



Third sitting

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Presidents: Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, Mr. Donato

STATEMENT BY MR. SOMAVIA,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT — As you know, we shall start today the general discussion on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

It is my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Somavia to present his Report: *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL — It is my privilege to introduce this morning my Report to the Conference. It carries a central message: we need to reduce the global decent work deficit. We need to make decent work a reality in our countries and embed this goal in the global economy.

For the last two decades, governments and international financial institutions have focused on bringing down budget deficits. As we all know, this has been a sort of mantra of the international system — and rightly so. I think it is now time to focus with the same energy on strategies to bring down the decent work deficit. That is a goal that all of us at the ILO cannot deliver on our own — but we can and must be the catalysts to create an expanding global consciousness for decent work. We must lead by example by showing that there are policies through which the goal can be progressively achieved because our capacity to pursue the ILO's vision of social justice depends on our ability to address this global challenge. Yet we know that we cannot simply decree decent work into existence. We need the will and the means to do it.

In our debates in the Conference, we must all ask ourselves: what can we do together and individually to strengthen the ILO and make it more effective for this purpose? What are the key issues on which the ILO needs to be further empowered?

The question that we address today is how best to build on the foundations we have developed over the last years. We have crafted a decent work agenda on the basis of dialogue amongst ourselves and tripartite consensus. That has been no small task, and no meagre achievement.

Decent work has given us focus. It is a goal that connects with people's aspirations. It provides a policy framework; it is a method of organizing ILO programmes and activities and it is a platform for external dialogue and partnership. It has become a key management tool for me to carry out my responsibilities as Director-General and I have listed in my Report a number of the resulting outcomes.

You have also given me the mandate to go out and project a clear and coherent message of what the ILO

is about today, and I have invested much time in doing just that.

Let me tell you what I have found.

The message of decent work strikes a chord practically everywhere: among our tripartite constituents, in international organizations, with women and men as they ponder the future of their families, particularly in poor and single-parent homes; and even in groups with diametrically opposed views on globalization.

We have defined a message which has universal appeal and an agenda which, I believe, the vast majority of people want to see realized. It is perceived as a personal goal for individuals, a development goal for countries and a necessary goal for the international community. It has created expectations and we must respond to them.

To move forward we need to confront the widespread perception that we in the ILO and in other places who address social issues are playing in the minor league of the global economy, while the hardball actors in the world of commerce and finance occupy a superior sphere of policy.

This orthodoxy should be, and is being subverted. It is being subverted by the reaction of people all over the world and their perception of the failure to deal credibly with their social concerns and priorities in the age of globalization. And I think that many of them would agree with the President when she stated that "what is alarming is the possibility of a global black hole, which no amount of pole-vaulting or leapfrogging can prevent us from falling into".

In this setting, I have observed that our decent work agenda can be a key agent of positive change for the benefit of all, as well as a consensus-building platform to bring together divergent interests and perceptions.

Last year, in my speech to the Conference, I called for a global coalition for decent work. It is beginning to happen. And let me just mention a few examples of ways in which our proposals are being referred to throughout the multilateral system and elsewhere.

- The Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to follow up the Social Summit last year gave explicit backing to the ILO's Programme on decent work; as did the Millennium Summit, in addressing youth employment.
- On 1 May last year, his Holiness Pope John Paul II gave backing to the call for a global coalition for decent work
- I found the same echo at the World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, which I addressed last year.

- South Africa's President Mbeki, conveying the message of the Non-Aligned Movement of the Okinawa G8 Summit, stated that "decent standards of living, adequate nutrition, health care, education and decent work for all are common goals for both the South and the North".
- The UNDP *Human Development Report 2000* identified "freedom for decent work — without exploitation" as one of the seven types of basic freedoms.
- And one that I must say I like very much: in concluding a historic agreement at the Joint Maritime Commission earlier this year, shipowners and seafarers declared that they were proud to be, and I quote "torch bearers for the ILO campaign to promote decent work the world over".
- Finally, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD has referred to decent work as a part of its poverty reduction strategy. So the response is out there.

The ideas underlying decent work have always been part of the ILO's vision. We are building on the strong foundation of an 80-year history. Our next task is to address the hard issues of creating an integrated policy framework for decent work within the Office, at the national level, and as our contribution to consistency within the multilateral system.

It is a policy package. Only by addressing our four strategic objectives simultaneously can we maintain momentum and cohesion. We all have to look beyond our immediate concerns or specific interests towards the integrated development of our common agenda. If we are creative enough, we have the opportunity of reconciling the interests of people, the environment and markets.

This is clear when we look at the role of decent work in development. Decent work is a development goal. It expresses the people's right to development and a country's right to a fair share of the benefits of globalization.

Fundamental principles and rights at work are the essential foundation, "the floor" of decent work. And people must have work if these rights are to be realized, so employment must be part of the story.

What is seen as decent is built on universal rights and principles, but reflects the circumstances in each country. In that sense, there is a floor but there is no ceiling. Decent work provides a development goal that evolves as the possibilities and priorities of societies evolve. The threshold advances with economic and social progress. That has been the history of today's high-income countries, and it is also one reason why developed countries today also have decent work deficits.

The experience of countries around the world shows that there is plenty of room to promote decent work, whatever the level of development. Yet I have heard people say: "Decent work is all very well, but what we need at the moment is jobs, any jobs: work first, decent work later". Unfortunately, far too often "later" never comes.

The fact is that the social floor is critical for people living in poverty at any level of development. Take child labour. If you do not ensure that people have a decent childhood, you undermine their chances for decent work as adults — and create inequalities which are hard to change. Freedom from discrimination and greater gender equality are essential if all are to have

the same opportunities. The right to organize is vital if the poor are to claim rights, to improve their capacity to earn a living, to train and educate themselves, and to secure a fair share in economic benefits to train and educate themselves.

In my Report I give the example of freedom of association, in which I say that in Chile, in Nigeria, in Thailand or in Sweden, workers have the right to organize and to bargain collectively. Now the result of that negotiation is obviously going to be different. It is going to be dependent upon the actual conditions prevailing in the country concerned. But all have a right to sit down and negotiate for their rights in the reality of their own society. This is what the floor is about — and that is why the floor is an enabling floor precisely to permit people to advance.

I have also heard people say that moving towards decent work is costly, an unaffordable luxury. This, of course, has been a long-standing debate since the nineteenth century. Every social advance was costly, was going to be difficult to deal with. But history has given us the answer. With the right policies, enterprises and economies benefit from decent work, because it helps to raise productivity, to use resources more effectively and to promote legitimacy and commitment. It permits to deal better with issues of employability and adaptability. We have to be clear that there is a positive economic dividend. Can we really advance decent work objectives in the informal economy, which accounts for most employment in poor countries? The answer again is yes. There are success stories in the work of the ILO and many others that show that it is possible. SEWA in India has shown that it is feasible to deliver organization, opportunities and social protection to hundreds of thousands of self-employed, mostly poor women. New institutions deliver microcredit and reach millions who were previously excluded, most of them women again, so that the Micro-Credit Summit can credibly aim at reaching 100 million of the world's poorest families by 2005. Micro-insurance offers health protection to many more in different parts of Africa.

Of course all of this is tough. Living in the informal economy is difficult. People are living at the margins of organized society in many, many countries. But the success stories show that it is possible to make rights, employment, protection and dialogue part of one development package. The real basic challenge confronting us now is to multiply the successes and mainstream them into general public policies. The aim must be to reach everyone and to bring them closer to public institutions and to formal markets.

So our task is clear. It is to make decent work happen at all levels. We in the Organization — the Office and the constituents working together — can put decent work into practice where it matters most: at the national level.

Since the last session of our Conference we have launched a first effort to do just that — a new programme which is developing the policy methods for decent work. We have started in the Philippines, in Panama, in Denmark and in Ghana — at the request of the different countries — working in close collaboration with the tripartite constituents, learning from their experience as well as aiming to contribute to their priorities.

We plan to work in several other countries in the second phase. We have already started to discuss the possibilities with Bangladesh, Morocco, Kazakhstan,

Peru and Mauritius. I recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China based on the ILO's four strategic objectives. We are also linking the decent work agenda at the national level with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers of the Bretton Woods institutions in Mali, Honduras, Nepal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Cambodia.

All of this effort of bringing the decent work agenda to the reality of a country is designed to explore how the decent work framework can be mapped onto a practical policy agenda, adapted to the concerns and circumstances of each country. That means policies to promote enterprise and employment alongside policies to defend basic rights at work: policies to strengthen the social partners and reinforce their dialogue around the decent work goals; policies to extend the reach of social protection and mainstream gender equality. But above all, it is a strategy which shows how action in each of the aspects of decent work can reinforce the others.

The aim is coherent policy packages which can reduce the decent work deficit, developed through partnership between workers, employers and governments. We will use and multiply these experiences, so as to offer methods and options, advice and cooperation, to countries which wish to participate in this endeavour.

All of this makes heavy demands on the ILO's knowledge base. In the key fields of the decent work agenda, we have to be thought leaders, the one place in the world where people can turn to for quality information on its different dimensions. The discussion of social security in our Conference illustrates this well; here is an issue of fundamental concern to all of our constituents, at the heart of national strategies for decent work and at the heart of politics in all of our countries. To meet the demands we need quality information and quality analysis. I insist we need to have a solid knowledge base and we need to decide to be thought leaders on the issues in which we have established as our priorities. The same applies to our discussions on cooperatives and on health and safety in agriculture.

Our work at the country level with individual member States has to be complemented by action in the international system because in today's world, many of the decisions which impact critically on the realization of decent work are taken at the international level.

Undoubtedly, accelerating globalization has lent urgency to this need. But we are not breaking entirely new ground here; already in 1944, the Declaration of Philadelphia had understood this. It says that it is the responsibility of the ILO "to examine and consider all economic and financial policies and measures in the light of (the) fundamental objective" of the Organization. Indeed, it is telling us to look at events beyond the frontiers of the ILO to see how they impact on the objectives of the Organization. This is our mandate.

I believe that we need a common approach in the international system, which encompasses our decent work goals. Situations which we have all lived through, in which member States have received different and contradictory advice from different international organizations, amount to policy schizophrenia. It is a disservice to their citizens and a discredit to the international system itself. The absolute minimum is that we cease to operate at cross-purposes.

