workers' rights as depicted in the Report of the Director-General and reiterated faithfully in the reports presented to the Committees. These describe a series of violations of the rights contained in the eight core Conventions of the ILO.

In contrast with this global state of affairs, we are extremely pleased to be able to tell you that in Venezuela, we workers managed to witness on 1 May, the promulgation of the Organic Law on Work and Workers. This is a legal instrument developed by means of an unprecedented process of consultations and participation both through trade union grass roots, including agricultural workers and fishermen, and sectors that have been unprotected thus far and are not part of trade unions: domestic workers, those providing domestic services and non-dependent workers.

Our Socialist Bolivarian Workers' Central proposed to the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on 10 November, that we establish this law together. To this end we held 2,040 consultation activities with trade union grass roots and collected a total of 19,400 proposals constituting the basis for the law, which makes this law the most democratic and consulted law in the history of our country, aside from the Constitution of the Republic itself.

Our law, which arose from the workers' debate, strengthens and consolidates the rights contained in the eight core Conventions of the ILO.

The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); we have ratified trade union liberties, to protect trade unions and guarantee their autonomy. The Workers' delegation from Venezuela in this Conference, made up of six trade union confederations with various ideological positions, is the best demonstration of the existence and advocacy of this freedom.

The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); we have reinforced the right to collective bargaining.

The Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention,

1957 (No. 105); we in Venezuela have abolished forced labour and this law unambiguously reiterates that prohibition.

The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); there is a categorical ban on child labour and that of adolescents.

The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); the new law not only guarantees wage equality but also protects such equality by prohibiting any breakdown therein.

The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); access to work without discrimination is guaranteed.

Moreover, the new law guarantees core stability for workers; it will eliminate in a maximum period of three years any type of outsourcing or employment insecurity and it reduces the working week to 40 hours with two full days of rest.

At the same time, we have reformed the Law on the Venezuelan Institute of Social Security guaranteeing the right to a pension from the age of 55 for women and 60 for men, regardless of whether they have contributed to the social security fund or not. This pension is equal to the national minimum salary and will be increased according to the cost of living each year.

These triumphs are taking place in the midst of economic growth that has lasted for six consecutive quarters, demonstrating that it is possible to combine the generation of wealth with its fair distribution and to respect workers' rights.

My delegation congratulates and supports the work done by the Committee of Experts on the Committee of the Application of Standards. We flatly reject the position of the Employers in attacking the right to strike, which is something that workers have moved mountains to obtain. We also deeply lament the fact that there has been no consensus on drawing up a list of countries that oppress workers.

We deplore the fact that the final purpose of the Employers is to overcome the crisis of capitalism at the cost of workers.

We support the workers of Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, Spain, Greece, Portugal, and in particular the workers of Palestine, and we would also call for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the armed conflict which the workers and people of Colombia have been suffering from for decades.

Original Arabic: Mr MATTAR (Employer, United Arab Emirates)

I am delighted to address the Conference on behalf of the Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry. It gives me great pleasure to begin by congratulating you on your election as President of this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference and I wish you every success in your work.

The transformation of the economy of the United Arab Emirates and the success we have had in overcoming the global financial and economic crisis have been the result of factors that are paving the way for a new economic model. It is based on a philosophy and a vision of the future where we will move from a time when the focus was on labour-intensive sectors of economic activity to a new era. Then, the focus will be on industries that require a large capital with a knowledge-base, state-of-the-art technology and recognition of the importance of the environment in maintaining one's country and na-

tional identity and increasing job opportunities, especially for young men and women and enabling them to participate productively in the labour market. It is also important to ensure job stability for the temporary immigrant workforce in order to safeguard the economic structure and investment frameworks in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.

Our economy has managed to engage young citizens, strengthen their capacities and put them at the heart of the development process, enable women to participate in the world of work and incorporate people with special needs and promote their role in the development of society.

Several private sector companies have signed agreements with national universities and science and research centres enabling gifted students to pursue studies within the country or at the best universities in the world before coming back to work in those companies. This allows the young people concerned to have access to decent work and to be competitive in the job market.

Employers have striven to forge partnerships with government initiatives, by promoting self-employment and directing young people towards employers. Among these initiatives we can cite the establishment of the Khalifa Fund for the development of enterprise, the Mohammad ben Rachid Institute which supports young people's projects, the al Charika Institute which supports pilot projects and the Saoud ben Saker Programme which supports projects that give young men and women the possibility of being self-employed.

The employers in the United Arab Emirates are only too aware of the primordial role which the ILO can play in the area of technical cooperation. We urge the Regional Office in Beirut to ensure that there are the necessary required and sufficient technical resources to step up and increase the level of technical cooperation.

Lastly, we echo the words of our brothers in the Arab group and fraternal countries who have called for the ILO to continue taking a particular interest in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and support the efforts of Palestinian workers and employers to build an independent, productive and sustainable national economy. We applaud the pivotal role played by Director-General, Juan Somavia, in this regard. We firmly believe that the new Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder, will continue to promote that line of work, knowing as we do how committed and supportive he is of the struggle of the Palestinian people and workers.

Mr SULTAN-MUKHAMEDOV (*Employer, Uzbekistan*)

On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of Uzbekistan, allow me to thank the International Labour Organization for its constant support and productive cooperation, and to inform you briefly about the efforts made by the Chamber, as the largest employers' organization in Uzbekistan, to implement the state policy of employment and business development.

One of the key principles of the CCI is to develop the system of social partnership. To ensure systematic regional development and local employment promotion, a general agreement has been concluded between the Cabinet of Ministers, the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce on socio-economic issues for 2011–13.

The system of social partnership at work, established in Uzbekistan as a mechanism to coordinate the interests of employees and employers, is based on mutually beneficial cooperation.

