

**Fourth sitting**

Tuesday, 7 June 2005, 11.15 a.m.

*President: Mr. Chiriboga***REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION**
(CONT.)*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

Before beginning our work, I would like to inform the Conference of the results of the elections of the Governing Body. These results are found already in *Provisional Record* No. 9 of the Conference.

We shall now resume the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director General.

Original Spanish: Mr. DE ALBA (Government, Mexico)

The Government of Mexico agrees with the Director-General that it is time for the constituents of the ILO to pause and consider the future of the work of our Organization with a realistic vision far from self-complacency, the ILO has, by its tripartite nature, a fundamental role to play in giving globalization a human face. Hence, we appreciate the determination of the Director-General to increase the knowledge base regarding labour markets and their interaction with policies.

We support the efforts of the ILO to develop decent work into a paradigm of economic and social policies which focus on the individual, the centre of all human activity. The best way of supporting decent work in domestic policies is through social dialogue in which government, workers and employers all participate, as has been pointed out in the Director-General's Introduction, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*.

Inclusive social dialogue is a fundamental tool for democratic governance. It is a way to foster the exchange of ideas and the construction of necessary agreements, with shared responsibility between society and government in order to consolidate democracies with a view to sustainable development. Internationally, decent work must be the objective which unites nations to improve everybody's quality of life.

Only through decent employment, on the one hand, and through the promotion of ethics and corporate social responsibility, on the other, can one achieve the goal of finding decent work for everyone. In this way, we can overcome the problems of poverty, inequality and lack of opportunities, as well as implementing universal values, such as solidarity, social justice and the common good.

We also agree with the Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental

Principles and Rights at Work, *A global alliance against forced labour*, in its rejection of this practice which is considered unacceptable in the new labour culture, which is inspiring the Government of Mexico to place the individual at the heart of our labour policy. An enterprise which realizes that it is working with, and for, human beings becomes aware of its social responsibility. When this occurs, people, enterprises and countries are made more competitive and their development becomes sustainable.

Human dignity is fully expressed at work when there is respect for and promotion of the rights and duties of workers within the enterprise, understood as a productive human community. The Government of Mexico rejects human trafficking. Therefore, the Secretariat of Labour and Social Security reaffirms its commitment to continue collaborating with the competent authorities so as to eradicate criminal practices such as this.

With regard to the proposal in the Global Report promoting the orderly management of migration, our country deems it essential to safeguard the rights of workers regardless of their migratory status and to make renewed calls to fight against the exploitation of migrants in irregular situations.

Just like the ILO, Mexico is committed to the Millennium Development Goals. In the international sphere, our vision of the central importance of the individual includes the social and labour effects of globalization, in order to promote ethical values so that States commit themselves to protecting the labour rights of workers, particularly the most vulnerable.

At this session of the International Labour Conference we will ensure with regard to youth employment, we continue to establish and apply strategies which will provide young people with dignified and productive work.

The Government of President Vicente Fox accords special importance to youth employment. Activities such as the launch of the Mexican Labour Observatory last March will contribute to better knowledge of the labour market which, along with the implementation of productive insertion and training programmes for young people, is an instrument which enables us to develop dignified and productive working conditions for future generations.

Preserving and fostering the value and dignity of work is a commitment which all contemporary societies must shoulder. Mexico is convinced of the

importance and topical nature of focusing on the individual in our approach to labour, and we will encourage debate in the Americas on “Employment and the individual at the centre of globalization” at the 14th Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour, of which Mexico will take over the presidency. We trust that this exchange within our hemisphere will contribute to discussions in other multi-lateral forums, such as the ILO itself.

Mr. NG (*Minister for Manpower, Singapore*)

Riding on the strong global economic performance last year, particularly in Asia, Singapore’s economy grew by a robust 8.4 per cent. This has resulted in a significant drop in the unemployment rate from a high of 5.7 per cent in 2003 to less than 4 per cent in 2004 and this year.

With intense competition from increasing globalization, our businesses are forced up the value-added chain to survive. Singapore’s response is to upgrade the skills of our workers through training in order to help them meet the changing needs of our industries to remain employable. This will also help our workers earn more through increased productivity. This is especially relevant for low-wage workers who are at risk of structural unemployment.