For this to happen, there is going to have to be progress too in the consistency of governments' positions across different organizations. We can call for cooperation between organizations; we can tell the secretariats to please come together to discuss common objectives; but it is the governments, it is the governments in the governing bodies and in the boards of these organizations, that have to take the decisions. And I think that the governments have taken too long; they have left the responsibility to the secretariats when the responsibility for policy coherence actually lies with the governments themselves, who have to guide the actions of the different organizations in such a way that structural adjustment is compatible with caring for people, for example. So I believe that it is essential that the system stops acting as if it were a series of unconnected islands, and begins to put together the type of integrated responses required by the interrelated challenges of the global economy.

These are issues which will be taken up in next week's meeting of the Governing Body Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

In this connection we also have to be aware that the image of the ILO as a "toothless" institution still surfaces from time to time. Our recent efforts have raised the ILO's profile and shown that it is a relevant actor that can exert more influence than might previously have been supposed. But I think that this is not enough. We must have the will to make a difference to the path of globalization. We must contribute to fair rules of the game and the level playing field for both people and countries.

Most importantly, the ILO tripartite constituency will have to agree that it should take on a significant role in tracing social road maps for the global economy. The opportunity is there; seizing it depends on our capacities for creativity and imagination — and also a concept of what this institution should be and the role it should play in the world of today. We must deepen and expand our knowledge base and forge a strong tripartite alliance that is open to the world.

Let me say that dealing with these issues is also linked to the follow-up to the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This year the Global Report under the Declaration jolts us into realizing that forced labour persists in a variety of forms around the world and not only in developing countries. I look forward to our debate on this issue.

The decent work agenda makes demands on each of the ILO's tripartite constituencies as well as on the Office. The ILO has a particular institutional responsibility to provide services to its constituents to help them respond effectively. We need stronger employers' organizations and stronger trade unions with increased representative capacities and better gender balance. Equally, we need to work with governments to ensure that States are better able to carry out, individually and collectively, their responsibilities in the world of work.

I have been heartened in our contacts by your obvious awareness of the challenges you face and the priority you attach to constructing new and innovative strategies to meet them.

All of us — constituents, ILO bodies and the Office — face the danger of inertia, a reluctance to change. Even those who recognize that the world is changing all around them often get bogged down in old ideas. It requires an effort to shift gear. Routine, "business as usual" is of course easier, and after all, how do

we know that the new ideas will work? Why take the risk? Large international bureaucracies are vulnerable to that sort of thinking, but so are governments and national organizations. Yet we must change to take advantage of new opportunities. And we are.

For example, in a field which concerns us all, standards, we have started to look at how we can modernize our methods while retaining our value base. Looking at families of standards with decent work as a guide may provide a better overall framework for normative action and I am persuaded that we could be more proactive in our use of the supervisory system.

In driving the change process, I have repeatedly found ILO staff, at headquarters and in the regions, willing to experiment, to be creative, to question old assumptions. They are the breeding ground of the decent work generation that will lead this institution in the future.

Our common determination to achieve decent work is vital, but it should not lead us to think that we can do it all on our own. The goals of the ILO Constitution go far beyond our immediate areas of influence. Employment and security depend on wider economic policies — so dialogue and cooperation at the national level with finance, trade and other ministries, and with multilateral organizations internationally, are absolutely essential.

And in the increasingly diverse forms of organization of civil society there are many possible partners who share our values and are able to do things which we cannot. Why would we refuse to listen to and work with those who can help us achieve our goals? The decent work agenda provides a platform of partnership; and we should be able to build on it while retaining our structure of decision-making.

As we tackle the challenge, it has to be accepted by all, as I have already stated, that the decent work agenda is a package. There is always a risk that one or other of the ILO's constituents will say: "I am only interested in standards", or "I am only interested in employment". I believe that that will not work basically for two simple reasons. First, the different dimensions of decent work do reinforce each other; and second, there has to be a shared commitment, and that means that everyone's priorities have to be in the package. That is what cohesive tripartism is all about.

Looking ahead, we may feel overwhelmed by the task before us. There is the sheer magnitude of making decent work a reality for people everywhere. There is a sense that globalization is an implacable and inexorable process. There is the reality of poverty and of inadequate resources. I myself sometimes have a feeling of frustration when I observe so many humanitarian crises affecting workers and, for example, the continued killing of workers in Colombia.

I have pointed to some of the answers in my Report, but let us never underestimate our capabilities, represented by the governments and organizations present in this chamber. We have accompanied South Africa, Poland, Chile and many others in their struggle for freedom. Much of the enormous social progress of the twentieth century can be traced to the tireless work of the ILO and its constituents.

I must say that one of the things that worried me when you honoured me by electing me to be Director-General was that I did not have a historical linkage with the ILO, that I had worked on the issues and the subjects of development and social development, but that I had not been here sitting with you as you strove

in this field. And I have to tell you that two years down the road, I could not feel prouder of being the Director-General of the ILO — precisely because of its 80-year history, precisely because of all that you and your predecessors have done to influence the course of human events on social issues. And when we hear about all of our limitations, which of course all institutions have, I say to myself "but after all, if you take a look at the labour legislation in the world, it is mostly inspired by ILO Conventions; if you take a look at the world, whenever social conflict is being managed in terms of problem solving, you see that the hand of an ILO mission is present; and when you see people thinking about social dialogue as one of the things that needs to be promoted and developed in the world of the twenty-first century, you realize that that was why the ILO was created in 1919".

So I must say that even though implementing the decent work agenda and reducing the decent work deficit appear difficult and complex, they constitute challenges that this institution has been able to address in the past. Imagine approving the first Convention at the beginning of the twentieth century; the reactions, the difficulties, the opposition that this institution had to fight when it tried to generate for the first time in history a global Convention in the area of work.

What we have to do is difficult. But this house has done difficult things before and we simply have to have the will and take the decision to reduce the decent work deficit and to play the role that we have to play in the international system in order to make this happen.

Together with our history we have an immense untapped potential — the support and cohesiveness of all of those who work in the world. By strengthening and extending our own national organizations — trade unions, employers' organizations and governments — we can lay the foundations for decent work in the emerging global economy.

By focusing our political will, we can make a significant start. And that is exactly what is now happening. For example, three countries from different regions, the United Republic of Tanzania, Nepal and El Salvador, are now launching time-bound programmes for the eradication of the worst forms of child labour. The public commitment is an essential part of this strategy in each country, and tomorrow a Special Session of the Conference will highlight that commitment, honoured by the visit of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa who will address the Conference.

Our task then is clear. It is to help reduce the decent work deficit. This needs both determination and a change of attitude to overcome the obstacles in our way.

We have the accumulated capital of our own Organization. Over the years, we have created international structures for voice and cooperation which are unique in the international system today, which are deeply rooted in national societies.

Above all, the ILO is built on shared values. We care deeply about social justice, about rights and equity, about democratic representation and debate, about inclusion and fairness. We believe that a just society is the essential foundation of a civilized world. We are willing to put our energies into pursuing that goal. Workers, employers, governments and the Office share the commitment to action. And what gives

us strength is the personal commitment of each one of us to our fellow human beings.

This brings to mind an experience I had when I was preparing the World Summit for Social Development. I used to make the point regularly that the crisis in social development was a reality in both the developing countries and in the developed ones; of course, the difficulties and the complexities in developing countries were much greater and more difficult to solve, but the social problems were everywhere.

I used to give the example, speaking in the United Nations, of Harlem just 100 blocks up from the United Nations Building in New York; and I used to say that: “we can visit Harlem and other places in which the social crisis is happening, even in the context of New York City” — and in that framework I was invited to a street in Harlem. The reason for inviting me to that street was that, in the course of the previous year, nine black youths had died, either because of a drugs overdose or because of violent confrontation, and the parents of that street had decided that they wanted to make it a clean street — a street where you could not have drugs or arms; and since I was in contact with some of the non-governmental organizations participating in the Summit they invited me to the street.

And I had the following experience. A small kid, 6-7 years old, came to me and I began talking and he asked: “why are you here?” And I replied “well I am here because I care”, and then he said “well, why do you care?”. Those words resonated throughout the whole process of preparing the Social Summit and I asked myself: “Is caring for an individual just an individual approach, or do we have to develop institutions and methods and instruments that make our societies care for those that need that care?”. I think that if we take a look at what the International Labour Office is doing and we ask why we are doing everything that we are doing, I think that the answer is because we care — because we care institutionally, because this is an institution that has a mandate to care for workers, and for the life of workers. And the life of workers is the life of families, and the life of families is the life of a community, and the communities are a fundamental part of a region, and a region is fundamental to the stability of the nation; so yes, we are looking at the worker, but the manner in which we deal with the lives of workers is a very fundamental way in which a nation is going to solve the issues that we are all confronting today.

So let me finish by saying that all of these are precious assets at a time of uncertainty and overwhelming change. We have in our values a compass. We have in our structures, both national and international, a powerful engine; and we have in our shared attitudes and commonality of approach, the energy and determination necessary to drive this Organization forward and to help create a more inclusive society and a wider sharing of prosperity. If we care enough we are going to do it.

REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE GOVERNING BODY
AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION

The PRESIDENT — Before initiating the discussion on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General, I should like,

first of all, to make the following statement on behalf of the Officers of the Conference.

This statement refers to the way in which we intend to discharge our duties and to the principles which we propose to apply in guiding this discussion. These principles will be applied with the greatest possible uniformity to all speeches made by any speaker in the Conference.

The principles by which we shall be guided were first established by the Working Party on the Programme and Structure of the ILO and approved by the Governing Body and communicated to the Conference in 1967. They are set out in paragraphs 54 to 58 of its report which are reproduced in the *Memorandum* on the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, a copy of which you should all now have. It is incumbent upon the Officers of the Conference to draw the attention of all delegates to the contents of paragraph 58, which reads as follows: “In periods of acute political tension, the ILO has a twofold responsibility — to uphold the values of human freedom and dignity enshrined in its Constitution, and to circumscribe rather than extend the area of international tension by ensuring the fullest possible degree of continued cooperation in pursuit of the objectives of the ILO.”

Every delegate to the International Labour Conference therefore has an obligation to the Conference to keep these considerations constantly in mind, and the President has an obligation to ensure that the Conference does not lose sight of them.

In the discharge of my duty, I draw the Conference’s attention to these principles. In full agreement with the other Officers and on behalf of all of you, I urge all delegates to collaborate with us in applying these principles. In particular, we hope that every delegate will recognize that the Officers of the Conference are responsible for ensuring that these principles are observed. My colleagues and I are determined to carry out this responsibility.