The CCI works closely with the key partners – the Minister of Labour, the Federation of Trade Unions, the National Centre for Human Rights, as well as a number of non-governmental organizations such as Foundation “Mahalla”, which represents more than 9,500 *mahallas* (communities), the Foundation “Nuroniy”, representing the older generation, and the youth movement “Kamolot” uniting young people across the country.

To date, the number of businesses has exceeded 520,000 units. The implementation of the state programme “Year of small business and entrepreneurship” stimulated the creation of 35,000 new small companies in 2011. Small businesses account for 54 per cent of the total volume of GDP, 74.8 per cent of all employment in the economy and 31.6 per cent of the total volume of capital investments.

In Uzbekistan, commercial banks are paying great attention to the financial support of small businesses, especially family business structures. In particular, last year the amount of allocated credits to this sector increased by 1.5 times in comparison with 2010 and amounted to over US\$2.2 billion, of which US\$13.7 million were allocated to the financing of the business plans of graduates of colleges.

We are conducting consecutive work to create conditions for involvement in entrepreneurial activities among youth, especially in rural areas. Joint projects with colleges and universities are being realized on teaching the skills for organizing and conducting business.

All 194 districts and cities of Uzbekistan are involved. From 2010 onwards, special curricula and training programmes have been introduced at colleges and universities with modules on “introduction to business” and “labour law”.

The CCI promotes the employment of college graduates, including the work practice of 246,000 college students for training and further employment at 70,000 enterprises.

Together with such partners as “Kamolot”, “Microcreditbank” and other banks, projects on business skills training are being carried out, with loans/credits being obtained for 10,000 graduates of colleges and universities.

It should be noted that in the former Soviet Union, young people were prepared mainly as employees. Today, however, all manner of conditions and opportunities have been created so that they can make their own choice and start their own business.

Information sessions have been conducted for employers to clarify adopted regulations in the field of business development.

In 2011, more than 250 workshops, with over 9,000 entrepreneurs, were conducted.

Every Friday of the week, in each district and city of the country, “entrepreneur days” are held to study and discuss current issues and challenges of doing business, including direct interaction between employees and employers. In 2011 alone, 106,819 employers attended these events.

We highly appreciate the work done by Director-General, Juan Somavia, and the ILO, with respect to the development and implementation of youth employment policies and social protection.

In cooperation with the ILO and member States, we propose the following: to introduce activities on

improving occupational safety and health; competitiveness and productivity and other work improvements in small enterprises; and to use the facility of ACT/EMP on developing publications to help the CCI develop its capacity.

Finally, in partnership with government agencies and non-governmental organizations, the CCI intends to continue efforts on ensuring employment and business development in Uzbekistan.

Mr ČANAK (*Worker, Serbia*)

I am 67 and I will speak today about youth – the youth that we are responsible for, the youth that have to replace us in politics, in the economy, in governments, employers' federations and trade unions, and here at the International Labour Conference. "The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity", said Benjamin Disraeli, and I believe that it is our common duty to help them become successful trustees. But are we doing enough? Do we know what has to be done?

In Serbia, we call them the "unemployed generation" because, indeed, that problem affects the whole generation: unemployment affects 41 per cent of those under the age of 30, and 34 per cent of those under the age of 35. In poorly developed regions in the south and east of Serbia, this percentage surges by an additional 10 and even 15 points.

Who should we blame for this? The crisis? Yes and no, because if we address the crisis alone, then we could overlook the most important thing, which is that these negative trends date all the way back to the early 1990s when two, to me, interdependent crucial processes started to develop: the fall of the Wall and the rise of new democracies and rudimentary market economies in the East, and, as an immediate answer, acceleration in the overall use of new technologies in the West as a tool to communicate with emerging markets. When we add to that hasty and nasty privatization practices, we end up with a bomb that potentially kills two normally corresponding age groups: youth entering their working age and the older generation that is almost at the end of their working age. These two age groups, two generations, are not corresponding anymore. They become confronted, although they suffer from the same economic and social disease, the increasing lack of jobs. It becomes more and more difficult for the young to enter the labour market, while the elderly are facing the ever-increasing trend to extend the working age.

Due to the fact that contemporary technologies are a two-way street, the processes from the other side of the former Wall have swung back like a pendulum. However, instead of a search for adequate, sustainable and just solutions, the answer has come in the form of general alienation of the financial capital that started to act as an unregulated, independent factor in the world and national economies – independent not only from manufacturing and social services industries, as it always tended to be, but even from its own financial roots. This is what we call the world crisis, although it is only a scanner that can read even the most hidden processes and outcomes. It is ironic – if that comforts us a little – but this alienated financial capital could serve as the best forensic tool to explore and describe its own misdeeds, if you want and if you dare to see them, of course. But if you want and if you dare, you will see that the measures offered so far have nothing to do with the solutions we need.

What kind of growth is that, if it is achieved by extending the retirement age further and further, far beyond 70, as the tendency seems to be now, and postponing the first employment of youth far beyond 30, as the current trends seem to indicate? Are we really for growth achieved by austerity measures, if it means saving on the elderly and youth? Not long ago, something very familiar to trade unions and employers was created in the building just across the hill over there, the headquarters of the ILO, and approved many times right here in this room: a Decent Work Agenda, which has meanwhile become one of the major avenues not only for getting out of any crisis, but rather for not getting into one. But can we say that this is an item from that Agenda? Can a society be decent when there are citizens whose entire active life is shifted forward for a decade against his or her own will? If we do this to our youth today, what will their youths look like? We are responsible for them, too.

Now, let us get back shortly to growth based on austerity. When anyone talks about austerity, it is usually understood that cuts will start and end in social services, mainly in education and health-care systems. Education and health-care centres have long been defined as a mirror that reflects the conditions of society, except that this mirror is used one way by those who create the money and another way by those who distribute that money.