Like many other countries, Singapore also faces the problem of an ageing population. Hence, the Government is actively studying how the effective retirement age of older workers could be extended. One key strategy involves re designing jobs so that older workers can still perform efficiently in them. Our unions are spearheading this effort through the National Trades Union Congress. To enhance the employability of older workers, we must also design appropriate remuneration schemes pegged to the output of the job in question and not to the seniority of the worker.

I note that, in recent years, occupational safety and health has become a priority area for the ILO. Singapore welcomes this increased emphasis, as our workers and their families deserve a safe workplace.

Since last year, we have embarked on a fundamental review of our occupational safety and health regulatory framework. We have set ourselves a target of halving occupational fatalities – currently standing at 4.9 per 100,000 workers – within ten years. We seek to become one of the safest places in the world in which to work.

Our new initiatives for occupational safety and health are in line with the ILO’s promotional framework for occupational safety and health tabled at this Conference. First, the focus will shift from prescription to prevention and assessment of risks. Secondly, all stakeholders will be brought on board for greater ownership of safety standards and outcomes. To complement this, our enforcement stance will also shift towards partnership and assistance. Third, improvement will be facilitated at workplaces with poor safety management through rigorous auditing and tougher sanctions. These principles will be institutionalized through new safety laws to be enacted by the end of this year.

Let me take this opportunity to update the ILO on Singapore’s initiatives in respect of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In 2001, Singapore ratified one ILO core Convention, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). In the following year we ratified another core Convention, the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). These ratifi-

cations signify Singapore’s continued commitment to safeguarding the well-being of workers and to improving our employment standards.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform this meeting that following an amendment in our law last year to raise the minimum employment age, Singapore will, this year, ratify the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).

Child labour does not exist in Singapore and our children and young persons generally remain in schools or vocational institutions until at least the age of 16. The ratification of this Convention further demonstrates Singapore’s commitment to the values and principles that the ILO upholds.

Original Japanese: Mr. TOGARI (Vice-Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan)

Once again, it is my great honour to be given this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Japanese Government this year in this beautiful world city of water and green, Geneva. First of all, my country strongly supports the ILO in its strong conviction to pursue its basic call of decent work and respects the efforts of the ILO, the Employers, the Workers and each member State.

The recent trend of accelerated globalization has created new economic opportunities – but it is also true that in the shadow of this new phenomenon many people have been left behind. We share the awareness of the ILO that globalization should be fair and open to everyone in that its benefits and interests be available to all people. To this end, it is important to achieve the goal that everyone has access to decent work and we support the ILO’s role in this endeavour.

One of the effects of globalization is that it attacks directly those who are in a vulnerable position. Youth, one of the agendas in this Conference, are likely to be negatively affected by globalization but at the same time young people have a wealth of creativity and a flexibility. They are the asset that has a great potential to contribute to the development of a society through accumulation of knowledge and experience. We are convinced that by tapping the young generation’s potential the social economy of each region will revitalize and lay the foundation to create decent work.

In December last year, Japan held the Symposium on Globalization and the Future of Youth in Asia, together with the ILO and we were honoured to have the presence of the Director-General, Mr. Somavia. From Asia to the rest of the world, we were able to send out the message that youth are our greatest asset. Based on the results of this event, Japan plans to begin a project in 2006 in cooperation with the ILO for youth employment.

Japan highly values and supports the objectives of the ILO and its activities that are being carried out in the world.

However, in any organization it is necessary to continuously review the efficient use of its resources, especially with regard to a budget that is an aggregate of the contributions of each member State. We need to manage it as efficiently as possible and avoid unnecessary increase as many of the member States are faced with challenging financial situations.

It is also indispensable that, by thoroughly reducing administrative costs, we strive to enhance the budget for the field activities. To this end, we believe that personnel costs need to be reduced

through a restructuring and the structure needs to be made more efficient. We feel that further decentralization and more flexible human resources assignments are needed in order to implement effective field-based technical cooperation. We look forward to the further efforts of the International Labour Office.

In the Director-General's Report, the question is raised as to how to run the annual Conference itself. We welcome this as it relates to a very important matter. The annual Conference is the place where the social partners of government, employers and workers of the world gather together with their respective wisdom and experiences. This is where the future of labour is being designed. Therefore, we believe that a very important issue has been raised here. How can we run the Conference more productively by modernizing and making it interactive? We are particularly interested in the possibility of connecting to the rest of the world via Internet and the Director-General's proposal of panel discussions.