Freedom of expression is a vital feature of the International Labour Organization. However, in order to exercise this right in a spirit of mutual respect, we all have to accept a certain amount of discipline if we want our work to be carried on in an appropriate way and be crowned with success. It is the duty of the President of the sitting to ensure that these principles are respected, and the Officers of the Conference will not hesitate to intervene in this connection. In particular if there are offensive or insulting remarks made about any head of State or government or if personal insults are directed at any other delegate, the President will intervene immediately. At the Conference, all delegates should: use parliamentary language; respect the accepted procedure; refer only to the items under discussion; and avoid raising any question alien to these matters.

It is important that delegates who wish to make a reply to a statement should refrain from asking for the floor by raising a point of order. What they should do is to inform the President of the sitting before that sitting finishes that they wish to exercise their right to reply. A request for a right of reply should be addressed to the Officers during the sitting in which a delegate considers that it should exercise its right to reply. These requests should be transmitted to the President through the Clerk and not through asking for the floor at the sitting.

I wish to refer to the practice with regard to the exercise of the right to reply. The reply should refer

only to the point under debate. It should be brief, not exceed two minutes, and should not give rise to any further remarks. Lastly, it should be couched in correct and parliamentary language. Furthermore, I wish to point out that, in order to avoid endless debates, it has been a practice of the Presidents to refuse to allow replies to a reply.

I also wish to draw your attention to the reduction of a time-limit for speeches of delegates participating in the discussion of the Chairperson of the Governing Body's report and the Director-General's Report. A recommendation to reduce the duration of speeches by half, limiting them to five minutes only, was formally submitted to the Conference again this year for decision following consultation with the Vice-Presidents. I therefore invite all delegates to concentrate their remarks on these Reports alone. The time available to the Conference for the examination of its agenda being very short, it is imperative that these provisions be strictly respected. All delegates and ministers attending the Conference will no doubt wish to take this limit of five minutes into account in preparing their remarks, so that the President will not be obliged to withdraw the right to speak from speakers before they have finished their speeches.

Of course, according to the usual practice, the only exception to this rule will be in favour of any special guest of the Conference.

May I remind you that in accordance with the established practice, the Officers and President organize the general discussion. In particular, it is up to the President to ensure respect for the principles and provisions of the Standing Orders to which I have just referred.

Concerning the Special Sitting on the Situation of Workers in the Occupied Arab Territories, may I remind you that on the proposal of the Selection Committee, the Conference has decided to allow speakers who so wish, to take the floor both on the General Report and during the special sitting, it being understood that the subject to be discussed in that sitting would not be discussed in the debate on the remainder of the report. May I recall in this respect that it has been decided to close the list of speakers for the special sitting at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 12 June.

Finally, it goes without saying that all the principles mentioned above also apply to the Special Sitting.

For the second time, the Director-General has submitted a Global Report under the follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The subject this year is the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour.

In accordance with the decision of the Conference, this report will be discussed in plenary, separately from the Director-General's Report, on Friday, 15 June, all day, with the possibility of an extended sitting. This discussion will take place in three phases: in the first phase the Employer and Worker spokespersons and, if appropriate, other delegates, will make opening statements; during the second phase, statements will be made by individual delegates; finally, in the third phase, the spokespersons of the groups and other delegates will be able to make concluding statements.

Subject to the adjustments which may be decided by the Officers of the Conference, the maximum duration of speeches will be ten minutes for speeches of the group spokespersons and five minutes for delegates' speeches. In order to make this discussion as

interactive as possible, there will be no formal list of speakers. Delegates wishing to take the floor will be requested to fill in forms which will be available in the room at the first sitting on Friday morning.

With your help and collaboration we shall fully discharge all the responsibilities conferred upon us, with a view to ensuring the proper conduct and success of the Conference. We thank you in advance for your understanding.

Original French: Mr. KAMARA (Minister of Employment and Public Service, Guinea) — Let me begin by saying that, on behalf of the Guinean delegation, it is a pleasure for me to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their outstanding election to oversee the work of the current session. The President's personal ability and long experience in dealing with the matters on our agenda are certain to ensure the success of our session.

The Reports of the Governing Body and the Director-General make an important contribution to defining how our organization should work in pursuit of the many long and short-term tasks assigned to it.

Indeed, in a swiftly changing world where technology revolutionizes lifestyles and widens the gap in terms of development, the International Labour Organization must constantly improve its methods of work and regularly adapt the tools it makes available to its member States.

My delegation has noted with keen interest the main thrust of the various reports, and in particular the Report of the Director-General, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. Indeed, the economic, social and technological change of the past 25 years has deeply affected the structure of labour and employment, as well as the system of social protection as a whole. The swiftness of these changes, in particular in the service sectors and in the new economy, have brought about upheavals which have led to a number of harmful effects, including the marginalization of some social groups.

Seeking solutions to employment and social protection problems must thus become a basic goal if we are to ensure social peace.

The socio-economic situation in our States demands that we establish employment promotion structures through small and medium-sized enterprises so as to improve the way human resources are employed and integrated in national development programmes, in a spirit of tripartism. Our delegation welcomes the fact that this matter has been put on the agenda, as job creation is one of our priorities.

I would like now to share with you the position of the Guinean Government on the technical matters listed on the agenda of this session.

The question of safety and health in agriculture was the subject of a first discussion at the 88th Session. The new standards put forward would provide a proper framework for the drawing up of national policies pertaining to safety and health in agriculture.

The Republic of Guinea, which is heavily dependent on agriculture and livestock, is happy to see standards adopted which will make it possible to improve the physical and moral protection of agricultural workers.

Another agenda item, Social security — issues, challenges and prospects, reflects our Organization's will to seek lasting solutions to the difficulties facing social security systems, in particular when it comes to covering social and occupational risks and hazards.

Indeed, the social security systems in many of our States only provide protection to workers in the formal sector, leaving without protection those in the informal sector and in rural areas, despite the fact that they are by far the most numerous and the most vulnerable.

Social security agencies now have to face new challenges as a result not only of the economic and social situation, and the ageing of the population, with more people drawing pensions, but also because of the informal sector, which still makes an enormous contribution to gross domestic product. One of the other great, more urgent challenges to social security is that of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, because of its high cost and devastating effects on the population at large and on the working population in particular, and thus on the economy.

The sheer scale of this scourge calls for the international community to show more solidarity. It also calls for the adoption of better adapted legal instruments to allow social security institutions more effectively to play their part.

Our session will also address the matter of promoting cooperatives, which continue to play an important role in our workers' lives. In an international and national economic context where the developing countries have few resources, it is indeed necessary for those countries to strengthen community organizations, in particular cooperatives, while promoting competition through free enterprise.

In Guinea the Government has set up structures to promote cooperatives, and has made decentralization the main theme of the grass-roots social and economic development of our country.

Our Government's political will is reflected in the establishment of two support programmes for local initiatives — the Programme of Support for Village Communities, PACV, and the Programme for the Strengthening of Institutional Capacity, PRCI. With the support of the microcredit system, these two programmes provide financial and material aid for cooperatives as they carry out their projects and development programmes. This policy of grass-root development has allowed us to achieve positive results in terms of job creation and the enhancement of human resources and to increase the income of those populations benefiting from these schemes.

The standard-setting activity of the ILO is an ongoing source of inspiration for our States.

Our Organization's commitment to promote such standards in the service of peace and progress and our determination to strength tripartism and technical cooperation are all good reasons to back the proposals put forward in the reports submitted to the current session. To conclude, the Government of my country will continue its efforts to give effect to ILO standards and to ratify the appropriate Conventions with a view to promoting social justice, peace and democracy.

Mr. RAMPAK (*Workers' delegate, Malaysia*) — Allow me to congratulate the Director-General and the Office for putting together a comprehensive and detailed Report entitled *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge* for this session of the Conference. The issue of "decent work" has been the main theme of discussions at recent ILO Regional Meetings and sessions of the Conference.

The information, data and related discussions contained in the Report, while focusing on the efforts

made by the ILO to promote decent work worldwide, have also brought to light new perspectives which clearly reflect the aspirations, expectations and hopes of people, particularly workers and their families.

It is our hope that the outcome of the discussions held here will benefit the ILO constituents through effective implementation in the member States.

The Director-General should also be complimented for his very progressive approach in carrying out his leadership of the Office. I particularly wish to congratulate him for introducing and implementing strategic objectives and strategic budgeting in ILO operations. This new and focused approach is fostering increased efficiency and effectiveness in implementing the ILO mandate as a whole. The future will surely show that the selection of the four strategic objectives covering: standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue has given the Office a clear direction for meaningful work. Strategic budgeting will also provide guidance and discipline for allocation of the limited financial resources of the Organization. In addition, strategic budgeting will help in monitoring and evaluating ILO operations and in keeping ILO constituents informed of the work of the Organization in a more clear and precise manner.

Decent work is more than a goal: it is our life. Just as there can be no livelihood without work, there can be no existence without decent work. The concept of decent work is an integrated approach that includes job creation, core labour standards, social protection and social dialogue as key constituents. They are, in essence, the very underpinnings for the ILO's founding principles and policy initiatives, which have been incorporated in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The Director-General has also acknowledged that decent work is a platform for external dialogue and partnership. As workers, we believe that efforts aimed at "engaging the world beyond the ILO" could encompass interactive linkages with other United Nations agencies as well. For instance, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour has worked closely with UNICEF and the World Health Organization on joint action programmes in several developing countries. This interactive approach could be continued in programmes to promote decent work in ILO member States.

I must also mention the WTO, which promotes trade liberalization and should also protect the world at work by preventing the economic colonization of the weak and vulnerable States by the rich and powerful. Political agreements between developed and developing countries should not result in domination and destruction of developing economies, and nor should poverty assume political dimensions. The WTO cannot function in isolation. It needs to have core labour standards, workers' cooperation and social dialogue to be a success. With these tools, dialogue should continue actively promoting the decent work agenda without fear or favour, with employment and development questions taking priority. Decent work has to be promoted with the knowledge that the WTO shares the same feeling and is prepared to work closely with the ILO in order to make this idea a reality.

The arrival of the knowledge-based economy in the new millennium brings into greater focus the importance of poverty eradication through job creation in a globalizing world of work. It also raises the following

issues which I would like to put to delegates. How many countries are actually prepared for this major change in economic priorities? Will globalization evolve into a new form of colonization of developing countries by the major powers? Will the globalization process take into account the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 which among other things called for the developed countries to cancel the debt of poor countries in order to achieve sustainable growth. What will be the future of cooperatives, small and medium-sized enterprises, job security and workers' rights in the context of mergers of huge corporations? Will globalization strengthen or harm socio-economic development? Can poverty be eradicated through globalization? These are some of the issues that need to be considered and examined not only by this session of the Conference but also by the superpowers.

