



## EIGHTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**International Institute for Labour Studies****Report of the 48th Session of the Board**

1. The Board of the International Institute for Labour Studies held its 48th Session on 10 November 2006. It was chaired by the Director-General of the ILO and had before it three items: the report of the Director;<sup>1</sup> a document on the Education Programme of the Institute;<sup>2</sup> and a document concerning the acceptance of contributions and gifts in support of the Institute's activities.<sup>3</sup>
2. The Director-General welcomed the first-time presence at the Board meeting of external experts, namely the Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Thandika Mkandawire, and Professors Deepak Nayyar, Michael Piore and Alain Supiot. He highlighted the support obtained by the Decent Work Agenda at the international and regional levels and described the challenges ahead to convert that political support into national realities. The Decent Work Agenda now enjoyed enormous international success and that implied growing demands on the ILO. The Institute's important role in that context was to be an antenna for change; its challenge was to understand the shifting nature of the world economy. The Director-General also saw a space for the Institute in central debates on emerging issues requiring reflection, such as the labour implications of global warming and the question of policy coherence within the international system. He had asked the Institute's Director to look at a number of issues: the *International Labour Review* would have to be overhauled so as to become central for the ILO as well as recognized internationally for its analytical strength; the impact of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization should be assessed three years after the launch of its report. The Director-General also told the Board that with the ILO's 100th anniversary approaching he was reflecting on a possible role for the Institute in collecting and telling the history of the ILO. The Director-General concluded his introductory remarks recalling that the ILO was faced with increasing demands and a tight budget. That required making choices about which activities to concentrate on.

<sup>1</sup> INS.B.XLVIII/1.

<sup>2</sup> INS.B.XLVIII/2.

<sup>3</sup> INS.B.XLVIII/3.

## Report of the Director (INS.B.XLVIII/1)

3. In presenting the 2006 report, the Director listed the areas where new research activities had begun and pointed to outputs from projects started in earlier periods. He underscored the importance of engagement with external research networks and reported on various collaborative efforts such as the organization of national workshops to map out common research agendas; exchange and interaction with the ILO's constituents; work with wider academic networks; and the development of agreements for longer term collaboration with selected institutions of higher learning, mainly in developing countries. The upcoming International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS) Research Conference also contributed to network building. It would be evaluated with a view to planning such events in the future. Several educational activities had been successfully undertaken in 2006 as well as lectures organized. The jury for the ILO Decent Work Research Prize had been constituted and the call for nominations launched and widely disseminated. Progress has been made in strengthening the *International Labour Review*, notably by bringing high-level academics into the Editorial Board, which would be chaired by the Director of the IILS. The Institute had successfully sought to raise extra-budgetary funds. The Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC), the research arm of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), would support research networks and the Research Conference. The latter would also receive support from a foundation. The Director also referred to the informal meeting held the day before where three research projects were presented and discussed by Board members as well as the four external experts. He observed that the discussion had been very stimulating and helpful.
4. Ms. Byers (Worker Vice-Chairperson) commended the work of the IILS over the previous year and identified four future topics in the report of key interest for the Workers' group: global production networks and local development; labour law in low-income settings; corporate social responsibility (CSR) and international labour standards; and cross-border social dialogue. She stated that the Institute was an asset to the Workers' group and expressed the need to find ways to deepen collaboration with constituents, so that they were more involved in the deliberation process and gained from those discussions, brought in knowledge and researchers from their own networks, and contributed to the debates in events such as the forthcoming Research Conference, which she considered a good initiative. She regretted, however, not to be able to attend the Research Conference due to commitments in Canada. The Workers' group would also like to look for opportunities for sharing information back and forth with their networks, acknowledging in this respect a responsibility to disseminate and promote the Institute's work within its constituency.
5. Mr. Suzuki (Employer Vice-Chairperson) stressed that enterprises were very much committed to making work decent and that the IILS had an important role to play to assist enterprises in that regard. He observed that existing budgetary limitations imposed choices and expressed the view that educational activities should receive the main priority. He stressed that research should serve education and that more attention should be given to research themes which were important for enterprises, such as decent work and productivity. There was not enough in the Institute's programme of direct interest to the socially responsible employer. Mr. Suzuki welcomed the idea of the Institute playing a role in illustrating the history of the ILO. He also expressed his satisfaction with the institution of the ILO Decent Work Research Prize and found very timely the organization of the IILS Research Conference. He regretted, however, that he would not be able to attend it and wished that information on the Institute's future activities be given with more advance notice. He concluded by expressing his appreciation for the report and his interest in receiving more detailed information on forthcoming activities.