So far I have been talking about the reform of the ILO concerning the civil service; indeed, we have been having various discussions in Japan as well. The Japanese Government will continue, within this context, to advance this reform. I would like to invite the ILO to look patiently at the development of this dialogue between the government side and the labour side.

In Japan we have a saying "Eyes are cowardly, hands are courageous." Faced with poverty and all kinds of injustice, it may seem too idealistic and too far away to bring about the society that the ILO seeks to achieve. At times we may be discouraged, but this saying reminds us that, if we are willing to take one challenge at a time – a challenge that we can handle – eventually, we will be able to achieve our lofty goal before we even know it.

I would like to conclude my remarks by saying that Japan is committed to facing these difficult challenges, moving forward together with the ILO.

Original French: Mr. NKILI (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Cameroon)

I should like to take this opportunity of addressing the chamber to particularly express to Mr. Juan Somavia, as Director-General of the ILO and a friend of Cameroon, the esteemed appreciation of the President of the Republic of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya and of his Government for the many actions undertaken, both for Africa, in general, and for Cameroon, in particular.

It is a pleasure for me to state here that in Cameroon the right to work, *de jure* and *de facto*, is granted to every citizen as a fundamental right. Forced labour or compulsory labour is in fact banned and no law exists which opposes the freedom to work.

Therefore, it is in a climate of peace and dialogue that Cameroon has seen organizations and trade unions flourish and develop freely.

One should point out at this stage that the involvement of trade unions in tripartite bodies for coordination and social dialogue, such as the National Health and Safety at Work Commission, and the National Labour Consultancy Commission which met recently and whose conclusions shall be submitted as a bill to the office of the National Assembly in anticipation of its next session.

As regards the dialogue forums, may I mention in particular our Synergy Committee, responsible for promoting social dialogue, our Ad Hoc Tripartite Committee on Stabilization of the Social Climate in the Case of a Social Crisis and our Tripartite Commission for Negotiating and Revising Collective Agreements.

The Government of Cameroon, in synergy with social partners, is making every effort to ensure that the values of human liberty and dignity are respected, and is proclaimed and enshrined in the ILO Constitution.

Can we really legitimately talk about liberty and dignity for workers whilst so many in the working population have no employment, while they waste away due to poverty, despite repeated efforts by governments to resolve this thorny issue?

We know that, as in the past, we can rely on the support of the International Labour Office in bringing about true progress within the world of work.

Thus, the Government of the Republic of Cameroon reiterates its support for the Director-General, with whom it fully shares the ideas and vision of progress and prosperity for workers.

Mr. GOCHE (Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe)

I wish to congratulate the Director-General for having presented a thought-provoking Report at this session. It is indeed informative in two respects.

Firstly, he has challenged us to reflect upon what we have achieved, or not, collectively as member States since the adoption of the Decent Work Agenda in 1999.

Secondly, the Director-General has challenged us to continue thinking of ways and means of improving the functions of the International Labour Conference so that it remains relevant to our needs. This is also desirable against the backdrop of the new socio-economic arrangement largely influenced and shaped by the forces of globalization, a phenomenon that has brought mixed fortunes to most of us in the developing world.

The Decent Work Agenda, as was highlighted by the delegates from the developing world at the 88th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2000, risks remaining a vision to the majority of us from the developing economies as a result of the negative impact of globalization forces. This position was noted, though in a different fashion, in the 2004 report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

The negative impact of globalization, coupled with the deepening impoverishment and unemployment traps, as well as the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, remain challenges working against the much-cherished Decent Work Agenda in our societies and economies.

In Africa, the Heads of State and Government noted these challenges to the Decent Work Agenda during the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, held in Ouagadougou in September 2004.

The African Union has placed employment promotion and poverty alleviation high on its agenda. Zimbabwe welcomes the role of the ILO in the operationalization of the African Union Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa. The focus on youth employment by the ILO again demonstrates the Organization's commitment to fight poverty through employment creation. It is our hope

that this Organization will devote more resources to this vital area.