Anyway, I have to add something here that is very interesting, with which I shall end. The figures that I gave you are the findings of one of the most recent polls in Serbia, but I am very certain that this situation exists almost everywhere. While employment, economic development and improvement of living standards are at the top of the list of the priorities of young people between the ages of 18 and 35, 58 per cent of them believe that they do not influence political processes in Serbia whatsoever. Before we opt for austerity, we should ask ourselves what lies between that 58 per cent and the inability to get a job in a developed and sustainable economy based on the basic Decent Work Agenda, which in turn guarantees better living standards. I can tell you that there are very dangerous things dwelling in that gap, something that has already happened several times in the last century, and we all should endeavour not to have it repeated again.

Original Spanish: Mr ECHAVARRÍA SALDARRIAGA
(*Employer, Colombia*)

I would like to congratulate the President on his election to steer the deliberations of this Conference. The Colombian Employers have great admiration for the support you gave our country when you were appointed Special Representative of the Director-General in 2001.

At your initiative, a committee was set up to resolve cases that had been brought before the ILO, which is now working better than ever.

This Committee has become a point of reference in the International Labour Standards Department for resolving complaints that are brought before the Committee on Freedom of Association at the domestic level in Latin American countries.

This year, I shall raise an issue that departs from the usual details of the Report of the Director-General to the Conference, an issue that requires us to examine how the system for supervising the Conventions and Recommendations is working.

As a member of the Employers' group, which is a member of the Committee on the Application of Standards, I would like to say that at no point have we questioned the honour or respectability of the experts, or the staff members who work for the application of standards system.

Hence our astonishment at the mistaken interpretation reached by the Director-General himself in this regard at the beginning of the discussion of his Report in the plenary of the Conference yesterday.

We have said that the experts do not have the authority to interpret Conventions; disagreeing on the authority of a supervisory body is not the same as questioning the respect of the members of that body.

We have always recognized the right to strike and we examine it in the Committee on Freedom of Association in cases when, because this or other rights enshrined in domestic legislation have been exercised, freedom of association is affected in terms of legislation or in practice. We do not share the view, indicated by the experts in paragraph 118 of this year's General Survey, that the right to strike exists because it is included in the objectives of Convention No. 87.

The Employers disagree with that interpretation, firstly, because, under the Constitution of the ILO, it is not within the mandate of the Experts to interpret Conventions and, secondly, because there is no reference whatsoever to that right in Convention No. 87.

We have said that the Office should be at the service of the supervisory bodies because that is its nature. Giving an opinion on the support role the Office plays in the supervision of standards does not mean we have doubts about its staff; it clarifies a perception of its meaning and guidance.

We regret that the discussions in the Committee on the Application of Standards have meant that, this year, we do not have a list of individual cases to be dealt with by the Committee.

We are not seeking to apportion blame; the time is ripe to think about the mechanisms we should implement so that this does not happen again in the future.

None of this should upset the Director-General. What we need now is the tranquillity and calm that is fitting to this house in order to overcome our differences, which is nothing more than the exercise of social dialogue, the standard for resolving differences and the means with which we have always shown the world that we can achieve concord and social cohesion between peoples.

I would like now to refer briefly to my country's achievements in social and employment terms, building on the recommendations of the high-level mission from the ILO in February last year.

In May 2011, we entered into a tripartite agreement containing measures we have been implementing in several fields in order to achieve the goals proposed by the mission. They have included re-establishing the Ministry of Labour and ensuring it is precisely focused on employment issues, strengthening employment issues, strengthening labour inspection in accordance with the labour legislation, introducing standards to limit the appropriate use of associated work cooperatives, verifying the compliance or obligations by temporary recruitment agencies, recognizing that collective accords with non-unionized workers contain greater benefits than those granted to workers who are pro-

tected under collective agreements, creating a committee to consider alternatives for regulating article 53 of the national Constitution, bringing the workers' human rights commission back into action, putting a former Constitutional Court judge at the helm of the Special Committee for the Handling of Conflicts referred to the ILO (CETCOIT), which has, within a short space of time, helped to resolve several cases that were before the ILO, the swift action of the Ministry of the Interior to protect union activists and leaders, and last, but no less importantly, the increasing number of investigations conducted by the Attorney-General's office and the sentences handed down by judges that bring to light criminal acts committed against unionists and effectively convict the perpetrators.

We recognize that much remains to be done, but in Colombia we are heading in the right direction towards sustained development in terms of economics, society and political understanding. This will confirm our status as a nation that is making progress and is regarded with high hopes by the rest of the world.

We would therefore like to call on our friends from workers' confederations to join with us, as social actors, in putting together proposals to the authorities and the Government for their consideration and implementation.

Mr GLYNN (*Representative, International Movement ATD Fourth World*)

International Movement ATD Fourth World appreciates the privilege of addressing this plenary session.

We have been actively involved, invited by the ILO to make a submission to the Committee debating the adoption of a new ILO instrument on the social protection floor.

ATD Fourth World, with a core of like-minded groups, coordinated the activities of 54 non-governmental organizations. We then provided the Committee with relevant and consistent input from those concerned to facilitate the effective and efficient work of the Committee in the best interests of our constituents.

ATD Fourth World was formed in 1956. It is a non-governmental organization with ECOSOC general consultative status. It engages with individuals and institutions to find solutions to eradicate extreme poverty. It works in partnership with people in poverty in both the global North and South, creating public awareness of extreme poverty and influencing policies to address it.

ATD Fourth World wholeheartedly supports the ILO Recommendation on the social protection floor. We see the adoption of this Recommendation as a crucial step forward in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. We are ready to work hand in hand with the ILO constituents – governments, employers' and workers' organizations – to implement the Recommendation.

In our submission to the Committee, we highlighted three issues.