Original Spanish: Mr. VALLARINO III (Minister of Labour and Social Development, Panama) — Panama is particularly keen to use this opportunity to reflect on the global challenge of reducing the decent work deficit as presented by the Director-General, Juan Somavia, in his Report. This is an issue on which it appears that consensus is easy yet which calls for clearly defined policies, strategies and actions.

It is important to emphasize that decent work, rather than being an altruistic desire, is a global challenge, because growing unemployment, especially in the developing countries, is not something that we can resolve within our own States.

It is unrealistic to close our eyes and ignore the effects of globalization on the labour market, particularly in terms of increasing unemployment. What we need is an integrated approach, for the new global economic order the risks coming up against a social reality that, with time, might produce an unsustainable situation in which people are deprived of the means for survival.

To give you an example, the Central American banana-producing countries risk losing tens of thousands of agricultural jobs as a result of trade policies that do not take into account the right to decent work.

This is why the countries of the Central American group have made their voices heard in international forums. We believe that others have listened. The European Union is reconsidering the "first come, first served" trade policy on bananas, the application of which could involve unforeseen adverse effects and directly affect the right to decent work.

It is in Panama's interests that the Members of this Organization carefully consider the fact that the so-called banana war is a labour problem, with extremely serious social consequences for our workers.

This is so because, on our small, shared, globalized Earth, everyone's actions affect everyone else, and decent work cannot exist only within the political borders of a single country.

Activities to promote decent work, especially by the developed countries, must be accompanied by measures to ensure that they do not lead to unemployment, marginalization and poverty in other latitudes.

It is also clear that enterprises in our countries lack the technological and financial resources to compete on an equal footing in globalized markets. They thus become victims of the large corporations that flood domestic markets with low-cost products, causing the closure of enterprises and a rise in unemployment.

Scientific and technological development leads to an urgent need to train human resources in order to improve productivity, reduce costs and improve quality. In this way, we can begin to bridge the gap.

A fundamental role in this process can be played by social dialogue and cooperation, which will produce policies adopted to national and global realities.

Globalization should not be used as a strategy to enrich some at the expense of others, or to set developed countries against developing countries, multinational enterprises against small and medium-sized national enterprises, or the rich against the poor.

Our goal should be to achieve economic growth and social and labour development in our countries and for our workers and employers in a balanced and harmonious way as part of the globalization process.

This is an exciting prospect. It is not an easy task, but it is our responsibility, and it is not too late to take the necessary steps.

Mr. MOORHEAD (*Employers' adviser and substitute delegate, United States*) — On behalf of the United States Employers, I would like to offer the President of this Conference our congratulations upon her well-deserved election.

Three years ago, in 1998, US business addressed this Conference on the need for the ILO to adopt a strategic vision for the future. We said at the time that "at this critical juncture in the history of the ILO, it was time to assess our strategic direction — to re-define the focus and operating practices of this Organization for the near and longer term. This is a time to challenge what we do, and to change what we plan to do, in tune with the dynamic changes in the world of work and the global market economy. It is time to ensure the relevance of the ILO into the next millennium".

Following his 1999 vision of decent work, this year's Report of the Director-General provides us with a truly ambitious agenda for this great and historic institution seeking its place and relevance in the twenty-first century. However, the five minutes that each of us is given to comment on this forward-looking Report is hardly a sufficient basis for going ahead.

What certainly is needed is further discussion of this Report in the Governing Body and its relevant committees before proceeding forward to assure that, as the Director-General puts it, there is "cohesive tripartism".

During this Conference, there will be a very interesting special sitting of the Governing Body's Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization, as a result of the Director-General's spontaneous proposal at the March Governing Body. It would appear that the proposal would make the Working Party the heart of the ILO and would gradually drain the life out of the Governing Body committees and this Conference. The decent work strategy needs to be implemented pragmatically without undercutting the core competencies of the ILO. This also means that the decent work strategy needs to be converted from philosophy — there is too much left to the imagination — to concrete programmes that the ILO constituents can understand and identify with.

At the heart of the Director-General's Report is the need for better research and statistics to document the actual facts. Strategic planning, programming and standard setting would certainly benefit from a more accurate assessment of the workplace across the glo-

bal economy. What the ILO needs is a world-class economic and employment research programme led by a Nobel Laureate quality economist that would enhance the ILO's credibility and reputation with both its constituents and other multilateral agencies.

When the Director-General writes about decent work, he is really talking about employment quality. In the United States, the Employment Policy Foundation, on whose Board of Directors I serve, has developed an "employment quality index" based on regularly published monthly data. The index has four components: job availability; job quality, that is the relative growth of jobs above and below the median wage; employee total compensation; and employee attitudes on job availability and voluntary quit rates. A world-class economic research programme at the ILO could build on this index and include workplace human rights and social protection indices which would require sophisticated data collection and analysis.

As a proponent of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, we agreed with the Director-General that the rights contained therein serve as a non-negotiable floor to decent work.

We are troubled, not only in the context of this Report, but in other publications and posters of this Organization that the principles and rights at work are often expressed in different ways, with different points of emphasis. This not only undercuts the well-considered principles and rights that were agreed after a complex and contentious four years of negotiation, but can only serve to confuse the ILO constituents and the world community as to what they mean.

This is important, because the challenge for the ILO is to establish its central role in the multilateral system based upon a credible policy. So too, the ILO must not cede interpretation and application of the Declaration to other agencies like the United Nations as it has with respect to the United Nations website on the Global Compact. At the same time, there is a difference between respecting the principles of the Declaration and the obligations placed on States which have ratified the core Conventions that must be maintained.

We agree with the Director-General that the other components of the decent work agenda are aspirational. As he says on page 37, its achievement "will depend on national situations and priorities". In the global economy, a clear differentiation must be made between the absolute rights that form the floor of decent work and the other aspects of decent work that must be resolved based upon national circumstances where there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

We think the emphasis of the Report is wrong when it puts decent work and standards before jobs. As the Director-General stated, there is nothing to protect if there are no jobs. That part of the decent work agenda that can affect the comparative advantage of developing nations should not be seen as a brake or barrier to job creation in a world where there is substantial unemployment and underemployment.

Globalization is, in the final analysis, a race to the top. Anyone who has climbed a mountain knows that there are many ups and downs before getting to the top. A race to the top is not a straight line. The ILO should be seen as the organization that is four square for globalization. We believe that the Conference's adoption of the 1998 Declaration demonstrates that

the debate on the social dimension of globalization belongs in the ILO.

Original Spanish: Mr. MORALES CARTAYA (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Cuba*) — Cuba has continued to make a gradual and sustained economic recovery after traversing, during the last decade, a path of changes in order to achieve a substantial increase in efficiency, in the international economy, a correction of the domestic and external financial imbalance and managerial improvement.

Our undeniable progress, although insufficient, is the result of making decisions to tackle the economic crisis with the consent and resistance of the heroic Cuban people, relying on their stability and flexibility to carry out the necessary changes without giving up their principles and to assume the huge challenge of defending their conquests and ensuring their future in spite of the worsening of the criminal blockade of the United States.

While the world employment situation continues to be characterized by serious deficiencies for the workers of numerous regions, as a new ILO report states, in Cuba the unemployment figure that reached 8.3 per cent in 1995 fell to 5.4 per cent in the year 2000.

While it is recognized in the Report that women continue earning lower wages, they have a high unemployment rate and are usually found in jobs with lower qualification. In Cuba women account for 43 per cent of all those in employment and represent 66 per cent of the technical workforce.

Cuban achievements in social matters are summed up in free large-scale access to education and public health as well as total coverage of social security, culture and sports. These are among the most important elements contributing to the Cuban life expectancy of 76 years of age.

Of the 250 million children in the world registered as being obliged to work, not one is Cuban. Not a single one of our children, young people or the elderly, men or women, is abandoned or lacking social protection. Some 10.8 per cent of Cuba's GDP is set aside for 1,355,000 beneficiaries of our social security system.

Working mothers' rights to maternity leave have just been extended to one year, respecting their labour rights, so that they can concentrate on caring for their newborn babies.

During the revolutionary process 700,000 university professionals have graduated with a patriotic spirit and sense of solidarity as they have demonstrated in international missions of selfless assistance to fellow peoples from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The recent 18th Congress of the Confederation of Workers of Cuba provided the ultimate stage for workers' true participation in all the economic, social and political matters of the country of democratic commitment and of the unity of workers, peasants, students, pensioners, combatants and, in short, of all the people.

The idea of decent work for all should have been achieved in all countries in the last century and we note at the beginning of the new millennium the obstacles preventing this achievement but faced with serious problems we should find serious solutions. We live in a hegemonic and uni-polar world, marked by neo-liberal globalization.

Millions of deprived people are realizing that the only possible alternative is that of uniting and fighting

unfailingly until the causes of the inequalities disappear and a world order where solidarity, social justice and equity among people prevails. Only in this way will there be any guarantee of decent work and social protection for all the people on earth.

Mr. CHANDRAPRASERT (*Government delegate, Thailand*) — It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege for me, on behalf of the Royal Thai Government, to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the President on her election to the presidency of this august assembly. I am confident that under Her Excellency's wise and noble guidance this meeting will be both pleasant and productive.

The present Thai Government is committed to the realization of the full strategic objective of decent work. In the policy statement delivered to the Thai National Assembly on 26 February of this year His Excellency Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra declared that human resources are the heart and soul of the new economy and praised the Government's effort to develop and elevate Thai labour. In this connection, the Thai Prime Minister promised that the Thai Government would institute monetary and fiscal policies to facilitate the development of labour skills and expertise and will ensure that labourers receive just compensation. The Thai Prime Minister also committed the Thai Government to implement increased social security measures and to expand the range and scope of labour welfare in order to provide suitable protection for labour, both inside and outside of the system, as well as to protect health, safety and the workplace environment, particularly for young people and women workers. Furthermore, in order to strengthen tripartite and social dialogue, the Thai Prime Minister has promised to promote the creation of a labour relations system that will provide the opportunity for all sides concerned to participate in the resolution of labour problems.

The present Thai Government's commitment to improve the welfare of Thai labour is reflected not only in the abovementioned policies but also in concrete actions such as the introduction of the universal health care programme which aims to provide basic health-care for all. Under this programme any Thai citizen will have to pay only 30 baht, or about 67 US cents, per hospital visit, no matter whether he or she is suffering from a cold or cancer. Another concrete action aimed at improving the welfare of our agricultural workers is the introduction of a microcredit programme, under which each village is provided with at least 1 million baht, or about US\$22,000 as seed capital to promote local products in order to generate income and employment, thereby reducing the decent work deficit.

