



SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

ILO strategy and activities on employment and social concerns in crisis situations**Contents**

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I. The challenge posed by crisis situations

1. Crises of various types (ranging from economic crises to situations resulting from armed conflict, natural calamities, and difficult political and social transitions) are contributing further to the current alarming trend towards social disintegration and the deterioration of the employment and poverty situation in different parts of the world. As stated in the paper presented to the Committee in March 1999:¹ “Economic growth has largely declined across all regions, and several countries are in a prolonged and protracted stagnation of output and employment, whether induced by conflict, adjustment reforms or transition-related factors.” While the countries afflicted by the Asian financial crisis showed some recovery during 1999, armed conflicts, natural disasters, economic crises and social and political instability continue to afflict many countries. The challenge for the ILO is to assist such countries in their efforts towards social reintegration through employment creation and income generation for those affected by the crisis.
2. There is little doubt that crises vary greatly in terms of their causes and hence also in terms of the packages of measures needed to respond to them. A natural disaster may cause severe damage to productive assets and livelihood prospects, but leave the political system relatively unaffected and the social fabric intact. On the other hand, a war or political upheaval may seriously impair the capacity of the system to respond due to a breakdown in governance and the functioning of civil society institutions and communities. A sudden economic crisis may leave the political system more or less intact, but it might severely damage the social fabric and exacerbate social tension. Crises resulting from difficult social or major political transitions could affect both the political system and erode the social fabric.
3. The presence or absence of a reasonably representative and functioning government and the institutions of civil society is a major factor in determining or conditioning the most appropriate response. For example, at the end of a bitter civil war and before national reconciliation has even begun, it may be necessary for international agencies like the ILO to work also through other relevant structures rather than only through government machinery, which may not be fully functioning or which may have low credibility among the people. In the aftermath of natural disasters, the ILO would, however, normally work through the government and involve the social partners and NGOs to the greatest extent possible. In countries facing economic crises in which government and civil society institutions continue to function, it may be possible to work with them to develop policies.
4. While the nature and cause of crises may vary, one common element in most crisis situations is a deterioration of the employment and poverty situation. Hence, a common thread in the ILO’s response will be to facilitate socio-economic reintegration for those affected, through the formulation and implementation of direct programmes of job creation, income generation and social integration. Although in most crisis situations, the most important immediate task may have to be relief (which, strictly speaking, is outside the ILO’s mandate), it is important to secure, right from the outset, a space for the transition from emergency to reconstruction, and for broader development objectives. In addition, the measures taken during the emergency period can have important implications for successful reconstruction and development. Accordingly, it is important to build crisis

¹ GB.274/ESP/4, “Employment activities of the ILO in the context of economic crisis”, para. 14.

preparedness within the ILO and to strengthen and streamline the crisis response capability of the Organization.

II. The ILO's response and current strategy

5. The InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction was set up by the ILO in October 1999 as a means of building up its crisis preparedness and capacity to respond. The overall focus of the programme is on employment-related development activities, such as the promotion of employment-intensive reconstruction and rehabilitation works, skill and entrepreneurship training, small enterprise development, local economic development, and the promotion of social dialogue and social protection. The strategy for implementing the programme involves various types of measures and activities before, during and after the crisis which include: early warning systems, crisis preparedness, emergency assistance, and rehabilitation and development activities. *Gender considerations* are an integral part of the strategy.
6. The programme has four interrelated objectives. The first, which relates to *crisis preparedness*, is to develop a coherent ILO framework and comprehensive capacity to respond speedily and in an effective manner to different crises. In order to attain this objective, the ILO's knowledge base on different crises will be expanded, and guidelines and manuals on employment, other appropriate social concerns and appropriate modes of action in crisis situations will be developed. A network of ILO crisis specialists and focal points will be established and technically equipped to contribute effectively to the ILO's comprehensive programmes in crisis countries, and a roster of consultants and experts will be compiled in the different functional areas involved who can be deployed rapidly. Close working relationships and partnerships will be established with relevant UN and non-UN organizations active in the crisis field. A resource mobilization strategy will be developed and implemented to mobilize both internal and external resources.
7. The second objective is to promote the *socio-economic reintegration and poverty alleviation* of crisis-affected groups through employment-intensive investment programmes, skill training, small enterprise development, social dialogue, social safety nets and social protection. To attain this objective, integrated socio-economic reintegration programmes will be designed and implemented to provide employment and income to the crisis-affected groups (e.g., refugees, internally displaced people, returnees, demobilized soldiers, retrenched workers, informal urban and rural workers who have lost their productive assets and sources of income, disabled persons, women and children). Efforts will be made to assist governmental and other relevant groups of civil society to elaborate and implement relevant employment, investment and socio-economic policies that reflect the ILO's concerns and to promote crisis mitigation, general socio-economic reconstruction, and the generation of employment opportunities to absorb the vulnerable crisis-affected groups.
8. The third objective is to *increase awareness* at the national, regional and international levels of the importance of tackling the employment problems, inequalities and other social concerns in crisis situations and of the ILO's unique expertise in this area. This would involve undertaking advocacy and information dissemination activities that stress the ILO's comparative advantage as an active participant and partner with others in efforts to reduce both the vulnerability to crises and their adverse effects.
9. The fourth and final objective is to build the *capacity of ILO constituents* to play a greater role in crisis monitoring, prevention and tackling of adverse consequences. This would involve designing measures to help ILO constituents and other actors to play a strong role