First, for the Recommendation to be properly implemented, all forces in society must participate. In this participatory process, the social partners, together with governments and civil society organizations, need to work in partnership.

Second, we are convinced that a rights-based approach is the most effective way to design sustainable social protection floors. In this way their im-

plementation will not depend on the political situation of the day, but be based on firm, long-term principles, such as equality, non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability.

Third, we support the human rights texts that recommend “all persons should be covered by the social security system, especially individuals belonging to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups, without discrimination”, irrespective of their legal situation.

We commend the social protection floor initiative of the ILO and sincerely hope that civil society can contribute further with its implementation across the globe.

Mr SERAZ (*Worker, Bangladesh*)

Allow me to first express our heartfelt greetings and sincere thanks on behalf of the Trade Union Movement of Bangladesh. I hope this session of the International Labour Conference will deliver fruitful results and outcomes for healthy industrial relations, sustainable economic growth and proper distribution of wealth among developed and developing countries, as well as among the rich and the poor within countries.

I have the privilege and honour to inform you, at this august gathering, that the Trade Union Movement of Bangladesh is in a position, now that ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 have been ratified by the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, to ensure their proper implementation by law and action. The Trade Union Movement urges the Government of Bangladesh to amend the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) 2006 in order to bring it into line with ILO Conventions, which was a public commitment of the present Government reflected through the election manifesto.

The BLA 2006 needs to be more in conformity with the ILO Conventions to protect workers’ rights. The Trade Union Movement of Bangladesh firmly believes that there should be a single unified labour code for all working people without any discrimination. We would like to see decent working conditions in the formal and informal economy, as well as for workers working in the export processing zones (EPZs). Due to the antagonistic attitude of the employers in most cases and lack of proper government measures, as well as the lack of capacity of the administration at times, the existing law is not implemented probably in some sectors. We feel that bringing the BLA 2006 into line with the ILO Conventions is important, but in our experience the Government needs to take appropriate measures to extend the implementation of the existing labour laws, and to proceed with a further revision of the BLA – hopefully in the very near future.

The Trade Union Movement of Bangladesh strongly believes that a creative, constructive and responsible trade union movement is vital to ensure sustainable industrial development, increase productivity, maintain industrial peace and to safeguard democracy and economic growth. And, for this, a continuous and meaningful social dialogue is important. It can be organized by tripartite and bipartite means.

The public commitment and voice of the present Government, under the leadership of Honour Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is always in favour of the working class. Despite shortcomings in laws and practices, the Department of

Labour and Inspection has inadequate manpower, as well as a lack of training or supervisory powers, to implement all the procedures. We ask the Government of Bangladesh to address these issues on an urgent basis.

The multifarious struggles of trade unions to conduct their activities have been a common phenomenon for decades. But, in today’s global world, all the parties – including the Government, employers and trade unions – need to understand that we must respect ILO Conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international obligations. Democracy, democratic practice, respect for each other and mutual trust and frequent, meaningful social dialogue are the only ways to address complicated issues. I hope that the Government will continue their actions, so that all the trade unions’ struggles will soon be at an end. I request the ILO to come forward to support Bangladesh in its capacity building and skills development for a better understanding, to ensure social dialogue for all the parties concerned. Thank you very much for listening patiently. *Joy Bangla- Joy Bangabandhu* – unite world working class.

Original Spanish: Mr PARRA GAONA (*Worker, Paraguay*)

As a representative of the workers of Paraguay, I would like, first of all, to offer a very special greeting to Mr Juan Somavia, our brother from Latin America, who is the Director-General of the only tripartite body of the United Nations system, the ILO, with a sacred mission to defend the labour rights of the entire working world. We wish Mr Somavia all of the best for the future.

We are also very pleased by the election of the new Director-General, comrade Guy Ryder. We wish him all of the best in his future work.

We would highlight the great effort made by Mr Somavia, particularly in launching the international campaign for decent work and other similar initiatives.

Regrettably, today’s world is characterized by the worst crisis in human history and we have not been able to do anything to deal with unemployment and the ongoing violations of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining throughout the world. What is happening in rich and powerful countries is surprising and worrying because, in 100 years, the children of European citizens are starting to have worse living conditions than their parents. This is one example of the impact of the crisis of neoliberalism-dominated capitalism.

Paraguay began a major process of change in 2008 with some major achievements, but it must also be said that there is still an authoritarian culture, and arbitrary procedures, particularly by employers against the trade union movement, continue. The Ministry of Justice and Labour has found that, of every ten trade union organizations set up, seven rapidly disappear because of the dismissal of their leaders and threats against their members. In Paraguay, the practice of exploitation of workers and social exclusion persists. Systems of forced labour still exist in various parts of the country, particularly among indigenous peoples.

There is also gender discrimination, the principle of equal work for equal pay is not enforced, ILO Conventions are not complied with, and *campesinos* live in fear of not having enough land to survive, grow crops and die with dignity. Young people still do not have the opportunities they need to have de-

cent work, and migration continues to be a way out for thousands of unemployed and those suffering from deprivation, poverty and even extreme poverty.

In Paraguay, we must undertake genuine comprehensive agrarian reform to put an end to the sad reality that 2 per cent of landowners control over 80 per cent of the ownership of the best land in the country. Even more worrying is the MIPYMES Act, roundly condemned by us in this 101st Session of the Conference. It is a deceitful act on SMEs, supposedly intended to promote micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, but it is unconstitutional and undermines clear provisions laid out in the Constitution and the Labour Code. It stipulates that workers can be paid only 80 per cent of the minimum wage and it makes a mockery of other provisions in domestic law and ILO Conventions that protect workers. And there is another threat: a law on first employment for young people, which similarly violates labour standards and ILO Conventions. The National Central Union of Workers of Paraguay and the Authentic Unitary Union of Workers, like other trade unions in Paraguay, reject these manoeuvres by our country's legislative branch, which answers directly to the economic and financial sectors which consider human labour to be a mere commodity and seek to exploit it to the maximum extent in order to maximize their profits.