The Thai Government is not only concerned about the quantitative decent work deficit, but also cares about eliminating aspects of the qualitative decent work deficit such as gender inequality. In this connection we have introduced a project on the expansion of employment opportunities for women in Thailand — Social and Economic Empowerment of Women in Thailand — in collaboration with the ILO and Japan. The project aims to empower, and increase job opportunities for women, especially those who are vulnerable. Thus the Thai Government seeks to ensure that there be decent work for all labourers in Thailand, urban and rural, men as well as women.

Thailand's commitment to develop and protect our labourers is reflected in our ratification thus far four

of the eight core Conventions, the latest of which is the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The Thai Government is now in the process of public consultations with a view to ratifying the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).

In our South-East Asian region the ASEAN countries are also cooperating to alleviate the social impact of the decent work deficit during this troubled time. The Ministers of the ASEAN countries recently identified human capacity building as the key vehicle for overcoming the slowdown and enhancing competitive markets. In addition, the Ministers noted the importance of enhancing the capacity to design social protection systems and employment generation programmes promoting tripartite cooperation in the context of economic restructuring. Although the ASEAN countries are facing the spectre of a global economic slowdown that may undo the pain and the sacrifices of the past four years after the financial crisis, we have not turned away from our commitment to the strategic objectives of decent work, but instead are intensifying our cooperation to realize these objectives in order to eliminate the decent work deficit in our region. In this connection, the ASEAN countries look forward to working closely with the ILO, in particular the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, which has done a tremendous job to ensure that there be decent work for all in our region.

Original Russian: Ms. MUSAEVA (*Minister for Labour and Social Protection, Tajikistan*) — First of all I would like to congratulate the President on her election to this very high office, and to express my gratitude to the organizers of the 89th Session for permitting me to participate in this important Conference and for ensuring its success.

Last year when I addressed you from this rostrum, I reported on the achievements of the Tajik people in respect of peace-building and the search for national consensus and general political stability in our country. Indeed we have now seen trends towards economic stabilization and growth. There have been basic changes in the population's psychological mood, and the people now have great expectations. Despite the objective difficulties it faces, our Government, headed by our President, is trying to restore order in our country with the support of international financial and credit institutions, donor countries and international organizations. It has taken steps towards the establishment of a market economy, and a strengthening of the democratic principles of development, while observing fundamental human rights.

Tajikistan is a full fledged member of the International Labour Organization. Its three social partners — the Government, the employers and the trade unions — are endeavouring to fulfil the obligations we have thus taken upon ourselves. The Government has examined the implementation of all our obligations as a Member of the ILO. We already have 52 ILO Conventions in force in our country, and in December of last year we ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Our Government has also paid its arrears, along with our initial contribution, and we thus have had our voting rights restored.

At present we have prepared, in accordance with certain agreements, a programme for mutual cooperation between Tajikistan and the ILO. This programme covers the next three years and is aimed at en-

sureing the principles of decent work. It is our hope that with the presence of a tripartite delegation here, we will be able to sign this document in June or July of this year.

One of the most acute problems in Tajikistan is unemployment. We have a shortage of capital and a surplus of labour. Employment problems are very important, particularly as regards young people and women. At the last session, I appealed for cooperation and assistance from the ILO. In this respect I would like to thank the Organization for supporting one of our proposals concerning employment. The establishment of a training centre for former soldiers and their reintegration into civil and peaceful life have proved to be very important. We also have developed a system of microcrediting.

Thanks to ILO financial support, in March of this year we held a very important subregional conference in Dushanbe on labour migration in the countries of Central Asia. Our Government has drawn lessons from that event, which helped us draw up strategies for the migration of workers from Tajikistan. We hope to work on the document relating to labour strategy in Tajikistan with the participation and consultation of ILO experts.

According to the Director-General's Report, access to work is the surest way out of poverty. In this connection I would like to point out that in Tajikistan we are now completing work on a document dealing with poverty reduction. This was an initiative of our President. It has been supported by a number of financial institutions and the consultation procedure has included representatives of civil society, local communities and international donors.

Our strategy relies on the stimulation of economic growth with the intensive involvement of labour, the provision of basic social services and targeted assistance for the poorest strata of the population. Labour and social protection are described, in two special sections of this document where we also deal with decent work, with particular emphasis on social protection and social dialogue. There are also plans to provide assistance for the most vulnerable strata of the population, which relates to social security issues, challenges and prospects.

We are also trying to develop and reform our legislative basis, including labour law. We are training staff and setting up a database. We also have an advisory service which is assisted by international organizations. Many of the problems we face will be addressed jointly within the framework of the ILO's activities promoting decent work.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am convinced that we shall succeed at this session in developing a common and joint approach to the basic issues before the Conference.

On behalf of our delegation, I express our support for the programme to reduce the decent work deficit and for any measures aimed at reforming the Organization, strengthening the ILO and enhancing its influence worldwide.

Ms. WILSON (*Minister of Labour, New Zealand*) — My delegation congratulates the President on her election and wishes her very well for a successful Conference.

Globalization has changed the face of New Zealand and will continue to do so, impacting of most areas of life. We are now part of the world economy

and our domestic growth increasingly depends on social and economic growth elsewhere.

While globalization brings with it the opportunity for job growth, it also brings tougher competitive pressures and the risks of the movement of people and capital to other economies. Against the background of these challenges, translating the concept of decent work to the New Zealand context has followed two key paths: first, reforming our approach to rights in work; and secondly, ensuring all New Zealanders have equal rights to work.

In terms of equal rights in work, last year my Government passed new employment legislation — the Employment Relations Act. The Act heralds a return to the value of tripartism by introducing a more co-operative approach to the employment relationship, based on the values of mutual trust and confidence and fair dealing, through the promotion of collective bargaining.

We are also currently reviewing our workplace health and safety laws, our equal employment opportunity laws and our holiday laws. Key components of our strategy are to ensure coverage of all workers, effective enforcement and most importantly a minimum code of employment standards. A key goal is also to encourage a greater sense of partnership between employers and employees through effective communication.

My Government is also determined to ensure that a child's work experience in New Zealand will continue to be safe, healthy and non-exploitative. While I am at this Session of the Conference, New Zealand will be ratifying the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

In terms of rights to work, my Government agrees with the Director-General's statement that "there is no overstating the priority of job creation". We have established a new employment strategy, the underlying objectives of which are to minimize the number of those who are persistently disadvantaged in the labour market and to maximize the number of jobs and the level of earnings for all.

To achieve these objectives, my Government has a work programme that links the associated areas of education, social security and economic development. The key elements include ensuring that macroeconomic policies enable a sustained economic growth that produces jobs, removing barriers to employment growth, developing a flexible, highly skilled and well-paid workforce, developing strong communities and improving participation in employment of all people with disabilities and other groups at risk of long-term and persistent unemployment, in particular Maori and Pacific Island peoples.

There is a strong alignment between these key elements and some of the Director-General's messages in relation to addressing the decent work deficit.

As the Director-General notes in his Report, he was elected with a mandate for this Organization's modernization and renewal. My Government would like to congratulate the Director-General for the leadership that he has shown on these issues.

We acknowledge the excellent progress made to date in improving the coherence of the ILO's work programme by using decent work as a strategic policy framework. Structural and management reforms, and implementation of the strategic budget process, have established a solid basis for the ongoing effectiveness and relevance of the Organization.

We acknowledge the work under way to ensure that the setting, promotion and application of standards is more efficient and effective. We support the innovative approaches such as the grouping of families of standards that are being explored. We endorse the Director-General's statement that "we must continue to pursue the goals of placing a social floor under the global economy, in ways that are acceptable to both developing and developed countries". Progress is best made through consensus.

The Director-General has asked for views on what can be done to strengthen the ILO and to make it more effective. My Government would highlight two key issues: first, maintain the momentum for modernization and renewal of the Organization. Considerable progress has been made so far but public sector reform is an ongoing process that calls for continuous development and improvement; and secondly, continue to actively engage with other international institutions to ensure that decent work objectives are reflected in their work.

In that regard, we look forward to exploring how the role of the Governing Body's Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization can be reinforced as a major forum for reflection and debate on the policies and institutions that can promote social progress in the world economy.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL SHO'ALA (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Bahrain*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! I am privileged to head the delegation of my country, Bahrain, at this important Conference and I would like to commend the President highly on having been entrusted with the presidency of this session by all Members, and to wish both her and the Conference every success.

Allow me first and foremost to say that the period that has just elapsed was of particular importance to Bahrain because more than 98 per cent of the population approved the National Labour Charter, which is a pact between His Highness Sheikh Hamad Ben Issa Al-Khalifa, the Emir of Bahrain, and the population, thus reaffirming a stipulation of the Constitution adopted in 1973, namely that work is a duty for all citizens and that all citizens have the right to work and the right to choose their work. It provides that the State must ensure for its citizens equitable employment conditions and opportunities within the framework of national economic development programmes, but without imposing any compulsory or forced labour on anyone, and upholding individual freedoms, equality without discrimination and upholding trade union rights and freedoms.

In the same period, Bahrain became a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. We are very proud of this because it indeed provides recognition of our achievements in this area, in particular the introduction of democratic principles and of a state of law.

I would like to say that we greatly appreciate the content of the Report of the Director-General. We support his assertions on the relationship between decent work and economic and political stability, increased productivity, the promotion of foreign investment, and the link between democracy and positive economic achievements, without forgetting that decent work, taking into account the negative effects of globalization, can only be achieved by taking into con-

sideration the priorities and specificities of individual States.

We agree with the Director-General that we should give the ILO a central role in providing a social foundation for economic globalization by improving the work of the ILO, modernizing its bodies and its data, encouraging member States to uphold international labour standards, and strengthening cooperation with other international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the WTO.

In Bahrain, we have sought to ensure decent work for our citizens through a number of programmes and projects, the most recent being the national programme for the employment and training of citizens which the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs began to implement at the beginning of last month; 25 million dinars have been allocated to this project for a two-year period and 11,000 jobseekers are benefiting from it.

This programme complements the programmes and policies adopted by the Government of Bahrain and comprises a number of specific projects. Examples include providing immediate monthly financial assistance to jobseekers for a maximum period of six months; exempting from training fees all people registered as jobseekers and in training as well as students financing their own studies; employing and training 4,000 jobseekers who had interrupted their studies or who did not have a university degree.

This programme includes a project intended to employ and train 1,000 graduates specialized in areas such as Arabic literature, management and social sciences; it also includes a project aimed at promoting the recruitment of 2,000 persons from disadvantaged families.