In the case of Zimbabwe, the land redistribution programme which was intensified at the turn of the century has been one of the major tools employed to fight poverty. Zimbabwe has no apologies to make to those who saw the programme differently and continue to undermine it.

The programme, apart from empowering the erstwhile landless majority, was initiated to correct the colonial injustice which had led the Zimbabweans to wage a protracted war against a settler colonial regime. These forces continue to frustrate the process of consolidating the gains from that visionary land reform.

Today, efforts are being directed to ensuring that the land is put to maximum use with a view to increasing productivity and creating employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, which is the backbone of our economy. To us, land is the economy. Several schemes to support the new landholders have been put in place by the Government. In this respect, Zimbabwe has taken measures, through the use of this available productive resource, to give effect and full meaning to the principles covered in the Director-General's Report entitled *Working out of poverty*, as well as those essential elements which feature in the African Union Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, which is the product of the Ouagadougou Summit.

Turning to the issue of reforming the International Labour Conference mentioned by the Director-General in his Report, Zimbabwe, like those developing countries which find themselves being politically attacked at this Conference at the instigation of some countries of the West, advocates the revision of the working methods of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards. The listing of countries to appear before that Committee is now political and serves partisan interests.

It is common cause that all countries perceived by the West to be undemocratic according to its own subjective criteria, those with ideological differences with the West and those which resist continued domination by the West, are the subject of malignment at this Conference.

These Western countries prevail over some trade union organizations and individuals within their structures from the developing countries. These individuals, who have an appetite for donor funding and the propensity to betray their national causes and sovereignty, are bribed to agitate for the listing of their own governments.

This is done in the name of trade union solidarity, which involves trade union centres of the West that receive funding from their respective governments for onward transmission to trade union centres of the developing world. The finances are meant to be used by trade union centres in developing countries to destabilize their own governments.

Finally, I wish to end by thanking the Director-General for the Programme and Budget proposals for 2006-07, which prioritize youth employment. As has already been said, employment creation is one of the most effective tools in the fight against poverty. Youth employment contributes to the Decent Work Agenda. Decent work entails a better social world for us and for future generations.

Original Arabic: Mr. MANSOURI (Minister of Employment, Social Affairs and Solidarity, Morocco)

In the Report he has submitted to the Conference, the Director-General addresses a number of important issues which are part of this Organization's social policy. I would like to highlight decent work in particular decent work since it has become a global objective and one of the components of the economic and social policy of this Organization, stressing the importance of employment in general and youth employment in particular. It is also crucial to prohibit forced labour and strengthen tripartism, one of the pillars of the work of this Organization.

We share most of the concerns set out in the Report of the Director-General and support his proposals for promoting development while creating an enabling environment for decent work, securing dignity for everyone. But these objectives cannot be achieved without promoting social dialogue amongst all the partners (governments, trade unions and employers).

Allow me also to take this opportunity to stress the importance of the standards-related activities of the Organization, which lay the groundwork for ensuring that international labour standards have a realistic content, thus enhancing their role in achieving social justice, which is one of the aims that the Organization wishes to promote through the different means at its disposal.

The issue of forced labour as addressed in the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is a central concern and one of the priorities of this Organization: this approach should make it possible to put an end to this practice, which jeopardizes human dignity and fundamental rights.

An effort should be made to find new means of dealing with this problem.

The commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to the principles and aims for which the ILO stands, in particular its lofty humanitarian values and concern for human beings, is what prompted the Government of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God preserve him, to take an interest in the social aspects, because only by succeeding in this can we achieve sustainable development, based on partnership and consultation of all the social and economic factors to tackle all the problems with economic and social dimensions.

I would like to mention the national initiative for human development launched by His Majesty Mohammed VI in a speech he made on 20 May 2005, aimed at resolving the social dilemma by tackling the social deficit in villages and towns, by encouraging income-generating activities providing a steady income and generating employment, while meeting the special needs of vulnerable groups.

To this end, Morocco has undertaken a tremendous social and economic reform effort to create a modern society guaranteeing equal opportunities for all citizens and effective and efficient participation by all its members.

To implement the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Government is convinced of the importance of social peace within the enterprise as conducive to productivity growth and job preservation. We have made dialogue and negotiation an effective tool to resolve social problems, focusing on freedom of association, collective bargaining, the prohibition of forced

labour and any discrimination in employment, as well as the elimination of child labour.