Furthermore, I would like to express my concern over the attitude of the Employers who have decided that there would be no list of cases to be dealt with in the Standards Committee. This has led to a serious questioning of the right to strike and the supervisory system of the ILO.

We reiterate our special greeting to the outgoing Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, highlighting the work he has done, and we express our thanks and we welcome the designation of Mr Guy Ryder as the new Director-General. We hope that there will be better times ahead for workers throughout the world.

Mr GOODLEIGH (*Worker, Jamaica*)

At the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference, we adopted the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. At that time we agreed that the Declaration's four strategic objectives were inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive.

We expected that the principle of policy coherence embedded in the Declaration would serve as a guide for policy coherence and for sustainable development between social, environmental and economic objectives among multilaterals; an approach that is critical in the best of times, but which is almost mandatory in times of crisis for small developing economies.

Currently the world's economy and its human resources are in crisis but, on the ground, policy coherence between multilaterals is not taking place despite the understanding of the Global Jobs Pact. What we have in most instances is the resuscitation of old institutional approaches. There are three crucial areas that have demonstrated this point.

The first concerns macroeconomic policy and the approach that national economies in crisis should adopt. In essence, as mathematicians would argue, the world is in a suboptimal slump and what is needed is approaches to move societies and economies towards optimal equilibrium.

For small developing economies, a major part of the answer must be that our future prosperity is dependent on how many of our citizens are in work and how innovative and productive they are, which, in turn, rests on the level and quality of the education and training they have received and how effectively they have deployed those skills across our economies. In other words, our future is dependent on the quality of our human resources.

For us to pursue that strategy, we would require in the short, medium or long term, a macroeconomic policy that places questions of employment, economic growth and living standards at its very heart. We appreciate that this has to be done in the framework of price stability and fiscal sustainability. That is an approach that is in our interests.

However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommendations regarding macroeconomic policy often take into consideration only questions of fiscal targets, lower inflation, lower interest rates and a reduction of debt in relation to GDP. Clearly, common ground has to be established between what small economies need and the IMF recommendations if we are to put our economies on a growth path.

The second issue concerns the continual doctrinal call for the shrinking of the State. We would ask the question, where is the empirical evidence that suggests that the shrinking of the State is a sustainable, medium and long-term strategy in developing economies? Because it is a fact that the State plays a critical and indispensable role in free markets. Free markets cannot exist without the rule of law; enforcement of contracts; the impartial administration of justice; the protection of intellectual property; and a healthy, educated, trained and socially protected workforce. As a consequence, we reject the notion of the minimalist State.

We are committed to a State that encourages civic engagement and facilitates reforms. Workers need a State that has the resources, the ability and the power to equip them with the knowledge, the capacity and the social protection to cope with a world that is increasingly volatile, complex and ambiguous.

The third area concerns questions related to the social protection of the world's human resources in the short, medium and long term. In the current crisis, the World Bank often times accompanies its sister institution, the IMF, in dealing with economies in crisis. But there is a fundamental vision difference between the ILO and the World Bank regarding the question of social protection. Fundamentally, in the ILO, we view the rule of social protection benefits as an investment in the development of a society and the fostering of social peace. The World Bank is solely focused on questions relating to risk management and the aim to minimize the income equalization effect of all social transfers. As a consequence, most of these recommendations are to dilute the social protection policy for economies. Clearly, if our goal in June 2008 was to foster social coherence among multilaterals we are not succeeding.

In closing, I must make reference to the fact that it is ironic that at this Conference our social partners who trumpet the benefits of free trade and globalization and insist on the establishment of international standards within the economies for the accommodation of capital, seem to be questioning the benefits of international standards in the world's

workplaces. It is not only contradictory, but I will offer the old adage “Be careful what you wish for”.

Original Russian: Mr PETRIASHVILI (Worker, Georgia)

Allow me from the outset to take this opportunity to congratulate Guy Ryder on his election to the position of Director-General of the International Labour Office. Allow me also to express my deep conviction that in the context of a global, financial and economic crisis, the International Labour Organization will be able to play a key role under his stewardship, and make a distinctive contribution to overcoming emerging challenges.

Our case was to have been examined in the Committee on the Application of Standards, and my intervention was to have been dedicated to a detailed analysis of non-compliance with the rights of unions in Georgia. However, in light of the deplorable situation in that Committee, which was provoked by the Employers, I would like to focus on this case from a Georgian perspective. I think that civilized employers are also not overjoyed with the state of affairs in the Committee.

The Georgian Trade Unions Confederation values the efforts of the ILO to develop respect for fundamental rights based on the principles of social equality and social dialogue. Unfortunately, due to the political and economic particularities in my country, these efforts have not yet led to tangible results.

The workers of Georgia have been eagerly awaiting this Conference and have vested their hopes in it – especially the participants of a strike at the Hercules factory, which was illegally broken up by the police, who were subsequently arrested for their participation in the strike. Teachers, whom the Ministry of Education and Science have been pressuring and threatening, have also been waiting for this day. That same Ministry unilaterally tore apart the current collective agreement and abolished the system of electronic voluntary contributions, thus jeopardizing the financial basis of the union. Railroad workers, whose employer, the state railroad company, continues to ignore the collective agreement in place, and which summons activists and forces them to choose between being fired or leaving the union, have also been awaiting this meeting, as have all Georgian workers who are not protected from the arbitrary will of employers.

They were hoping that the Government of Georgia, having come to Geneva to examine the events that had taken place, would at least have confirmed its promise to amend the discriminatory labour code. The amendments were suggested by the United States authorities in January 2012, as requested by the Government of the United States based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee of Experts of the ILO.