in crisis resolution, reintegration and reconstruction. It would also involve strengthening local capacities and mechanisms to promote social dialogue, reconciliation and employment creation.

10. While several activities were started with the appointment of the IFP Director in October 1999 and one more Professional in December 1999, the programme will become fully operational during the year 2000 once the rest of its small complement of staff are appointed. It builds on earlier ILO work including the Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Countries Emerging from Armed Conflict (1996-97); relevant post-conflict programmes in Central America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia; programmes in response to Hurricane Mitch (1998); and the tools developed for tackling employment challenges in conflict and post-conflict situations.²
11. It is not feasible for the ILO to respond to all the crises that emerge. Hence some criteria are being suggested for use in identifying situations where an ILO response would be appropriate. They include such considerations as the gravity of the crisis in terms of its impact on productive assets, institutional structures and employment opportunities; the level of development and capacity of the country or territory to respond to the crisis; how recently the crisis has arisen; and the political profile and degree of UN concern and involvement. Within the ILO, other important factors include the assessment by headquarters, field structures and constituents of the appropriateness of the ILO's action and the existence of adequate technical capacity and financial resources to respond in a timely and credible manner.
12. Also, the IFP alone cannot cover all potential fields of intervention. Its role should be seen more as a spur to action by others. Its success will depend not only on the work done directly by its staff, but also on its ability to draw on the best technical expertise available within and outside the ILO.
13. The ILO's technical and substantive response will typically call for multidisciplinary activities that are coherent and well-structured. To mobilize an Office-wide and multidisciplinary response to crises, the IFP has set up an *ILO Crisis Network* which comprises designated focal points in different ILO technical departments and programmes, regional and area offices, and MDTs. These focal points in the field and at headquarters will be trained to support and contribute to ILO activities in crisis situations, and to function as permanent contact persons to mobilize the technical capabilities and resources of their respective departments, programmes and offices when required. The departments and programmes from which the focal points have been drawn would also be expected to make available their services whenever necessary.
14. The IFP and the crisis network would be expected to contribute to ILO crisis preparedness and response at different levels. In addition, ad hoc task forces (comprising officials from the region concerned and headquarters) will be set up from time to time for follow-up on specific crises. The task forces would also establish links with the relevant regional structures within and outside the ILO.
15. The effectiveness of the ILO's response will depend on its rapidity and quality. This includes the placement of consultants at very short notice who have both the technical

² For example: ILO Manual and PowerPoint Tool on Training and Employment Options for Ex-Combatants (Geneva, 1997), Guidelines for Employment and Skills Training in Conflict-affected Countries (1998), and Gender Guidelines for Employment and Skills Training in Conflict-affected Countries (1998).

expertise required and the capacity to work under particularly difficult and sensitive field conditions. Hence, this supports the need for an active ILO roster of crisis consultants which not only takes account of technical skills and valid experience, but is also based on an understanding of the ILO's mandate and areas of competence. The roster will be prepared in close consultation with the field structures, with a special focus on identifying consultancy capacity within each region. More flexible administrative conditions to recruit and mobilize such consultants may be necessary in order to ensure a timely response.