With regard to forced labour, the Labour Code is entirely in conformity with the international labour standards on this subject, as it prohibits forced labour and imposes dissuasive penalties for those in breach of this principle.

As regards social protection, the Government has made social security one of its priorities by promulgating the Medical Insurance Code, which embodies the principle of the solidarity economy and enshrines one of the fundamental human rights in Morocco, the right to health.

This Code is one of the cornerstones of our social reform efforts, and is intended to extend medical coverage and access to the compulsory sickness insurance system and medical care to all Moroccans in order to achieve the desired goal of social development.

Concerning employment, the Government has given priority to employment, and youth employment in particular, as one of the key elements of its economic policy, by supporting institutions involved in the field of employment.

As regards legislation, the Kingdom of Morocco has completed its array of legal provisions in the field of employment by adopting laws and regulations under the Labour Code, with the participation of all the social and economic partners.

Cooperation between the Kingdom of Morocco and the ILO has developed along very positive lines, with help from friendly countries in employment-related areas, resulting in the organization of a number of programmes and workshops.

One cannot mention workers' dignity and rights in this international forum without recalling the human conditions and grave situation experienced in the Middle East, and in particular by the Palestinian people, as a result of the policies of occupation, repression and closure perpetrated by the Israeli authorities against our Palestinian brothers.

To conclude, I should like to thank the Director-General and his team once again for their tremendous efforts towards achieving the objectives of our Organization. I also convey my gratitude to the President for the excellent way in which he has guided the work of this session.

Mr. BOXALL (*Secretary, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australia*)

I welcome this opportunity to comment on the Director-General's Report to the Conference and on the ILO's work plan and priorities in a period of major global change. I am very pleased to be in Geneva at the International Labour Conference for the first time.

As the Director-General's Report states, we are living in a world with rapid change that poses challenges for governments and for all members of society. When we think of globalization, we often think of movements of capital around the world and increased foreign direct investment. But globalization also has a human dimension, and it is important that the gains from globalization are maximized to benefit all individuals.

There are many dimensions to enhancing the gains from globalization. In my view, the most significant contribution that can be made is reform of national policies. Governments need to examine their domestic policies to ensure they provide the flexibilities needed to increase productivity, thereby

enhancing economic and employment growth, raising living standards and creating an internationally competitive economy.

Paid work is the key to economic well-being and is the most effective way to alleviate poverty. The Australian economy has performed very strongly over the last decade and our unemployment rate is at a 28 year low. In addition, Australia is making a number of changes to its workplace relations arrangements to make them more flexible and to provide more choice to individual employees and employers. The Australian Government is also now focused on changes to its "welfare to work" arrangements and to its taxation system, to increase workforce participation and encourage individuals on benefits into jobs.

International organizations also have a role to play in responding to the challenges of globalization. This is particularly true of the ILO. The Director-General has invited us to reflect on the rapidly changing patterns in the world of work and to consider their implications for the future work of the ILO. The concept of decent work as a global goal is one with which I agree. The ILO can advance this international agenda through technical assistance and sharing of information and best practice.

The Director-General has also commented in his Report on "standard setting". The Australian Government believes that improving the transparency, effectiveness and relevance of the Organization's standard-setting system is a priority. It is essential that the code of international labour standards maintain its relevance for both developing and developed countries. The code must be contemporary, concise, non-prescriptive and widely ratified if it is to command respect from the global community and continue to meet the ILO's basic objectives.

Australia congratulates the ILO for work undertaken in relation to the drafting of the new consolidated maritime and fishing Conventions, which will replace the majority of maritime and fishing Conventions adopted since 1920. These new Conventions are important examples of the work which the ILO must undertake in order to reformulate outdated instruments and produce new ones that express contemporary standards of relevance to all countries. Comprehensive standard-setting reform of this nature must remain firmly on the ILO agenda. It is core ILO business.

The Director-General is to be congratulated on his efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the International Labour Office through strategic budgeting, cost-saving measures and allocation of resources to the areas of greatest priority.

Transparency of financial and budgetary arrangements is essential if the ILO is to remain relevant and have an ongoing impact in a globalizing world. At the same time, the ILO needs to be mindful that many governments are facing difficult budgetary circumstances and may not be able to fund continued growth in ILO expenditure.