6. Mr. Ahmed (Worker member) associated himself with Ms. Byers' remarks. He stressed the need for research on issues such as: whether the policies promoted by international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were consistent with decent work objectives, and how those policies might affect government policies; fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining as means for promoting decent work; good practices at the enterprise level; and how to make migration more human. He finally argued that when designing research projects which involved the study of specific countries, the Institute should consult the social partners that were on the receiving end of research.
7. The representative of the Government of Hungary expressed his appreciation for the Institute's research programme as well as the initiative to convene an informal Board meeting, and proposed the adoption of the report of the Director.
8. The representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran congratulated the Director on the excellent work conducted at the IILS. With regard to the ongoing research on CSR, he urged the Institute to envisage a closer collaboration with developing countries, so as to increase the levels of mutual learning. He noted that research findings could be more effectively implemented in the real world of work by buttressing a closer collaboration with governments. Finally, he expressed a particular interest in the issue of migration.
9. The representative of the Government of Argentina expressed his appreciation for the Research and Education Programmes of the Institute. He highlighted the research project on trade and development as one of the most topical issues in the international trade debate and congratulated the IILS on its contribution to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus organized in Argentina in February 2006.
10. Ms. Holst, the representative of UNESCO, expressed her appreciation for the fruitful collaboration between her institution and the IILS, and in particular the input of the IILS to the abovementioned UNESCO Forum held in Argentina and Uruguay in February 2006.
11. Mr. Godoy (Employer member) associated himself with Mr. Suzuki's remarks. In addition, he underlined that despite the willingness of developing countries to achieve the objectives of decent work, and the presence of their comparative advantages, i.e. their labour force and natural resources, most of those countries lacked the appropriate technical, scientific and marketing know-how which could allow them to access decent work without compromising their comparative advantages. Therefore, a key issue to be investigated by the Institute could be how to guarantee the resources needed to realize decent work in the developing world through a better understanding of the processes that had led to decent work elsewhere, e.g. the European Union, and how they could be replicated at the global level.
12. Mr. Lambert (Employer member) expressed his interest in the research project on CSR. He warned, however, that much had already been produced on that subject, and that it would be desirable for the proposed publication to be published as soon as possible.
13. Mr. Anand (Employer member) commended the work done by the Institute since the appointment of the Director. He expressed his satisfaction with the International Internship Course and emphasized the importance of closer collaboration with employers and workers on the definition of the content of the course for the future.
14. Professor Supiot highlighted the importance of the project on CSR. He suggested that a key research question in that respect would be "the identification of the enterprise". In

addition, one must not lose sight of another key issue, namely, that in order to guarantee social responsibility, one must identify not only the actor who should act responsibly, but also an authority before whom that responsibility could be claimed. The ILO might have a role to play in that respect. In addition, he highlighted the hidden normative dimension of “indicators” aimed at evaluating progress made in the socio-economy, and pointed to the need to engage in dialogue with the actors concerned by such indicators. Finally, he emphasized the importance of opening up to languages other than the European ones, such as Chinese and Arabic. That could help better to grasp the complexities of today’s world.

15. Professor Nayyar suggested that the ILS might wish to consider adopting a medium-term strategy for its research programme, taking into consideration its budget constraints.
16. Mr. Mkandawire underscored the increasing relationship between his Institute and the ILS. He highlighted the intersection between the two institutions’ research agendas, in particular in the area of social policy and development, and the fact that the UNRISD and the ILS shared very similar research questions. For the UNRISD a fundamental question was how to promote a social policy that was developmental and transformative without compromising the important values of equity and protection. That question also applied to decent work. Following up on Mr. Godoy’s intervention, Mr. Mkandawire observed that the link between decent work and national development could be seen in a double sense, development being both an outcome and an instrument of decent work.
17. Professor Piore congratulated the Director on his efforts to build a direct relationship with the academic community. He highlighted the importance for the Institute of maintaining a certain latitude in the design of the research projects in order to be attractive for and respected by the outside research community. He also observed that in order to improve communication with academia, the Institute might consider not only hosting scholars, but actually involving them in the research projects. Similarly, he emphasized that access to both trade unions and businesses was key to conducting good-quality research. MIT projects focusing, for instance, on productivity and decent work at the enterprise level could greatly benefit from direct access to the ILO’s constituency. He finally argued that an interesting topic for research was trade union policies aimed at expanding their representation, especially among previously excluded groups.
18. In responding to the discussion, the Director of the ILS observed that there was a common theme in many comments around the idea that possible synergies and partnerships with the constituents were not fully exploited. The Institute’s research agenda could be enhanced by taking fuller advantage of the ILO’s tripartite framework. That framework also offered additional dissemination and communication possibilities and the Institute could build further bridges across the constituents’ diverse agendas. The Institute would explore how better to generate tripartite debate and support educational activities once research results were available, involving a broader part of the constituency. The Director welcomed the fact that the informal discussion prior to the Board meeting had been a success. The conclusions would be shared with those delegates who had not been able to participate. In response to comments made on the resource demands of decent work, he explained that the Institute’s work on “social models” incorporated an analysis of both social and economic policies and their interplay. He would explore whether the work on CSR could be delivered more promptly, but, irrespective of that, the Institute hoped to offer value added in the debate. The point about the normative dimension of indicators could be incorporated into future work, as would the many other helpful substantive points made. A medium-term plan could also be developed.
19. Mr. Suzuki suggested that the project on labour law and decent work in low-income settings could also include the contribution of economists and management scientists. He underlined the important function of public lectures and stressed that it would be useful to

invite personalities with qualities of statesmanship, drawing on both the trade union movement and business. Finally, he wondered how the Institute was going to position itself vis-à-vis the results-based management applied in the Office.