The national programme awards training grants to the most deserving and to the children of disadvantaged families. It includes a rehabilitation project that seeks to integrate young people into the sphere of independent work and small and medium-sized enterprises. Another project relates to the rehabilitation and employment of those who have lost their jobs; a further project concerns the recruitment and training of people with special needs such as disabled persons; and another relates to support for family-based enterprises; all these in conjunction with the international organizations.

Our efforts and ambitions are not restricted to these projects. We are also trying to improve existing legislation with a view to strengthening trade union rights because it is our firm conviction that it is important to give all the social partners every possibility to enable them to participate in the process of economic and social development. We are also making every effort to broaden social protection, including improving income levels. We have also ratified a high number of international labour Conventions, the last one being the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

To conclude, I would like to reiterate what the Director-General said in his Report, namely that decent work can only be achieved through the cooperation of the social partners, and that is precisely what we are working to achieve in the State of Bahrain.

Original Arabic: Ms. AL-QUDSI (*Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Syrian Arab Republic*) — On behalf of the Syrian delegation, we present our gree-

tings to the President of the Conference and to the Director-General of the ILO. We congratulate the President on her election and on the confidence entrusted in her by the Conference. We wish her every success and we hope that the discussions between the social partners will lead to resolutions and Recommendations that express the aims of the ILO.

We confirm our attachment to the principles and objectives of this Conference and of the Organization. We would very much like to achieve ongoing positive cooperation with the Organization so as to protect workers and labour. We respect all the resolutions and standards adopted by the International Labour Conference and in particular the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Syrian Arab Republic adhered to this Declaration and ratified 46 Conventions, including six of the eight core Conventions. We continue to ratify various Conventions, especially those in harmony with our national legislation.

Thanks to the Government's policy, under the auspices of President Bachar al-Assad, aimed at modernizing the State and its legislation, we have amended some of our legislation in such a way as to bring it into line with international Conventions.

We have made great progress towards ratifying the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182), and we have also transmitted the necessary instruments for ratification and thus we shall have completed the ratification of the core labour Conventions relating to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

I must stress that the Conference's agenda is full of important items. The Syrian Arab Republic will do its utmost to ensure decent labour conditions in all fields and is working to achieve equality of opportunity among citizens. The Ministry is in the process of implementing a training project designed to ensure the full participation of the disabled in local communities. This objective was affirmed in the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-93). We have implemented a number of projects and have created a favourable environment for Arab and foreign investment through the adoption of a number of laws, and this will ensure decent work and eliminate unemployment.

We welcome the ILO's efforts, in particular those in the Arab countries. Among the activities carried out in the Syrian Arab Republic, we should like to mention a study carried out on the labour market in the agricultural sector. This project will be completed soon and it will help us to classify specialties and skills so that workers may find adequate employment.

We hope that the ILO will extend the use of the Arabic language in its various services and we encourage the use of Arabic on the Internet, because it is the official language of 22 member States of the ILO. It is also an official language of the United Nations and a number of its specialized agencies.

Our Government is making serious efforts to ensure a just and global peace-based international resolutions and the principle of land for peace. It has left the door open for the peace process and recalls its support for the principles of the Madrid Conference — the only bases upon which this quest for peace has been founded.

We call upon all peace-loving peoples to make efforts to support the three components of these nego-

tiations, taking into account the Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian points of view. The Syrian people must recover the Golan Heights and Lebanon the farms of Shabab. The Palestinians must have an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

We bring you the greetings of President Bachar al-Assad, who is working for a just and global peace founded on the principle of land for peace.

Original Thai: Mr. SAENGSANK (Workers' delegate, Thailand) — It gives me great pleasure and honour on behalf of Thai workers to have an opportunity to deliver my address to all of you here today.

Thailand has suffered a severe economic crisis since 1997, however, today every sector of Thai society, and in particular the Government, is confident that the Thai economy will experience growth in the near future. In fact, the reality of the situation is otherwise. The unemployment rate is increasing and the living standards of Thai workers are not improving sufficiently.

On behalf of the Thai delegation, I would like to reflect on our problems and propose the following. At present, Thai workers still have no job security. When workers are still capable of working, they are laid off due to the crisis. The workers cannot find new jobs in a short period of time. During their search for jobs, they are left without income to support their families. Their trade union movement, therefore, requests the Thai Government to enforce immediately the Royal Decree of Unemployment Insurance.

Regarding the protection of workers to organize trade unions, the Labour Relations Act of 1975 stressed that Thai workers have the right to organize trade unions but the implementation processes are very difficult to achieve. Employees are dismissed even before they register with the union. This is a tactic to destroy and ban trade unions. Thai trade union movements request the Thai Government to improve and amend the Labour Relations Act of 1975, which was approved 25 years ago to protect trade union organizers.

The living standards of Thai workers are very low and do not correlate with the general living standards. Thailand is a host to many foreign firms. The Thai workforce produces well-known brand names, good quality goods and highly competitive products in the world market, yet Thai workers still receive low wages. Their wage structures are divided into three areas: 165, 140 and 130 baht. These may seem higher than in China and Viet Nam but our cost of living is higher than that of those countries.

In addition, Thailand has no national wage structure. A large number of workers who have been working for five to ten years still get only the minimum wage.

Illegal migrant workers have been a problem affecting Thailand for many years. The Government has no measures to solve this problem, particularly as regards human rights. The Government does not prevent illegal migrant workers from being exploited. Moreover, some employers employ them at the lowest standards of human rights. We request the Government to take legal measures to allow these workers to work in sectors such as fisheries, agriculture, construction and others which do not affect the employment of Thai workers, and to formulate legal measures to protect them.

There must be transparency in the case of Mr. Thanong Poti-An, former president of the Labour Con-

gress of Thailand (LCT). The Government must take action and throw light on the disappearance of Mr. Thanong Poti-An, who was president of LCT during the dictatorship regime in 1991. At that time the military Government shut down the state enterprise workers' union. Mr. Thanong fought for democracy against the military Government. He was prevented by the Government from participating in the International Labour Conference in Geneva in June 1991. He disappeared at the end of June of that year. Thai society believes the Mr. Thanong was killed by the military dictatorship, which is why we have requested further investigation and transparency in this case.

The above topics are the priority of the Thai trade union movement. However, we must say that we have had good cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and with the Government. Some problems have been solved and there are positive developments on matters such as child labour and social insurance coverage.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-FAYEZ (Minister of Labour, Jordan) — May peace and the blessing of God be with you! I would like first of all to extend our warm congratulations to the President on her election and wish her every success in her work.

Mr. Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, evoked in his Report the way in which we can make decent work a reality at the national level in the context of the economic globalization which is dominant in the world today. We in Jordan believe that it is our responsibility to strive to create opportunities of decent, sustainable and productive work for men and women on an equal footing, based on freedom, justice and human dignity. We accept this responsibility despite our difficult circumstances, especially our lack of natural resources, the shortage of finance, unemployment, the lack of employment opportunities, economic stagnation and other obstacles to development.

Mr. Somavia was a guest of honour at the Arab Labour Conference which took place in April in Amman. He gave a detailed and important speech that identified a number of fundamental principles of the International Labour Organization and its outlook for the future. This speech was received in a very positive light in Jordan. We were touched deeply, as was all of the Arab world, when he referred to the important speech made by King Hussein at the International Labour Conference in 1997 and by his words of support for King Abdullah Ibn Hussain, who, through his innovative style of government, is creating a new future for Jordan despite the difficult regional and international context.

In this connection, I would like to state that His Majesty the King leaves nothing to chance and to refer to what he said at the American press club in Washington in mid-April namely that "We are determined to take a new approach in our region, where free trade will replace the philosophy of a closed economy, and where private capital should be able to move freely beyond borders. First of all, we are going to continue to invest in our main resource, that is human resources, in Jordan and throughout the Arab world. Our priority will be the development of education and training. That will provide a real advantage for economic development in the Middle East."

The Arab Labour Conference also welcomed Mr. Johan Verstraeten, the President of the International Social Security Association. He gave a speech

on the challenges facing social security and the need to promote the social aspects of globalization.

Jordan, this year, would like to confront the challenges that social development poses and examine the outlook. We are aware of the social changes arising through globalization and the need to prepare for our future. The King has ratified a new law on social protection which came into force in May. This is the fruit of dialogue among the social partners in Jordan under the slogan of social and economic development. These are important steps in improving our social security system, which will affect all existing and new participants in the insurance scheme. The Act introduces new protection for accidents in the workplace. New categories of beneficiaries have been created, including the self employed, people working in family businesses and Jordanians working abroad who would like to participate in the social security scheme. Most importantly, pensions have been increased by 25 per cent.

With regard to child workers, Jordan is one of the strongest supporters of the ILO's efforts to combat child labour and, like other Arab States, we are trying to find a solution to this problem. In October last year, we signed a cooperation agreement with the ILO, which establishes a national strategy for the long-term eradication of the worst forms of child labour and sets an example to be followed by other countries in our region, especially following Jordan's ratification of Conventions Nos. 138 and 182.

His Majesty King Abdullah and Her Majesty Queen Rania were among the first to sign the million-signature petition begun last May, thus expressing Jordan's support for the efforts to guarantee the right of children to live in a physically and psychologically safe and educational environment.

In conclusion, we would like to express our satisfaction at the development of our relations with the ILO. We hope to see this cooperation develop further in the future so that we can attain common goals and apply the ILO's humanitarian and social principles. We wish every success to this Conference.

(Mr. Donato takes the Chair.)

Mr. LEE (*Minister of Manpower, Singapore*) — I should like, on behalf of the Singapore delegation, to congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on her election as President of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

This session will focus on the promotion of cooperatives as an instrument of social progress. This is timely as economic changes and restructuring are causing concerns over unemployment and the widening wage gap. In Singapore our trade unions have established a wide range of cooperatives to serve workers and to ensure that they are able to enjoy a fair share of the fruits of economic growth. These cooperatives create employment and provide affordable and quality services in health and dental care, essential and consumer goods, insurance, child and elderly care, transportation and housing. They offer services equal to, if not exceeding, what private enterprises can offer. They significantly enhance the social and economic well-being of workers by benchmarking prices in the market. For example, "Fairprice", the workers' cooperative operating the largest supermarket chain in Singapore, was able to stabilize prices of essential food items to cushion workers from inflation. How-

ever, I must point out that while such socially responsible actions are lauded and necessary, over the longer term all cooperatives must be managed on sound commercial principles. Cooperatives in Singapore do so and have remained viable. They do make surpluses which are ploughed back into the cooperative or redeployed to better serve workers. Our cooperatives will continue to play an important role in social progress and our Government will continue to support workers' cooperatives.