Thanks to trade union solidarity, those very recommendations and the conclusions from the Committee of Experts were the very material which formed the basis of the EU's demands to the Government of Georgia made during its negotiations on concluding a free trade agreement, which is not only of economic, but also political, import. You know that when you consider domestic risks and external risks, those risks are very high in our country.

We hope that our brothers and sisters from civilized countries, together with employers and governments, will have a look at what is going on here,

and I hope that employers will understand why their predecessors were wiser than their present representatives, and why the ILO was established, and Conventions drafted, and supervisory machinery put in place.

The impunity of employers and governments who kill, harass or arrest their workers is ongoing and has no limits. It creates a dangerous breeding ground for revolution. The situation in the Committee is unacceptable. We will stand by our rights and we will obtain what is duly ours, not in courts or from behind bars, I hope, with which we are all too familiar, but in a civilized manner, which has been the practice of this house for decades.

Original Spanish: Mr MEDINA TORRES (Worker, Mexico)

Mexican workers are attending this Conference shortly before the G20 Meeting to be held in our country, and we are prepared to support the Global Unions' Statement, which is fully in line with ILO principles.

This Statement says that the G20 governments must adopt aggressive programmes to guarantee greater growth and the expansion of decent work in response to the emergency that we are facing today.

The Statement also demands guaranteed public investment in infrastructure, including “green jobs”; refocused labour market policies aimed at creating decent work and reducing income inequalities; strengthened labour market institutions, consolidating the rights of workers; a commitment to introduce social protection floors; and the creation of a Youth Jobs Pact.

We believe that this last point is extremely important. We need to have a tripartite front in order to establish a global pact to promote youth employment for the G20 based on the ILO's Global Jobs Pact.

We should realize that the challenge of decent work for young people is a complex matter, which involves the virtuous systematic and multidimensional articulation of a set of macroeconomic and microeconomic policies for each and every country.

A knowledge-based economy involves the establishment of a knowledge-based society with knowledge-based workers. Here, it is young people who should play the lead because what we are trying to do is to create a smooth passage where young people can easily move from systems of learning to systems of work, informed by lifelong learning and the respect of their rights as workers.

We need to accelerate, facilitate and optimize the transition from learning to work systems, where key roles should be played by education systems, the culture of work, and company training schemes and collective bargaining.

There is a broad range of experience, models and proposals which CINTERFOR, the ILO's specialized unit, has systematized around vocational training and ongoing, continuous learning.

Training systems based on the dual learning scheme, alternating between the classroom and the workplace, are particularly effective in accelerating this transition from school to work. They allow young people to understand the need to combine theoretical knowledge with the practical, real requirements of the workplace. On the other hand, it is also a necessary bridge which brings together the needs, characteristics and objectives of both education systems and training systems for, and at, work.

Vocational training, which articulates companies' economic and productive needs for training in the necessary technical skills, and in the context of young people's human development, must play a key role in the transition from school to work.

Improving these skills also goes hand in hand with managing to convince society and families that great social investment and inter-generational solidarity is required, as the Director-General said a few days ago, so that students, schools and workplaces develop a vision and a culture where work is a highly priced, scarce good, which must be cultivated and cared for and which requires being constantly prepared and creative, in order to respond to the great "social debt" which exists in our countries and which is also reflected in the growing number of young children entering child labour.

Through innovative social protection schemes for youth employment, we need to implement policies which will guarantee that young people who do not have access to any sort of employment can have appropriate access to well designed unemployment benefits.

Unemployment benefit systems for young people should go hand in hand with effective programmes and active labour market policies, so that this vulnerable group is not kept out of the labour market.

For our part, as a trade union organization, we are committed to strengthening the work of trade unions so that young people may join us and we can then collaborate with their full integration into society and work, and to sustainable and inclusive development that promotes greater social justice and enables the creation of "decent societies".

Original Arabic: Mr ELOAKLEY (Government, Libya)

I am speaking on behalf of Mr Al-Rajbani, Minister of Labour in the Libyan transition Government, who was unable to be present.

It is a pleasure to congratulate the President and Officers on their election and to wish them every success.

The current financial crisis has had an adverse impact on the working classes, first and foremost, because their job opportunities are dwindling, especially for young people. The worst of the jobs crisis is that jobseekers are prevented from working.

That is what happened in Tunisia in January 2010, when young Mr Bouazizi was prevented from working as a fruit and vegetable vendor after his wheelbarrow, his only means of making a living, was confiscated.

The Arab Spring is the result of the revolt of workers demanding dignity.

After the victory of the people of Tunisia and Egypt, the people of Libya paid a very high price to win their freedom. More than 50,000 people, a majority of them young, lost their lives. However, despite weapons, tanks, troops and mercenaries, the Libyan people emerged victorious first and foremost with the help of God but also thanks to its concessions and the support of the international community.

It is thus incumbent upon us to thank the international community for its support.

We have moved on from the past, we have embarked on a new era in which we will build a new Libya, and for this new Libya we have mobilized enormous human and financial resources in order to deal with the problems faced by the transitional Government.

We have begun by hiring the young revolutionaries to perform jobs in various sectors and paying salaries to those who lost their jobs as a result of the cessation of activities of domestic and foreign enterprises, while others have been hired to fill vacant posts.

We have also prioritized the development of new legislation to ensure that the rule of law prevails in Libya. The Labour Code, for example, regulates the relationship between workers and employers. We hope that the Labour Act will be promulgated very soon. It is inspired by international and Arab Conventions ratified by Libya, as well as all international human rights Conventions.

The provisions of the Act reflect the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which covers freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the abolition of child labour.

A bill on the freedom to establish trade unions, federations and professional organizations without State interference has been introduced.