Australia has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with the ILO. In March 2004, the Australian Government was pleased to hand over the instrument of ratification for the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155). This was the 58th ILO Convention ratified by Australia. Currently, the Australian Government is also progressing the ratification of a core Convention, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.

182), and is currently considering the Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162).

Finally, on behalf of the Australian Government, I would like to thank the governments that supported Australia's candidacy for membership of the Governing Body for the period 2005-2008. I would like to extend special thanks to New Zealand and the Republic of Korea for the work they have both done over the last term of the Governing Body. I would also like to thank the ILO member States in our subregion, the South-East Asia and the Pacific subregion, which have entrusted us with this important role. We look forward to greater engagement with the ILO, both as a Governing Body member and representative of our close neighbours.

Original German: Mr. ANDRES (Parliamentary Secretary of State, Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, Germany)

Attendance at the annual session of the International Labour Conference, which I have attended on several occasions already, is certainly not a routine obligation for my country. Germany sees it as an opportunity to take stock: where do we stand today in the international context of the world of labour? Are we afflicted by specific German problems – as some would have it, a “German disease”? Or are we all moving closer together in the context of globalization.

Let me be quite clear: I do not believe in a “German disease”. True, we Germans are world champions in complaining, but I would say that, to paraphrase Molière, we are rather “imaginary invalids”. However, we are also world champions in exports, ranking above the even larger economies of Japan and the United States, although I have to concede that for the fifth year running now Germany has seen weaker economic growth than our neighbours in the European Union.

As the labour and employment experts gathered here know better than anyone, this gives rise to considerable problems for our social security system as a whole. Germany has managed in recent years to lower non-wage labour costs and has also been able to stabilize levels of contribution to social security systems. The reform programme “Agenda 2010”, which was initially perceived by the German population and presented by the media as a threat is beginning to have positive effects.

This year, thanks to intensive support measures for young people under the age of 25, we are going to be able to reduce the duration of youth unemployment to less than three months. Since the beginning of this year, we have been able to provide all citizens capable of working and in need of assistance with equal access to employment promotion measures. Those who receive social assistance – the so-called ultimate safety net – are now included in the social security system. The entire Ministry of Economics and Labour and all the officials of the Labour Agency have made it their motto that there is no greater priority for us today than overcoming our excessively high level of unemployment.

In this, policy chiefs in Germany are in full agreement with the Director-General of the International Labour Office. What he so aptly calls “decent work” translates, in Germany, into a whole host of large and small measures intended to give all who are capable of gainful employment a transition or access to work or at least, as a first step, access to employment promotion measures.

The Federal Republic of Germany owes its political stability to the recognition by society that the State is also there to provide a minimum level of protection to those who are left stranded by events in the marketplace or, as is increasingly the case by globalization. This social consensus and its outcome, which we in Germany call social peace, are liable to disintegrate when redundancies and dismissals in the labour force are seen by some amongst the business elite not as a problem but as evidence of successful modernization of the national economy.

Those who criticize this attitude, as I am doing now, are neither damaging the prospects of Germany as a place to do business nor abusing investors; they are only addressing what the Director-General of the International Labour Office and the World Commission set up for that very purpose have called the “social dimension of globalization”. Indeed, this must once again become a deciding factor in economic activity, even in business circles, and it is precisely here, in this world forum on labour, that employers, workers and governments should raise their voices in unison when the concept of globalization is deliberately misinterpreted and used as an alibi for worldwide wage dumping.

Pure, undiluted shareholder capitalism obeys rules of its own. The focus is not on the long-term survival of businesses or on securing employment but on the short-term return on anonymously invested capital. This will inevitably destroy social market economies and the social dimension of globalization, as we call it today. The key question is therefore: how can profits or added value be turned into social progress in the years to come? Unless we have minimum standards in Europe, including, in particular, for taxation of enterprises and for wages and salaries, countries and people will be caught up in a destructive process of competition whose disastrous effects are even now being seen in many German abattoirs and on German building sites, where illegally employed butchers and construction workers from the former Eastern Europe are having to work for less than five Euros per hour, or even to claim that they are fully independent small-scale entrepreneurs, even if their entire operating capital consists of one trowel.