16. The IFP will develop a set of generic tools specifically for use by ILO staff and consultants in crisis-related situations. These include guidelines on the rapid assessment of employment and other socio-economic needs, modules on how the ILO should respond to different types of crisis, manuals focusing on job creation, and gender guidelines. These tools will be revised and refined periodically on the basis of new insights obtained and lessons learnt.
17. Simultaneously, the different technical departments and other programmes need to develop, adapt and package the new approaches and products being generated as part of their normal activities for use in the context of crises and reconstruction. It would be facile to assume that what works well in normal and stable conditions will necessarily work in a crisis situation. In addition, it may not be the best strategy to replicate the institutions set up in various countries: the institutional structures and products identified must be relevant to the specific situation and nature of the crisis.
18. The ILO will contribute to the development of early warning systems for crises. Considerable work has already been done by other agencies on climate and political variables. However, social and economic variables like unemployment rates, wage trends, industrial unrest, poverty levels and social exclusion have not been adequately taken into account as barometers of potential tension and predictors of likely crises. The IFP will work in collaboration with other agencies responsible for the development of early warning systems.

III. Experience

19. Over the last year or so, the ILO has responded to different crisis situations in Kosovo, East Timor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Orissa in India, and Venezuela. These cases include post-conflict situations and natural disasters. Responses to the Asian economic crisis during the latter half of 1999 in respect of Indonesia and Thailand are also briefly mentioned here. The latter topic has been discussed at length at earlier meetings of the Governing Body as well as at symposia and special meetings organized by the ILO.³

Kosovo

20. The ILO was able to participate in an inter-agency rapid response mission to Kosovo and Serbia in May 1999, which produced important findings and recommendations, some of which covered the serious employment impact. The report by the inter-agency mission was submitted by the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council in 1999.⁴ An additional

³ See GB.276/ESP/4/1.

⁴ Document S/1999/662.

detailed report⁵ on issues of ILO concern drew more attention to the employment crisis resulting from the war in Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia; the strains placed on the social insurance system; the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons; the absence of social dialogue with the independent trade union movement; and the diverse gender impacts of the conflict.

21. That mission report recommended several measures to tackle the employment problems, including emergency employment programmes; employment-intensive assistance in rebuilding the infrastructure; microfinance; local economic development; strengthening institutional capacity at national, provincial and local levels; social assistance and other social protection schemes for the most vulnerable groups; business identification, training and income-generating schemes for conflict-affected groups; the promotion of social dialogue; and special measures to combat the adverse gender impacts of the conflict. It also proposed the establishment of an ILO task force to plan and follow up on the required multidisciplinary response.
22. A task force was set up to elaborate full-scale proposals as part of the ILO's comprehensive response concerning emergency employment creation, vocational training and the promotion of SMEs, labour market assessment and rapid data collection, social protection schemes and institutional capacity building, promotion of social dialogue, reconciliation and social healing and an appropriate labour law framework. The programme proposals have been presented to several donor conferences in an attempt to mobilize resources for their implementation. It is expected that at least some of the proposals will secure donor support during the year 2000. Indeed, Belgium and France have already provided some funds, and Italy has pledged to fund a project.
23. An important initiative was the setting up of an ILO presence in Pristina, in August 1999. Among other activities, the ILO worked with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other institutions to run a training workshop on skills training and employment for the reintegration of demobilized soldiers in Kosovo. An ILO mission then formulated a project proposal for the training of demobilized KLA soldiers and unemployed youth for employment, self-employment, and micro- and small enterprise development. A technical paper on the current employment situation in Kosovo has recently been prepared by an ILO consultant,⁶ and the findings were covered by the media in late 1999.

East Timor

24. In response to an urgent request during the immediate aftermath of the crisis, from the then head of the UN Humanitarian Assistance Programme in the territory, the ILO was able to field a needs assessment mission within 48 hours. The purpose was to identify relevant emergency training needs in the building trades to address the major reconstruction needs of the territory resulting from the widespread destruction of infrastructure and utilities.
25. The mission was able to deliver more than requested, and was highly appreciated by the UN representative. It developed four project proposals (comprehensive vocational education and training; employment registration and service centres; the immediate and medium-term rehabilitation of physical infrastructure; and local economic development

⁵ Date-Bah, E.: "The employment crisis in Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia: The impact of conflict", ILO, Geneva, 1999.