This year's agenda also includes a discussion on the issues and challenges of social security for workers. This is again timely as social security is a rising concern in many developed and developing countries. We look forward to a fruitful discussion on this issue. In Singapore our social security system is based on the Central Provident Fund. This is a savings plan with contributions from the employers and the employees to meet the old-age, medical and housing needs of all employees. Such saving has enabled 90 per cent of workers to purchase their own homes and to give them a tangible stake in the nation.

Apart from owning a home, employees will retire with sufficient savings to meet their medical and basic retirement needs. We have also encouraged employees to look for opportunities to invest their Central Provident Fund savings for higher returns. Over the longer term, prudent investment will help workers to accumulate more savings for their retirement.

Singapore supports the elimination of child labour. Children are our hopes for the future. They should be nurtured and not exploited. Last year we announced our intention to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Child labour is non-existent in Singapore and I am therefore pleased to inform Madam President that the instrument of ratification for the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) will be conveyed to the ILO in the course of this session. We also firmly believe in the fair and equal treatment of men and women at the workplace for work of equal value. To reaffirm this belief, we are pleased to announce that Singapore intends to ratify the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

We welcome the decision of the Governing Body to review the standard-setting process and the supervisory mechanism. This will address the concern of many member States over the relevance, applicability and implementation of the ILO Convention. In this connection I would like to mention that at the recent 14th ASEAN Labour Ministers' Meeting, we were informed that the Myanmar Government had taken legislative, administrative and executive actions to prohibit forced labour. It had made the requisition of forced labour illegal and punishable by law. These are positive developments which should be given time to take effect. We hope the International Labour Office will continue to work with the Myanmar Government towards meeting these obligations under the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

Increasing globalization and technological changes will create opportunities for trade and employment. In this connection what the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, has said about people having work for rights to be realized is indeed relevant; we agree entirely with him. However, workers must be prepared to take advantage of these new work opportunities. These will require greater investment in human capacity development. Hence, we must give priority to continuing education

and training opportunities for workers. Such programmes will help workers to bridge the digital divide and remain employable in the new economy.

Singapore has stepped up efforts to develop human capital by supplementing our comprehensive pre-employment education with an extensive network for in-employment skills training and upgrading.

Our programmes are undertaken in close collaboration with trade unions and employers. We believe that the active participation of unions and employers is essential. Our experience over the last four years has confirmed that human capital development must be a tripartite effort. In particular, we value the contribution and commitment of the trade unions in reaching out to workers and motivating them to adopt new lifelong learning mind-set. Helping workers upgrade their skill has become an important added dimension to the role and responsibility of our trade unions.

My delegation looks forward to a thorough discussion of the various agenda items, and we are confident that under the able leadership of the President this Conference will come to a fruitful conclusion.

Original Spanish: Mr. ALONSO (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Uruguay) — In the twenty-first century the coming together of factors such as the extraordinary ongoing technological change, market globalization accompanied by far-reaching regional integration processes, economic crisis adjustment policies, and obviously a cultural revolution, show us a world that at first sight seems to bear little resemblance to the one that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century when the International Labour Office came into being.

The features of the current world of work have for some years now been accompanied by a peculiar feature of the times, the precedence of economic considerations over social considerations, which has become so widespread that it is increasingly visible across the board.

Faced with this backdrop, what are the new routes we can take to meet the fundamental goals of social justice, an improvement in living and working conditions and the fight against poverty, with freedom of association and expression as the instruments in the service of a universal and lasting peace, instruments which indeed inspired the establishment of the International Labour Office in 1919.

Lasting peace is still a shared aspiration, and the main threats to it are poverty and social injustice.

The globalization of the economy and of the financial system enhance the importance of the International Labour Office, both in the face of the requirements and possibilities offered by this new world of work, and in the need to distribute the benefits of economic change equitably, because the Office offers two original and unique instruments, namely a forum for tripartite debate and a system of agreed international standards designed to provide minimum social guarantees and protection.

We concur that the main goal of the International Labour Office should currently be the promotion of opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity.

We should also be mindful of the fact that globalization is not a proposition or an option, it is simply a fact of life. On the other hand, the way in which we

respond to it will be what makes the difference. We cannot curb the tide of economic change, but we can give the world economy a human face, providing workers world-wide with the opportunity to participate fully in the benefits of this process, and making sure that their families enjoy the basic conditions of human development that a just society should provide. In developing countries — our countries — there is a growing sentiment that the current rules are unjust, that people do not enjoy equal opportunities, and that a globalized economic system can generate injustice.

So we are faced with the challenge of seeing to it that the globalization process can work for everyone. The rapid globalization of capital markets has indeed made some economies over-dependent on other more powerful ones, and the unconditional demand that they fully open up their national economies often brings them face to face with protectionist policies that are put in place by the chief sponsors of this new economic order.

I would, in particular, like to underscore the role that I think MERCOSUR can play for my country in consolidating the social area that we are beginning to design, and in which we place high hopes, based on the new realities that strengthen us all. As a country in the process of development and integration, and in order to achieve a clear-cut consolidation of our democratic societies by encouraging sustainable development with social equity and justice, we call upon the economies of the northern hemisphere to open up so that we may compete on the basis of the quality of our products. This is our heartfelt appeal: the genuine implementation of free and just international economic relations that the world and the citizens of our countries demand for the labour and productivity of men and women everywhere.

Original French: Mr. PIRLER (Employers' delegate, Turkey) — On behalf of the delegation of Turkish employers, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend my best wishes for this session and express my sincere congratulations to the President of the Conference on her election.

I have taken the floor in order to express the point of view of Turkish employers on a number of subjects which are dealt with in the Director-General's Report, although this Report did come to us rather late.

Nevertheless, I should admit that the delay was partially compensated for by the content of the Report, which goes into detail on a number of issues which were addressed in the year before last's Report entitled *Decent work*. I would also like to take this opportunity to tell you that we would like to receive future reports in due time.

This Report is rather rich in information and deals with complex issues. We do not doubt that this Conference is an excellent forum in order to debate fully the problems contained in it and to come to objective conclusions, especially since the tripartite structure of the ILO will contribute to the objectivity of the forum.

Nevertheless, even in this Report, it seems clear that decent work is a subjective topic which necessitates a precise definition of each country and region, taking into account the specific context. We would agree with this approach.

It seems at the same time difficult and superfluous to make a distinction between decent and not decent work. The lack of information available on this subject is at the root of this difficulty. Even if it would be

possible to make a distinction between decent jobs and those which are not, we cannot ignore the danger which lies in ignoring the fact that non-decent jobs do provide possibilities of subsistence for a great many people. It is difficult to accept a situation that may give rise to a significant increase in informal sector work, to the detriment of the formal sector.

In countries where structural unemployment is high, such as in Turkey, we are convinced that we must create jobs by implementing all the measures and policies necessary. As you know, Turkey has gone through two major financial crises over the last six months, and their repercussions on the economy have left many new unemployed in their wake.

I do not believe that other countries in similar circumstances can afford to make a distinction between decent work and work which is not decent. We are advocating the implementation as soon as possible of a national employment strategy to create new jobs and to maintain the jobs which already exist. Reducing the number of unemployed by creating new jobs is one of the main objectives of the European Union, of which Turkey would like to become a fully-fledged member.

Among the jobs which will be created, there can be some which may not qualify as decent. In our opinion, this is not an important or insurmountable problem. Creating decent work for all unemployed in a country depends above all on its economic growth. Several examples show us that the number and quality of jobs increase in a country when the country reaches a satisfactory level of growth. This is why we should first of all intensify our efforts in order to achieve good economic growth.

Today, this is an issue which is closely linked not only to the implementation of appropriate macroeconomic policies and the creation of a climate to encourage investment, but also to the efforts to increase efficiency and quality in businesses: encouraging a spirit of enterprise, implementing training and developing human resources.

As is specified in the Report, we can no longer ignore the international dimension of problems related to production and employment in a context undergoing fast-paced globalization. It is true that globalization has created a number of new opportunities and new challenges. We note that a great many of the challenges can be met, thanks to the free movement of capital across borders. But we see that at the same time unfavourable economic conditions as well as inappropriate government policies cause capital to move quickly, leaving behind, in the country of origin, growing problems of unemployment. Turkish employers have long defended the idea of greater flexibility in regulating labour in order to tackle these problems.

Unfortunately, we cannot say that to date we have made great strides in the flexibility of standards, be that at a national legislative level or at an international level. Turkish experience shows us that inflexibility in labour standards results, unfortunately, in growth in unemployment and an increase in the informal sector.

Before I conclude, I would like to express our sincere conviction, as I said in my statement last year, that the ILO must take into consideration all of these realities in setting standards. It is essential that ILO standards and Conventions take into account national and international conditions. A balance must be struck between the economic context and social needs

in order to reduce the gap between decent and not decent work.

Original Arabic: Mr. GUIDER (*Representative, Arab Labour Organization*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! First of all, I would like to express our heartfelt congratulations to the President of the Conference on her unanimous election to the Presidency of this 89th Session. I also wish her and all the Vice-Presidents every success in discharging their duties.

On behalf of the Arab Labour Organization, we would also like to thank the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for accepting our invitation to attend the 28th Session of our Organization, held in Amman in April. His presence had a very positive impact and permitted us to understand how the ILO deals with technical problems similar to those our Organization is facing. It was also an important opportunity for all the social partners of the Arab world to understand the future visions and the policies that the ILO is working to implement in the future.

We are meeting here in Geneva, as every year, in order to exchange our views and to have a dialogue on various issues relating to work. Notwithstanding the differences between our societies, opinions and laws, I believe we share a single human vision of how God's creation — free and dignified human beings — should enjoy the rights bestowed upon them by the various religions and by international instruments. It is our hope that those rights will be respected by all decision-makers worldwide.

Our world is now undergoing a unique period in its history. We now see a completely new situation, with the hegemony of a single pole recasting international economic relations in its own interests in what is called the "new international economic order". This pole is trying to dominate the world economy, to the detriment of the working and social conditions of workers. The poor are thus becoming poorer and unemployment is worsening.

The Director-General tells us in his Report that "every day we are reminded that, for everybody, work is a defining feature of human existence". In another paragraph, the Report says that "while decent work captures many of the preoccupations in high-income countries, it is also a way of expressing the goals of development in human terms. It is about improvements in the quality of people's lives".

Here we have to face a number of questions. Where do we stand in this discussion as Arab workers and workers of the developing countries. Where do we stand in relation to this progress and these trends? How far are we from having decent work, when in many Arab countries and developing countries have no work at all, and certainly no decent work? Is decent work for the whole of humanity, or only some social categories?