Original Farsi: Mr. KHALEGHI (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The pivotal issues of youth employment and forced labour are addressed and submitted in two separate Reports by the Director-General to the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference. Both Reports are indicative of serious concern and a reflection of the long-standing commitment of the Director-General and the ILO to safeguard the dignity of millions of people whose lives are being threatened by the lack of international unity and determination in this era of globalization.

Led by the ILO and the United Nations, the issue of youth employment has been well incorporated and emphasized in policy developments in most international bodies. However, only a trivial rate of 0.2 per cent growth in youth employment has been achieved over the past decade (1993-2003). This growth rate is not helped by the fact that 85 per cent of the world's young people live in developing countries.

If only 1 per cent is added annually to youth employment growth, global GDP would increase by

US\$44 billion. This implies that determination and convergence at the global level remain the most efficacious tools in the promotion of youth employment, the eradication of poverty and achievement of the Millennium Goals. The ever-increasing rate of youth unemployment in all member States is primarily caused by two major factors: globalization and inefficient macro policy-making at national levels.

Two factors greatly affect one another, the promotion of youth employment is inextricable linked to macro policies at national level. By taking an ethical approach towards globalization, macro policies at the national level will be far more able to overcome the actual barriers hindering youth employment.

Factors that provide a sustainable solution to the problems of youth unemployment and which could further accelerate employment growth include adoption of an ethical approach towards globalization; the elimination of double standards; fair distribution of income, better management of globalization; cancelling the debts of poor countries; liberalization of foreign direct investment from the North to the South; capacity building for developing countries and finally, confidence building and reinforcement of tripartism among ILO constituents.

The world should vigorously endeavour to transform the initiative of decent work to a universal value in light of ILO's strategic goals. This would in turn require an all-out effort to revitalize tripartism and strengthen workers' and employers' organizations across the world. Decent work would undoubtedly be better established if workers' and employers' organizations are able to voice their demands and tripartite decision-making in a more transparent manner.

In spite of a zero growth rate predicted for the biennium 2006-07, the allocation of more financial resources by the ILO to regions to improve technical cooperation, reveals the importance attached by the Director-General and the ILO to the implementation of decent work.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is honoured to be amongst the 11 member States which have voluntarily played a leading role in the Youth Employment Network. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has incorporated the concept of decent work into its fourth national five-year development plan, starting in 2005, as a manifestation of its overall commitment to the ILO's strategic objectives.

I cannot conclude without referring to the shocking phenomenon of forced labour, addressed in Report I(B) of the Director-General, *A global alliance against forced labour*. The ILO statistics indicate that more than 12 million innocent people, mainly women and children, are currently victims of forced labour. Unfortunately this deplorable phenomenon has its roots in the unemployment of young men and women who unwillingly turn to migration in pursuit of better living conditions. The same people end up trapped by human trafficking networks, being abused both sexually and economically.

To eliminate forced labour in all its forms, it is imperative that a global strategy to reform regulations at both national and international levels be developed in order to effectively combat the organized networks of human trafficking.

Ms. BLINKEVICIUTE (*Minister of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania*)

I would like to thank the Director-General and the Office for the Report, which gives us an opportunity to once again identify the problems of the working world, and to pause before taking any decisions. It is crucial to analyse the changes in the world before taking any further steps.

The last decade saw a remarkable acceleration in the pace of globalization. Globalization makes our world increasingly interconnected and interdependent; it creates new opportunities for workers in all countries to develop their potential and to support their families through jobs created by greater economic integration; but it also carries with it serious risks. Our main challenge is to make globalization an instrument of opportunity and inclusion, not of fear and insecurity.

The ILO has always based its work on the dignity of the individual, and this implies special concern for the world's more vulnerable members of society, who often need both protection and assistance with social integration. The ILO remains an appropriate venue to reflect upon the social problems that confront us today. We are sure that acceptance of existing challenges is the first step towards tackling them, and we believe that it is for the ILO to guide us in this process.

Lithuania recognizes the great importance of youth employment issues. We welcome the Conference Report entitled *Youth: Pathways to decent work* as a very comprehensive one. It should be borne in mind that youth is not only an inspiration for our better and more efficient work in building the future, but also a hope for our own better future.