⁶ Hethy, L.: "Employment and workers' protection in Kosovo", Geneva, Oct. 1999.

through small and medium enterprises and microcredit programmes) with a total budget of over US\$7 million. These proposals were included in the UN Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal for East Timor, presented at the meeting for this purpose in Tokyo on 17 December 1999. During December 1999 another ILO mission was fielded to update and integrate the concerns of the proposals into a comprehensive emergency employment promotion and skills training programme. Funding is urgently being sought to begin timely implementation, as it is feared that the deteriorating employment situation could gravely threaten the territory's stability. Indeed, the head of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) has already identified, as one of the priorities, the provision of employment opportunities and necessary emergency and longer term skills training to the population.

26. The ILO was represented at a seminar in Darwin, Australia with a World Bank mission that had assessed the reconstruction needs of East Timor. The ILO noted that the obvious employment implications of the mission's proposals and assessments had been ignored in the mission report.
27. An ILO specialist in vocational training has been seconded by the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) as the temporary ILO representative to East Timor (assisted by a junior professional) to commence preparatory activities for implementation of the projects once they receive funding; set up employment centres for the registration of the unemployed and compile information on their occupational and skill profiles and actual and emerging opportunities in the labour market; and ensure the ILO's presence and visibility.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

28. A mission was undertaken, at the request of the ILO Area Office Director in Kinshasa, to hold discussions with ministries, NGOs, UN agencies, the World Bank and other donors on the ILO's approach and experience concerning the reintegration of demobilized soldiers. Following the second mission in November 1999, a project document entitled "Preparatory phase for a reintegration programme for demobilized soldiers in DRC" was prepared for financing through a World Bank grant of US\$700,000 to the Government of the DRC. The Ministry of Finance has officially approved the World Bank's (post-conflict fund) proposal that the ILO should manage and implement the activities covered by the grant.
29. The ILO has thus successfully demonstrated its technical capacity and preparedness to take the lead in the preparatory reintegration process of mostly vulnerable ex-combatants, including child soldiers in the DRC. In collaboration with IPEC, awareness was raised among the ILO's constituents in the DRC and other national and international partners on the provisions of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). As a result, the DRC's Ministry of Human Rights has taken up the plea for its ratification by the Government. This is the first time that child soldiers are explicitly included in the target group of an ILO reintegration project.

Sierra Leone

30. The IFP, in cooperation with the MDT in Dakar and the Regional Office in Abidjan, organized a needs assessment mission in December 1999 to identify elements for planning the ILO's response to the colossal employment challenge faced by Sierra Leone in the aftermath of the civil war and as part of the process of consolidating peace. (The Peace Agreement was signed in July 1999.) The mission elaborated a package of proposals,

constituting an Employment for Peace Programme in Sierra Leone, for funding by UNDP and other donors. The package comprised employment-intensive public works; skills training and retraining; small and micro-enterprise promotion; capacity building within the relevant government structures; and the identification of self-employment opportunities for returning internally displaced persons and refugees with special sub-components for young people, persons with handicaps and demobilized soldiers.

31. The Dakar MDT is expected to field a second mission in February 2000 to cover such issues as social protection, international labour standards and capacity building in the Ministry of Labour and among trade unions and employers' organizations. Following the December 1999 and February 2000 missions, demand for more wide-ranging support from the ILO may be anticipated. It may be added that Sierra Leone has a duly constituted Government in place and offers scope for ILO technical support in the development of longer term national development policies and strategies. The actual implementation of the proposed package could be more immediate if the necessary resources are available without delay.

Turkey

32. The earthquake in Turkey's Marmara zone in August 1999 led to widespread damage, loss of life and the devastation of housing and infrastructure. Two ILO missions were undertaken, one in October and one in November 1999, to assess needs and identify measures to provide more employment opportunities to the large number of people left jobless after the earthquake. During the second mission, a workshop on improved safety in the construction sector and employment-intensive technologies in post-earthquake reconstruction was organized by the ILO Area Office. The workshop served to make the participants, who included high-level officials and representatives of employers' and workers' organizations, aware of the need to improve construction safety and to devise measures to provide more employment opportunities to earthquake victims through employment-intensive investment programmes.
33. A study tour to Germany (and/or the deployment of experts from Germany) is under consideration. This may help to provide further demonstration to the government that employment-intensive projects should be undertaken and that they can be useful even in the context of developed countries. This could then lead to greater ILO involvement in employment-intensive construction and other programmes directed at helping the victims of such natural disasters seeking work to find employment.
34. Within the framework of IPEC, two further programmes have been developed to respond rapidly to the impact of the earthquake on child labour. Two groups are likely to be vulnerable: children working before the earthquake; and children now at risk of becoming child workers due to poverty. The aim is to provide 1,500 children at high risk of becoming child workers with rehabilitative, educational, health, nutritional and psycho-social counselling services and to ensure that they withdraw from, or do not join, the labour force.