20. The Director of the Institute stressed that the IILS recognized the importance of bridging different disciplines. He welcomed the suggestion to cooperate with constituents with a view to identifying appropriate speakers for future public lectures. With the ILO having adopted results-based management, the Institute would also have to work on the issue of research assessment, and draw on practices in academic institutions.
21. Ms. Byers expressed her satisfaction with the debate, and the involvement of the academics in that year's Board. She stressed the need to keep in mind that the IILS was mainly a research institute and, although there was a need to find ways to improve the dissemination of the research, education should not be the primary focus. Moreover, other institutes focused on education.
22. *The Board took note of the report.*

## **The Education Programme of the Institute** (INS.B.XLVIII/2)

23. In presenting the paper on the Education Programme of the Institute, the Director emphasized the high return on investment in education in labour and social policy for the ILO. The main educational activity of the Institute, the International Internship Course, was undoubtedly successful, as were other activities, such as study visits, internships and visiting scholarships. But there was a larger space to be exploited. The paper listed options about possible future activities. The Institute sought guidance on directions to take, with a view to preparing the Programme and Budget for 2008-09 and perhaps undertaking one or two pilot activities in 2007.
24. Ms. Byers noted the importance of including distinguished scholars from other constituencies so as to reinforce the internship course, while geographical/gender/age balance should be sought for teachers as well as interns. She welcomed the idea of an alumni survey and stressed that it was important to be in contact with the alumni and use their networks; alumni could also be a source of additional funding. As for the idea of shorter national/regional courses, the question would be how to ensure that all regions that had needs were covered without stretching resources very thin, and then being unable to provide follow-up. Regarding retreats/summer schools for leadership, Ms. Byers highlighted the need for them to offer some degree of uniqueness in format, content and approach. She added that the Workers' group endorsed the idea of strengthening research partnerships and networks in developing countries. In addition, she supported the proposals related to the development of postgraduate programmes, particularly the development of curricula with other supportive institutes, and through the constituents. As for the specific type of courses suggested, she stressed that executive courses would have to be very timely and topical in order to be attractive. Finally, on distance education, she drew attention to the high financial costs associated with it, recalling that the Turin Centre was already providing that service. She encouraged further collaboration with Turin.
25. Mr. Suzuki and Mr. Anderson expressed disappointment that figures in the report showed a lower number of employer than worker participants in the internship courses. They considered the imbalance to be discriminatory and unacceptable, and asked the Director to address the issue. Mr. Suzuki also underlined the need to ensure regional balance. With regard to the possible innovations submitted to discussion before the Board, he observed that more should be known about the format as well as the costs and benefits of the

proposed developments before coming to any conclusions. He also felt that among the proposals put forward, the ideas of building stronger collaboration with the Turin Centre, and reinforcing partnerships and networks in developing countries, especially those engaging both unions and business, were very important and should be considered as priorities, together with the International Internship Course.

26. The representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasized the Institute's role in furthering cooperation with member States that were willing to invest in socio-economic research, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran. He suggested that the Institute should make sure that students from developing countries and the least developed countries (LDCs) also benefited from the various educational activities, which were key for raising the research capacity of States, and said that there should be a fair geographical distribution of opportunities. Finally, he noted that his country had systematically translated research produced by the Institute.
27. Mr. Anand argued that the education activities of the IILS should target not only Ph.D. students but also students at lower levels of education.
28. Professor Nayyar suggested that the Education Programme of the IILS should be based on partnerships and networks with the academic world. Given the size of the Institute it would be important to choose the right balance between teaching and research, and to prioritize. In order to strengthen the link with the academic community, the IILS might wish to consider bringing aboard Ph.D. students for short internships, promising young scholars and also distinguished academics. Finally, he suggested that the Institute "hasten slowly" on teaching programmes, which should in general be seen as the end, rather than the beginning, of the expansion path of the Institute.
29. Mr. Godoy expressed interest in receiving a more detailed schedule of the forthcoming Institute activities.
30. In responding to the comments received, the Director saw widespread support for the notion of partnerships, especially in developing countries, and for working more closely with the Turin Centre, thus avoiding any duplication. The development of educational materials would be more effective than engaging in teaching. Replying to the concern expressed by the Employers, he stated that the issue of imbalance in participation in the internship courses had historical origins and further dialogue among the constituents was needed if it was to be resolved. It was agreed that the issue would be discussed by the Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons of the Board and subsequently with the Director. A more detailed programme of activities of the Institute would be communicated at the request of the Employers.
31. *The Board took note of the document.*

## **Acceptance of contributions and gifts** (INS.B.XLVIII/3)

32. Ms. Byers noted the difficulty in discussing budget priorities and related issues only once a year. She highlighted the need to explore ways of raising additional contributions.
33. *The Board took note of and approved the document.*

Geneva, 13 November 2006.

