



THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Preparations for the Special Session of
the General Assembly of the United
Nations: World Summit for Social
Development and Beyond: Achieving
Social Development for All in a
Globalized World****Addendum:****38th Session of the Commission for Social
Development; inter-sessional consultations**

1. Two events of significant importance to preparations for the Special Session took place in New York during the month of February 2000. The Commission for Social Development at its 38th Session undertook an overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. The meeting of the Commission was immediately followed by a second round of inter-sessional, open-ended, informal consultations of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session, to consider further the new Chairman's integrated working draft text¹ and the compilation of the summaries and proposals taken from the documentation provided by the United Nations system and other international organizations. In response to a request by the Preparatory Committee, the ILO contributed in early January 2000 a report entitled *Decent work and poverty reduction in the global economy*, which is appended. This ILO report had a significant impact on the Chairman's revised draft text and on the discussions at both meetings. A brief account is given below of the outcome of these two events.

**38th Session of the Commission
for Social Development**

2. The Commission for Social Development met on 8 February 2000 to begin its 38th Session with the priority theme of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the

¹ A/AC.253/L.5/Rev.2.

outcome of the Working Party on the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission had before it the Secretary-General's analysis² of the results to date in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.³ The first two days were devoted to a series of general statements on the priority theme by national delegations, United Nations agencies and a number of non-governmental organizations, including the ICFTU and the IOE. While the third day was devoted to other matters on the agenda of the Commission (disability, ageing and the Medium-Term Plan for Economic and Social Affairs, 2002-2005), the last day of the first week and the entire second week were taken up by informal meetings to discuss the content of the agreed conclusions on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Working Party on the World Summit for Social Development.

3. These agreed conclusions were of special importance this year as the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session had decided that the full negotiated text of these agreed conclusions would be inserted into the Chairman's working draft and would constitute the final text of Part II (Review and assessment of implementation) of the document to be submitted for adoption in June 2000. The aim of this arrangement was to allow delegates to focus on Parts I (Reaffirmation of Copenhagen) and III (Further initiatives for inclusion in the outcome of the Special Session) during the next steps of the negotiating process leading to the Special Session.
4. During the general discussion on the priority theme, many delegations reporting on their national situation stressed the importance of employment and labour issues (including Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Portugal on behalf of the European Union (EU), Belarus, Cameroon, Chile, China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Romania, Swaziland, Ukraine and the United States). Numerous references were made to the role and activities of the ILO. For example, the representative of Portugal (speaking on behalf of the EU and several other European countries) recalled the importance of "an effective implementation of the core labour standards established by the ILO"; the representative of the ICFTU spoke about the need to "endorse the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up", to ensure "greater cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations on the promotion of social policy" and to "adopt the ILO tripartite model of involvement of stakeholders in policy formulation"; the representative of the IOE (in a joint statement with the International Chamber of Commerce) also referred to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), calling for tripartite cooperation in the implementation of both instruments.
5. The ILO representative made a statement on the second day of the session, recalling that employment had been identified as one of the three core goals of the Social Summit and that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action had recognized the special role the ILO had to play in the field of employment promotion and social development. Since the Summit, globalization and a knowledge-based economy had intensified, opening new opportunities. But these processes had also been accompanied by a host of social problems, most of them related to the world of work. Consequently, the ILO had increased its efforts to help member States in formulating and implementing comprehensive employment strategies, and to raise awareness among the ILO's tripartite constituents of the challenges and opportunities offered by globalization for creating more and better jobs and for designing new approaches to overcome poverty and social exclusion. The International

² A/AC.253/13.

³ See para. 13 of document GB.277/ESP/3.

Labour Conference had adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up and more recently the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which had been decisive steps towards universal respect of the basic workers' rights identified in Copenhagen. The ILO would seek the collaboration of the United Nations system and the international community to launch a global programme for the promotion of "decent work".