Orissa (India)

35. A major cyclone hit the Indian State of Orissa on 29 October 1999 causing widespread devastation and loss of life. UN system-wide assistance was later sought by the authorities, and the ILO participated in the local UN Disaster Management Team (UNDM). The ILO also arranged a needs assessment mission to the cyclone-stricken area. The consultant, in his report submitted in November 1999 to the UN Disaster Management Team, proposed

an integrated project for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic infrastructure and other employment sources, as well as a number of workshops and training activities. This report was highly appreciated by the UNDM team in India. Another consultant, a specialist in employment-intensive programmes, will soon develop the details of the infrastructure rehabilitation and reconstruction work required.

Venezuela

36. The Regional Office, in cooperation with the IFP, is in the process of formulating a response to the recent devastating floods in parts of Venezuela. An ILO needs assessment mission is planned to the affected areas to work with the local authorities and formulate employment-oriented programmes that could address some of the adverse effects of the flood.

Indonesia

37. The ILO fielded an employment strategy mission in April-May 1999 which recommended a two-pronged strategy of employment-led recovery and reconstruction⁷ which has been accepted in principle by the Government. The two broad elements of the strategy are: (i) the adoption of policies that make the recovery and growth process more employment-friendly; and (ii) the creation of additional jobs through direct employment programmes. The findings and recommendations of the mission were discussed at a consultative forum held in Jakarta in November 1999, and a decision was taken to formulate an action programme to implement the recommendations suggested by the forum. The ILO is helping the Government to formulate the action programme. An important recommendation of the employment strategy mission was to establish an employment fund for direct job creation. The Government has now requested the ILO's assistance to elaborate this concept.

Thailand

38. The ILO has responded to the economic crisis in Thailand. It has been providing technical support to the Social Fund Office which manages and monitors the Social Investment Fund of around \$100 million, aiming at community building and strengthening community participation. It has also contributed to the development of such post-crisis related activities as the development of employment insurance schemes, poverty alleviation strategies, training on labour-based infrastructure development, and labour market monitoring.

IV. Lessons learned

39. Several lessons have been learnt that are already reflected in the ILO's response to more recent crises. It may be useful, however, to highlight some of the more important lessons learnt by the IFP, to be enriched by the Committee's discussion of this paper.

⁷ "Indonesia: Strategies for employment-led recovery and reconstruction." ILO, Jakarta, Oct. 1999.

Crisis situations

40. In crisis situations, technical activities have to be designed taking into account the very special context and associated political sensitivities. Objectives such as reconciliation, the restoration of hope, peace consolidation, peace nurturing and reconstruction of the social fabric are crucial and need to be an inherent part of the design and implementation of activities. In this context, experience indicates that it is very important to define not only what needs to be done, but also how to do it in the specific context. The IFP proposes to share the accumulating experience on this issue while providing technical support to the task forces set up to deal with each crisis.

Possible absence of representative government

41. As already noted, it is important to bear in mind that in some crisis situations the institutions of representative government and civil society are already functioning, while in others it may be several years before such a situation is reached. This has implications not only for the appropriate set of activities to be taken, but also for the process by which they are approved and undertaken.

Role of social dialogue and of the social partners

42. In its response to crises, the ILO approach will involve the promotion of social dialogue, especially in countries and territories where the social partners are already organized. Social dialogue could play a significant role by helping to restore confidence in institutions, facilitating dialogue between opposing factions, reorienting the social dynamics towards constructive purposes and reinforcing the sense of ownership and of social inclusion of the different groups and communities affected by the crisis. The aim has been, and will continue to be, to involve a wide range of bodies in civil society, including central and local authorities, employers' and workers' organizations and other representative bodies, especially those operating at the grass-roots level. Dialogue is especially important at the local level to promote a consensus around the priorities of the reconstruction and recovery process. The IFP is building these elements into its technical cooperation programme.
43. Measures to strengthen the capacity of the social partners to contribute to the reconstruction process may involve assistance to help employers' and workers' organizations to resume functioning as well as conscious efforts to ensure that they are involved actively in the recovery and reconstruction process. Relevant here would be their capacity to mobilize and represent their membership and participate in the reconciliation and reconstruction process. They could also play an important role in the formulation and implementation of plans and programmes for tackling the employment and other socio-economic challenges. The assistance and support of employers' and workers' organizations in other countries would also be sought. Apart from financial support, they could provide training and other inputs to strengthen the institutional capacity of employers' and workers' organizations in the country in question.