The Ministry of Labour and Training is making considerable efforts to put in place youth training programmes both domestically and abroad. The programmes will make it possible to enhance the skills of young people and train them in accordance with the needs of the domestic labour market.

In this connection, it is an honour for me to request the ILO's technical assistance.

In the context of the wider Arab nation, we request the Director-General to present a report on the fate of the resolution of the 59th Session of the International Labour Conference concerning the situation of Arab workers in Palestine and occupied Arab territories, as well as the resolution of the 66th Session of the International Labour Conference concerning the implications of Israeli settlements in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories in connection with the situation of Arab workers.

We also request that the report be drawn up by a mission sent to the occupied Palestinian territories.

I would like to take this opportunity to denounce the massacres committed against the Syrian people by its oppressors. The most recent massacre occurred in Al Houla, where most of the more than 108 victims were women and children.

On behalf of my delegation and all those present, I address my condolences to the Syrian people and hope that it will be victorious.

Ms WALKER (Representative, European Disability Forum)

I am speaking on behalf of the European Disability Forum, a member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA). The IDA is a network of global and regional disabled persons' organizations (DPOs). Today there are more than 1 billion persons with disabilities in the world. Persons with disabilities are overrepresented among the poorest and face multiple barriers and inequalities in the enjoyment of the rights to education, health, employment and living in the community, and this is especially true for women with disabilities.

We therefore support and welcome the Social Protection Floor Initiative, as well as the ILO Recommendation on the social protection floor being elaborated during this Conference. Following are some key recommendations that should be taken into account in the elaboration and implementation of social protection policies.

Firstly, social protection floor policies must not discriminate against persons with disabilities, either in law or in fact. Social protection floor policies must take into account the broad impact of discrimination on the basis of disability, which is defined in Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Otherwise, the policies could create new barriers and further consolidate the exclusion of persons with disabilities. Laws and the design of social protection floor policies, as well as social insurance and assistance schemes, must all ensure non-discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Secondly, social protection floor policies must be inclusive of, and accessible to, persons with disabilities and their families. Essential services must be inclusive and accessible. Each service that is not inclusive generates disability-related extra costs for individuals and families as they will have to spend more to get the same benefit from the service compared to persons who do not have disabilities. The lack of essential services, and the lack of inclusion in existing services, must be changed in line with the CRPD.

Thirdly, gatekeeping procedures, eligibility criteria and the design of schemes should consider, and aim to reduce, disability-related extra costs currently borne by persons with disabilities and members of their households. Right now, most social protection schemes fail to take into consideration disability-related extra costs faced by persons with disabilities and therefore those schemes are majorly flawed.

Basic social assistance benefits are determined solely on the basis of the minimum income or poverty line and they are not sufficient to cover basic household expenses and disability-related extra costs, whether personal assistance, assistive devices or rehabilitation. This leaves many people living below the poverty line even when they receive basic support. Disability-related extra costs, therefore, must be considered in the design of schemes and programmes.

Next, social protection floor policies must truly contribute to the greater social and economic participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Unbundling income maintenance and support to cover disability-related extra costs is needed as a means of achieving greater social and economic participation and inclusion. Often when people receive certain benefits when they return to work or go to work, they are forced to give up other benefits, leading them to drop out of that initiative or to drop out of education. In addition, means-testing thresholds should not create disincentives for persons with disabilities to work, nor should they limit their social and economic participation.

In addition, these policies must contribute to the expansion of support for inclusion and must not undermine other social policy efforts already in place or to be developed. In particular, there will be schemes geared towards the implementation of the UN CRPD and coordination and coherence are needed between these schemes and social protection schemes. For instance, in some places, placement in residential social care institutions is considered to be a social protection entitlement, but in fact that is now in contradiction with the UN CRPD. So we need consistency.

Finally, we need to ensure consultation with representative organizations of persons with disabili-

ties. That needs to occur in the development, monitoring and evaluation of social protection policies. We need to ensure that the schemes do not discriminate, genuinely promote inclusion and do not undermine the gains achieved with the UN Convention.

Mr YUSON (*Representative, Building and Wood Workers' International*)

Many of you have probably noticed “Without us”, an advertisement displayed on one of the tramlines, No. 15, that comes here to the Palais des Nations. These posters are part of the global union campaign on the rights of migrant workers. BWI initiated this campaign to draw global attention to the reality that migrant workers are very much an integral part of the global labour market.

The wheels of economies everywhere would stop turning without migrant workers. Today it is estimated that 210 million people are migrants. The majority of these migrants risk their lives, homes and families in search of better jobs and wages. The risks and sacrifices of migrant workers have kept not only their families but also their national economies afloat.

The migrant-receiving countries also have much to gain. And this is where our “Without us” campaign comes in. Governments and peoples of the world, and especially migrant-receiving countries, should realize that without migrant domestic workers there would be no clean houses. Without migrant health workers there would be no health care. Without migrant teachers there would be no education. Without migrant construction workers there would be no World Cups or Olympics. These are the important contributions of migrant workers; they are an essential part of global society.

Because of this it is essential for all workers, and especially migrants, to have decent work, a living wage and safe working and living conditions. Migrants should be covered by the guarantees of core labour standards. Here at the ILO we should ensure that migrants can seek legal and institutional redress when they feel that their rights are violated or unprotected.

BWI would like to appeal to this assembly to support our campaign to push for compliance with international labour standards in the construction of facilities and related infrastructure for the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022. Ninety-nine per cent of the construction workers are migrant workers.

We at BWI question FIFA’s decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar as workers there do not have the freedom to join and establish independent unions. More importantly, migrants are not guaranteed labour rights. Furthermore, the Qatar authorities have yet to live up to their repeated claims to end the notorious *kafala* system or workers’ sponsorship system that ties migrant workers to employers, thereby curtailing their freedom.