6. The ILO participated actively in the more informal discussions of the second week leading to the agreed conclusions, and was asked to provide information on international labour standards and on the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, in particular regarding its follow-up mechanism. The text of the conclusions became the subject of lengthy negotiations, and on the last official day of the session (17 February), it was still not possible to reach agreement on many paragraphs of the draft text. It was therefore decided that informal negotiations would resume during the following week, in parallel with the second round of inter-sessional consultations of the Preparatory Committee (21-25 February). By the end of those consultations and despite the efforts of the Bureau of the Commission and of the various negotiating groups, there was still some major disagreement on various contentious issues contained in four paragraphs of the text (economic sanctions, official development assistance (ODA), the 20/20 initiative, and debt relief). The Commission agreed to reconvene officially on 13 March to consider the situation and to adopt the agreed conclusions by consensus or by any other method (including a vote). In the meantime, informal consultations were to be carried on between the various groups. It was widely acknowledged that a possible agreement was near, and the parties were asked to show some flexibility in that regard.

7. From an ILO perspective, it is worth noting that the draft text of the agreed conclusions on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, as it stood on 25 February, recognizes "the need for collective action to anticipate the negative social and economic consequences of globalization and to maximize its benefits for all members of society, including those with special needs". It states that "while the overall progress since the Summit in reducing unemployment has been slow and uneven, there has been increased attention by governments as well as civil society, including the private sector, to the goal of full employment and to policies aimed at employment growth, as well as a renewed perception that full employment is a feasible goal. Employment promotion has increasingly been put at the centre of socio-economic development in recognition of the central importance of employment to poverty eradication and social integration". The text also refers to the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up and the unanimous adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and admits that, while some progress has been made in this respect, universal ratification of fundamental ILO Conventions has not yet been achieved. It stresses that while "in most countries the employment of women has increased steadily, there are still obstacles to women's equal access to and participation in the labour market". It is also noted that there has been "an increase in casual and informal employment since the Summit, as well as a growing number of employed persons with little employment security, low wages and low levels of social protection", and emphasized the need to adopt measures regarding the protection of immigrants and migrant workers. Finally, a reference is made to the fact that "in a number of countries social dialogue has contributed to social and economic development".

Inter-sessional consultations

8. One of the main objectives of these inter-sessional consultations was to advance as much as possible in the review of Part III (Further initiatives for inclusion in the outcome of the

Special Session) of the Chairman's draft text. In that regard, the Chairman had submitted a revised text, taking into account the various inputs received from the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as the results of his informal consultations with the major negotiating groupings. This revised draft text therefore contained extensive modifications, the Chairman proposing new formulations for many paragraphs and subparagraphs of Part III as well as some new paragraphs. This new text was widely considered as a major step forward, and though there was still some room for improvement it was accepted as a satisfactory basis for future negotiations.