Importance of the ILO's early presence

44. It is essential to ensure that the ILO is present and involved in the crisis country already during the process of the emergency needs assessment and strategy development, since planning for employment and general socio-economic reconstruction and development has to begin early. The ILO should be able to mount initial activities or start delivering technical input from its own resources even before extra-budgetary funding can be

obtained. This will help to convince donors of the credibility of the ILO and build confidence in the ILO's potential contribution. It will also ensure a better assessment of present and future needs and facilitate better coordination and synergies with the work of other institutions. In addition, this strategy will make it possible for ILO constituents to play a role through an ILO-developed set of project activities. As the case of East Timor illustrates, an early presence ensures that the ILO has project proposals in hand and can try to raise funds for them by participating in the UN joint appeal for the support of the international community.

The importance of funding rapid action and its links with resource mobilization

45. The IFP's experience in several crisis situations points to the need for the immediate availability of funding for the timely commencement of activities and to maintain an ILO presence. Implementation of planned technical assistance measures continues to suffer delays, for example in East Timor, because of the lack of appropriate funding.
46. While the international community is usually eager to respond positively to crisis situations, the process of securing funding is time-consuming. The modalities, channels, procedures, lead donors and their focal points for crisis work are quite different compared to those generally encountered by ILO resource mobilization activities. Donors are more eager to fund relief than reconstruction. They often look at whether the agency has a presence in the country and a track record of rapid response and timely follow-up in crisis situations. Importance is given to the agency's experience in working under difficult conditions and its ability to collaborate with other international agencies and programmes in the country.
47. The idea of an ILO rapid action fund is a central element in the IFP's rapid response strategy. The Programme and Budget for 2000-01 (Volume 3, paragraph 59) also incorporates this strategy. While it is important to have seed money for preparatory and start-up activities, it is also crucial that concerted efforts be made to mobilize resources in the medium and long term from external donors.

Working closely with other organizations

48. Systematic efforts are needed to develop synergies and promote strategic partnerships with other institutions within and beyond the UN system that are active in crisis contexts. This requires ILO to participate more fully in the development of integrated approaches and programmes, and promote partnerships with other agencies in operational activities at the country level, as well as at the regional and headquarters levels. Now that the ILO has an IFP on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, close links will be developed with all the key international actors. Efforts will be made to ensure that the ILO is invited regularly to participate at the outset in planning inter-agency needs assessments and other appropriate responses. This has already begun to happen and the IFP is being asked to join with other agencies in responding to crises in different countries. The IFP's participation in various existing UN frameworks and networks on crises will also be crucial for developing such collaborative action.

The need for quicker administrative and financial issues

49. The ILO's administrative and financial procedures are not always conducive to a rapid response in crisis contexts. It will therefore be necessary to identify the specific

bottlenecks and solutions for overcoming them. Another challenge will be to find feasible ways of ensuring an ILO presence in crisis countries and territories where there is no ILO office.

The advocacy role of the ILO

50. The ILO has also to play a greater advocacy role on several issues during crisis situations and when reconstruction begins. It has to promote the central importance of decent employment as a means of promoting social reintegration, resolving social and economic conflict, restoring human dignity, and alleviating poverty. It is important to focus attention on ensuring that the gender dimensions of the impact of the crisis are factored into its solutions. It also has to convince others that labour standards, social dialogue, tripartism, social protection, and the creation or restoration of the institutions of civil society are an integral part of the solution. Even if all these objectives cannot be achieved immediately, action of this type must begin if future crises are to be averted or minimized.

IV. Concluding observations

51. The ILO's response to recent crises and its contribution to the reconstruction process have generally been appreciated by the countries and other agencies involved. While it is recognized that the ILO has a unique interrelated set of products to offer (ranging from employment, income generation, poverty alleviation and social protection to standards and fundamental rights, as well as tripartism and the promotion of social dialogue), its success will be judged in terms of the relevance, efficacy and timeliness of delivery of various activities and their close integration with the work of other agencies and institutions.
52. The Committee may wish to share other experience and provide guidance to enhance further the ILO's current strategy and activities on employment and social concerns in crisis situations.

Geneva, 28 February 2000.