Finally, we call on the ILO never to cease being at the forefront of the struggle to ensure that labour standards are complied with in all parts of the world and for the benefit of all workers, whether migrant or otherwise.

While there are other institutions like the unaccountable and non-transparent Global Forum on Migration and Development that have become the forum to discuss issues and problems related to migrant workers, we strongly believe that the ILO should reclaim this role. The BWI calls on the ILO

to take a more active leadership role in the area of labour migration at the global level.

We are confident that the incoming Director-General, Guy Ryder, understands the difficulties and challenges that migrant workers face.

Migrant work is decent work, migrant work should be decent. Let us therefore put migrant concerns high on the agenda of the ILO.

Original Spanish: Mr HEMSANI (Representative, Latin American Union of Workers of Monitoring Bodies)

I would like to begin by echoing the words of the Director-General when he said that decent work should be at the centre of macroeconomic, finance and growth policies. We would also like to express a word of gratitude for the work carried out by Juan Somavia at the helm of the ILO and we trust that the work of the new Director-General, Guy Ryder, will be successful within the framework of social dialogue in pursuit of social justice.

I address you today in my capacity as Coordinator of the Latin American Union of Workers of Monitoring Bodies (ULATOC) which represents workers who carry out public monitoring of the State.

We believe that this crisis requires a profound paradigm shift to pave the way for a universal society based on the primacy of human labour, solidarity and equal opportunities; in other words, an inclusive and fair form of social justice.

We need to reassess politics and its basic institutions, political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations, encouraging necessary social dialogue and tolerance to find balanced and sustainable solutions as well as participation and fervent commitment to overcoming unrest.

The involvement of workers through their organizations and a strategy for mutual and international cooperation should take on a significant role. Our answer to the globalization of the crisis should be the globalization of trade union activity.

Public monitoring offers ideal mechanisms to provide advance warning of potential malpractice and corrective action which can be taken in public administration. It can therefore be a means for eradicating corruption which leads to delays, inequity and poverty.

Workers of public monitoring bodies need to have the profile of their activities raised as a factor determining institutional quality. A lack of public monitoring threatens life, health and the well-being of our citizens.

The lack of stability, administrative careers, selection processes, a fair merit-based assessment system and broad and unrestricted freedom of association and collective bargaining are some of the problems which our members face.

Workers carrying out inspections and inquiries as well as justice workers are subjected to similar conditions.

We need to defend the independence of monitoring bodies and their workers who should be free of any pressures and conditionality.

Given the sudden and reckless breaking of the rules by the Employers in this Conference, we call for a strengthening of the standards-related work of the ILO and of its supervisory procedures of international labour standards.

In light of this, ULATOC needs this Conference to set up a body to analyse the specific issues, which we face, and the conclusions drawn should serve as a basis for developing a Recommendation

for protecting workers in our sector and ensure the quality of public monitoring institutions.

Mr ROLLET (Representative, International Council on Social Welfare)

The International Council on Social Welfare has been devoted to the promotion of social rights especially in the field of social protection since 1928. This is why we welcome with great satisfaction the initiative on the social protection floor taken by the ILO and the United Nations system. We recognize the importance of the work done jointly by the 19 international organizations involved under the coordination of the ILO and WHO. We are convinced that the implementation of a social protection floor in every country is a key element in the fight against poverty and, more broadly, in the solution to the global economic crisis.

As delegates you know that social protection can be seen only as a financial burden, but it can also contribute to the improvement of productivity, be a buffer to soften the shock of the crisis, and improve social cohesion and individual well-being. The Bachelet Report has shown it very well, but many decision-makers still have to be convinced. An international instrument such as the one that the ILO is negotiating during this session of the International Labour Conference, and that will hopefully be adopted this week, will be of great help in convincing any Governments that may still be hesitating to adopt the national social protection floor implementation plan. It will also help to fully incorporate the social protection floor concept into the post-MDG development agenda for the period after 2015.

At our last ICSW General Assembly in Hong Kong 2010, we decided to support the implementation of the social protection floor, and we have asked our members in more than 70 countries to mobilize so that civil society adopts the concept of the social protection floor, analyzes the priorities at country level, and influences governments to implement it.

We have already achieved some results. For instance, the sixth ASEAN GO-NGO Forum, held in Bangkok in 2011, adopted recommendations for the establishment of the social protection floor within the ASEAN countries, and we have organized several international workshops to give leaders of national umbrella organizations of NGOs the opportunity to discuss the implementation of a social protection floor and the means to lobby the governments in their countries. We did this, for instance, in Dakar, Casablanca and Douala.

Many other NGOs have taken similar initiatives and these actions are now converging, through the adoption by more than 50 NGOs of a statement supporting the recommendation on the agenda of this Conference, and proposing amendments. We think that this important first step will be followed by many others. We want to continue acting together and our joint action will bring to the social protection floor the strength of our networks and the added value of our experiences.

Civil society wants to participate in the social protection floor. This will happen at country level on a practical basis and according to national specificities. Of course, in each country, it is up to governments and societies at large to take decisions about the measures to be applied. The role of the parlia-

ments will be to fight for the fiscal space which is needed.

Social partners will go on acting as pioneers in the building of the social protection floor, and we want to appreciate it, but the beneficiaries and their families would provide essential support for the guarantee that everyone can have access to basic health-care services, clean water or primary schools, and to make sure a minimum pension is given to those who are not able to work. Every citizen may con-

tribute usefully to the definition of the needs, the selection of priorities and the ways of implementing the social protection floor. NGOs will play an important role in helping societies to articulate the political will that is the most important prerequisite for political action.

The challenge we are facing is how to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and especially articles 22 and 27, a practical reality.

(The Conference adjourned at 6.15 p.m.)

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