9. Due to these modifications, there were some understandable delays in the negotiating process, as the main groups had to meet to try to find an internal consensus on many of these new formulations. Following numerous group meetings, the Preparatory Committee started to review the Chairman's text, but without having time to go through the entire document by the end of the week. In order to allow the delegations to reflect on the new version of the draft text, it was therefore decided that they could submit written comments to the Chairman by 21 March. With a view to ensuring fruitful negotiations during the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee (3-14 April 2000), the Chairman would then compile those comments and circulate them before that meeting. In the meantime, Ambassador Maquieira would also continue to have informal consultations with the various groups.
10. ILO concerns and proposals contained in the Office document submitted by the Director-General are well reflected in this new version of the Chairman's draft text. This is particularly true not only for Commitment 3 (full employment), but also for Commitment 1 (an enabling environment for social development) – with emphasis on the promotion of greater coherence between social development policies and policies for economic development, trade and investment – and for Commitment 2 (eradication of poverty) – which stresses the importance of employment (including through the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, training policies, credit, micro-finance and self-employment) and social protection (including some forms of social protection in the informal sector) as key elements in combating poverty. In Commitment 3 there is a call to support the ILO's global programme on "decent work"; to expand opportunities for productive employment, in cooperation with the private sector and the social partners; to strengthen social dialogue for the formulation of labour, social and economic policies; to cooperate with the ILO to enhance the quality of work and employment; to ratify the ILO's fundamental Conventions, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); to implement the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; to collaborate with employers' and workers' organizations to increase youth employment; to advance gender equality at work and at home; and to help people reconcile the competing demands of work and family. Commitment 8 (inclusion of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes) refers to the need to ensure that macroeconomic, structural and social policies are complementary and fully integrated; to protect core social development expenditure from budgetary cuts; to provide information to monitor the impact of crises and the evaluation of responses; and to establish mechanisms to assess the social impact of adjustment programmes.
11. As stated in the main paper submitted to the Committee under this item on its agenda, Part I of the Chairman's draft text should reaffirm the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, and this task should be undertaken by the Preparatory Committee as a separate exercise. It is widely expected that this part of the document will take the form of a short political declaration that could be adopted by the Special Session in Geneva. Building on his extensive consultations with the various groups and on his own perception of the preparatory process, on 25 February the Chairman submitted a number of preliminary

elements on the possible content of such a declaration, and informed the delegates of his intention to circulate a first draft text by 15 March.

12. A working group was set up to consider exclusively the organization of work of the Special Session, led by the Vice-Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Mr. Koos Richelle (Netherlands). Informal consultations were held on 23 and 24 February on the basis of various documents,⁴ in particular two “non-papers” on the organization of work at the Special Session, including the possibility of holding thematic round tables. While the merit of having interactive dialogues (panels) was recognized, it was proposed – following intensive negotiations between the various groups – that these panels would have an informal setting and would not be part of the official proceedings of the Special Session. It was also proposed to organize panels on the following themes:
 - (a) an enabling environment and resources for social development;
 - (b) the promotion of full employment;
 - (c) social integration.

Sub-theme: Basic social services for all

13. The draft provisional agenda for the Special Session and the organizational arrangements were reviewed by the group and would form the basis of two decisions to be recommended by the Preparatory Committee at its April session, for adoption by the Special Session on its first day. Other issues dealt with by the working group included the organization of the list of speakers for the debate in the plenary and the organization of the plenary sittings. It was agreed that a decision would be taken on these two issues following consultations between the President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia – who is expected to chair the Special Session – and the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee.

Conclusion

14. The ILO – and issues of concern to it – received considerable attention during these two events thanks to the centrality of its mandate to the attainment of the goals of the Summit, and also to the active participation in both the Commission’s and the Committee’s work of members of the Governing Body and of others familiar with the ILO. The ILO delegation organized two briefings, the first during the session of the Commission (dialogue with NGOs on their respective role in the implementation of the Social Summit and its review and appraisal), the other during the inter-sessional consultations (briefing on the ILO contribution entitled *Decent work and poverty reduction in the global economy*, appended). It was widely recognized as an organization with an important contribution to make to preparations for and follow-up on the Special Session.
15. Progress was made in the negotiation of an agreed text, especially the review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (Part II of the document). Nevertheless, much remains to be done on Part I (Reaffirmation of Copenhagen) and Part III (Further initiatives for inclusion in the outcome of the Special Session) of the

⁴ A/AC.253/18, A/AC.253/19, A/AC.253/20 and two non-papers dated 6 Jan. 2000 and 23 Feb. 2000.

Chairman's draft text. It was recognized that time was short, since there remains only one more session of the Preparatory Committee (3-14 April 2000) before the Special Session itself is held. Even if no decision has been taken in that regard (as it depends to no small extent on the outcome of the second session of the Preparatory Committee), it is therefore envisaged to have a third round of inter-sessional, open-ended, informal consultations at a date to be determined in due course.

Geneva, 13 March 2000.

Annex: [Decent Work and Poverty Reduction in the Global Economy](#)