The Report also mentions the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Once again, we must ask: Where do we stand? Do fundamental rights not apply to the workers in the Arab world, and to our children who are suffering from blockades, rights violations and sanctions? Are the new, so-called intelligent sanctions not simply an admission by the masters of power that the old economic sanctions were stupid and inhuman?

Trade liberalization and deregulation are intended, under the guise of globalization and with the pretext

that the world is now a single human society, to let the market govern the world economy. Should they not make a place for the poor in developing countries, by ensuring their freedom of movement and freedom to work unhindered, without obstacles preventing them and their families from benefiting from the fruits of their labour? There is another question. In our modern economy, are commodities more important and more precious than human beings?

The main labour market indicators represent a goldmine for those who are planning the economic future and who want to predict the negative effects of the people's anger and popular revolution by those who pay the price of such policies. These policies have adverse political and social repercussions on regimes, and on societies as a whole.

We in the Arab countries are not against international economic cooperation, but we believe a rational balance must be struck between economic progress and social needs.

That balance can only be achieved if the international community and organizations like the ILO oppose these fallacious policies and attempt to relieve their negative impact on individuals, families and society.

In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks and our appreciation to the Governing Body, which accepted to hold a special meeting to discuss the human problems and the suffering of the Arab workers in Palestine. We hope there will be more cooperation and international solidarity in order to achieve the common objectives shared by the Arab Labour Organization and the ILO.

Mr. TABANI (*Employers' delegate, Pakistan*) — I greet you on behalf of the Employers of Pakistan and congratulate the President, as well as the Vice-Presidents, on their unanimous election to the high offices of this Conference. I am confident that together we will devote our experience to ensure a successful outcome of this important meeting.

Globalization has created unprecedented economic opportunities. But this golden opportunity has also deepened social inequalities within and amongst nations. It has manifested itself in the form of acute unemployment and underemployment. These opinions, expressed by world leaders and heads of international agencies, is confirmed by the statistics revealed in the *World Employment Report* for the year 2000.

Ensuring stable employment is an important element of human-oriented management. However, people expect more than just jobs. The ILO, therefore, has to play an important role in evolving and implementing a development-oriented approach with emphasis on employment and social development, thus creating a climate that is conducive to globalization.

I therefore compliment the Director-General on his Report to this Conference: *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. It is indeed a global challenge and his Report is very timely if read with the contents of the *World Employment Report* of 2000 and his earlier report on decent work to the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference. The Report is wide-ranging and visionary and appropriate for a general debate in this Conference.

Whilst we could agree that an integrated policy framework for decent work is needed to give concrete expression to the principles in the Declaration, we

feel that it is up to the constituents to define and identify their own needs and priorities. It will not be proper for the ILO to make value judgements in what is "decent" or otherwise. With due respect to those who advocate minimum floor levels, I will submit that, unlike fiscal and criminal laws, labour laws encourage social development. It is therefore up to the respective societies to determine the levels from which to commence and then move forward. Such a procedure will be, to quote the Director-General: "In the true spirit of cohesive tripartism" which he explained to us this morning. In this respect, the Decent Work Pilot Programmes (DW/PP) in Denmark, the Philippines and Bangladesh will provide us with interesting data for future references.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Report of the Director-General was received rather late, I have no doubt there will be a wide-ranging and stimulating debate on the numerous questions raised in the Report. The nature of the various questions raised and the debate here will have implications for the future work and programme of the ILO. The gist of the discussions will have to be debated in the respective committees of the Governing Body for a full debate within the Governing Body framework. Some of the themes of globalization are being raised during the Governing Body's Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which is scheduled to meet in a special session to concentrate on these very themes during the last days of the Conference.

I would like to express our sincere thanks to the ILO for the technical assistance given to Pakistan during the year under review, as well as to IPEC for the continuation of technical assistance on the elimination of child labour.

I also wish to thank ACT/EMP for the cooperation and assistance for the Employers' Federation of Pakistan with the hope that this cooperation will continue for the future years.

Original French: Ms. SASSO MAZZUFFERI (Employers' delegate, Italy) — It is a great pleasure for me to see you in the Chair for this particular sitting and in the Vice-President's Chair for the whole of the session. I give you my best wishes and congratulations.

The Report of the Director-General informs us of the great progress achieved on the road to modernizing the ILO. We need to complete this transition towards an organization with services where team spirit and the integration of skills reign supreme. My congratulations to the Director-General and his staff for the work already accomplished to lay the foundations of future progress.

Amongst the programmes, I would like to highlight those of the Turin Centre aimed at employers. I would particularly like to encourage the Director of the Centre to continue with these efforts.

The Employers' group considers the emphasis placed on consensus by the Report to be of the essence. It is true that the ILO's strength lies in its tripartite structure and that when consensus is achieved — and that is always desirable — the Organization has more clout.

However, for us, the social partners, it is dangerous to promote artificial consensus which goes beyond that which our constituents — employers' organizations and enterprises — expect, if we are to retain the credibility of our members. We have to represent them, with all the accompanying responsibilities.

When it comes to private voluntary initiatives, we should not expect enterprises to do the job of governments, for instance, the implementation of basic labour standards. ILO action is necessary to encourage governments to adopt more consistent and responsible stances in this area.

In this tricky area, the Report presents issues and makes suggestions to which we cannot give swift replies. An in-depth discussion at the Governing Body level within the Committee on Employment and Social Policy is required. In this area, every enterprise has its own point of view; therefore the ILO's research must be updated before making proposals which commit enterprises.

To overcome the decent work deficit, one must first stimulate a climate which is conducive to investment and the creation of enterprises, and which increases flexibility. Flexible jobs, which should no longer be called atypical jobs, are often the most dynamic ones, especially in the most technologically advanced areas of the economy.

If, as the Report emphasizes, economic and social efficiency are closely linked, then Italian employers have at least three goals which remain priorities. The first is economic growth, which will lead to job creation and the participation rate should be increased, where needed. The second goal is the reduction and progressive elimination of the black economy, which, all too often, is hitting intolerably high levels. The third goal is to iron out the differences between the more advanced and lesser advanced areas in the same country, which leads to a disproportionate distribution of the gross domestic product, which is unacceptably low in some areas when compared with others.

In Italy recently, almost all employers' representatives and the vast majority of trade union organizations came to an agreement on a draft implementing the European Union Directive on fixed-term contracts. This agreement introduces greater flexibility into the labour market and may make an outstanding contribution to job creation, whilst at the same time promoting a decline in the black economy.

These goals should be placed in the context of competition within a country and within the globalized economy, which is bearing down ever harder on enterprises, and which means that smaller enterprises have to think in terms of growing if they are to face up to the challenges of world trade. With this in view, the main strategic elements of this change — fiscal policy, infrastructures, public administration, overall competition, should interact. We need an integrated approach which follows the paradigm that the ILO has put forward, taking into account the specifications of individual countries.

Italian employers are committed to promoting the ILO's action. We feel that this could play a key role in a sort of globalization which can secure prosperity, flexibility and the social changes required if we are to have favourable social and economic change in all member States.

Original Spanish: Mr. FERNANDEZ (Workers' delegate, Uruguay) — I would like to congratulate the President and the other members of the Office on their nomination. The Director-General, in his Report, identifies a priority for people throughout the world: "Work is a defining feature of human existence. It is the means of sustaining life and of meeting

basic needs. But it is also the activity through which individuals affirm their own identity, both to themselves and to those around them. It is crucial to individual choice, to the welfare of families, and to the stability of societies.”

If we take this clear concept as a basis, there is no doubt that the global challenge facing us is extremely serious. Any crisis anywhere in the world affects our rights. We are witness to the application of socio-economic policies that completely ignore social considerations and attack the most basic human rights. But, as the Director-General states, work is the basis of these rights. Clearly, this means decent work, or decency in work.

In Latin America, neo-liberal policies continue stubbornly and somewhat foolishly to be applied, and are leading to a rise in unemployment, precariousness and informal work, some of it specifically encouraged. All this is happening at an alarming rate. This situation is accompanied by marginalization and ever-worsening distribution of wealth.

Ironically, while technological advances, including economic growth take us by surprise, there is still a lack of decent work and no respect for the instruments which the poorest of the poor need in order to try to live with dignity.

Today, governments and employers are undermining workers' social protection. We deregulate in the name of competitiveness in order to generate higher profits for multinational companies. These better results are not redistributed, and people are obliged to accept any work available.

At the same time, higher qualifications are required, but the necessary resources for training are not available, or employers and governments discriminate against different workers at different levels in different ways. Young people are required to have theoretical training and experience, and yet they are not able to get it.

Privatization, far from being beneficial, has brought higher unemployment, corruption and inefficiency. More than anything else, what we need is reform of the State in order to defend and develop the national wealth.

As regards social security, Uruguay and Latin America have adopted regimes that are unique in the world in that they exclude the vast majority of people.

So far it can be seen that more than half of those affiliated to limited companies do not receive pension contributions from their employers. This means that many millions of workers will not have retirement pensions or will have inadequate pensions. There is a lack of information and participation. Debt is on the rise, financing is being reduced and capital is being dangerously concentrated in fewer hands. This threatens democracy and increases insecurity by leading people to depend solely on themselves and on global stock market growth.

In Uruguay, unprecedented indicators show that 54 per cent of people have problems with employment, 41 per cent lack social security, 40 per cent of children live in poverty and only 20 per cent of workers benefit from collective bargaining (and cannot use it to set a national minimum wage). This is a lack of respect for individual and collective rights. The situation is even worse for the very poor, women, young people, workers over the age of 50 and rural workers forced to emigrate because of unemployment and the unjust lack of unemployment benefits.

Only strong opposition by the unions can bring progress in social protection. As we have said already, we are having to fight on without the essential weapons of collective bargaining and trade union power. All of this in a country where negotiation and dialogue have been the key to finding a way out of crisis and dictatorship. Today, these instruments of democracy and civilization are under attack or are not promoted effectively.

We believe that the Government, in company with the entrepreneurs, is afraid to confront ideas in order to build consensus and find ways to check the backward slide we are witnessing.

We hope that those in power will have the humility to accept that solutions and rectifications must be introduced in the near future in order to move forward and lose no more time. Our children, the elderly, women and all Uruguayans deserve a better future with protection and social justice.

In conclusion, our delegation would like to express its solidarity with workers in Colombia who continue to suffer from barbaric violence and the violation of the most basic human rights.

(The Conference adjourned at 1.15 p.m.)