Lithuania is concerned about the number of unemployed young people, and we endorse the efforts to create real opportunities for every young person to find an appropriate job. Both public authorities and the social partners should assume responsibility for promoting the lasting integration of young people into the labour market. We would endorse the ILO's guidelines on youth employment issues.

Job creation and employment, not only for young people, are of utmost importance. Without jobs there cannot be decent work, and without decent work there cannot be adequate wages and sufficient family income. Access to work is the safest way out of poverty, and there are no workers' rights without work. Lithuania strongly supports an ongoing consolidation of the ILO's efforts in promoting decent work. It is essential to bring together economic, employment and social policies by focusing them on the commonly defined objectives of improving competitiveness, moving towards full employment and promoting social inclusion. These objectives are not about a quick fix; they are based on hard and ongoing work and cooperation.

Lastly, I would like to stress that it is evident that the world of work, even if it is very diverse, has to tackle common challenges. Therefore, it is essential that everyone pay their tribute in this process. We all should participate and embrace all the efforts to protect human rights, and promote economic development and improvement of the labour market situation. It is obvious that joint efforts will create a more stable world, and the ILO could lead our endeavours.

I would like to congratulate the Governing Body and the Director-General for the comprehensive Report devoted to a social policy theme of current interest focusing on developments in the world, and the Director-General's annual Report on the Declaration.

With the adoption of the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in 1998, and this year's follow-up on the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, the international community must now contend with the new challenges posed by globalization.

Human dignity and self-respect can only come if workers are not seen as a commodity, but treated as human beings. Surely, we are past the days of unjust exploitation of workers and feudalism. Yet, we hear that at least 12.3 million people are trapped in forced labour around the world, and in the words of the ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia, "forced labour is a social evil which has no place in the modern world".

We must now put on track our determination to pursue social progress founded on common values and the observation of human rights standards in all regulatory and policy formulation affecting workers.

Let me touch on some of these issues, which require the commitment of governments, employers' and workers' organizations to uphold basic human values – values that are vital to our social and economic lives.

We have seen how globalization, in the form of new trade agreements that do not recognize labour rights as a major principle, has mowed down the long fight for human rights and a common value of workers' rights that have been shared by workers and their other social partners alike. Those achievements have been replaced by a value system that sees workers as just another component in the workplace, or rather a commodity, a new set of value systems putting to naught all progress made by workers thus far. That kind of globalization dampens all the good that has been achieved so far and has to be addressed by us all.

One issue we need to take up is the plight of migrant workers and the need to safeguard the rights of workers in the host country. Migrant workers continue to be exploited and treated badly. There has to be a clear agreement on the policies to be adopted on this paradox by all parties in this august body, since migrant workers do displace locals and are, in turn, exploited for their toil. Workers cross borders in search of better economic opportunities. Local workers are denied bargaining power by those who control the supply of labour to reap greater benefits while encouraging migrant workers to get organized to defend their rights. This has caused both social and economic damage in the host country.

Should minimum wage policies be adopted globally, then this economic anomaly will be reduced. We call upon countries flush with migrant workers, to observe basic human rights standards in the treatment of migrant workers while at the same time reducing their numbers so that locals are not displaced.

It is in this light that we call upon our own Government to put in practice in all regulations and policies, such as the ILO Declaration on Fundamen-

tal Principles and Rights at Work, and to continue to work on improving existing measures taken to implement the fundamental rights covered by the Declaration and to underline them: the freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; the elimination of forced and compulsory labour; the abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace.

We hope that, in the near future, there will be social security system covering all workers, and for this to happen we must continue to lobby and influence governments to implement them. We hope that the ILO will continue to influence governments so they refrain from adopting policies that weaken workers' organizations and instead see them as partners in social and economic progress.

Unions in Malaysia are increasingly fragmented, owing to legal bias in favour of management-controlled unions, which has given rise to bickering and rivalry and undermined efforts to build strong unions. To pursue our efforts to build strong unionism in Malaysia, we need the Malaysian Government to ratify Convention No. 87 to allow workers to freely associate. We also need to become stronger to challenge the threat of globalization policies and practices that exploit workers effectively to play our role in enhancing to the nation's development, and to contribute to economic growth and world peace.

Governments worldwide must be sincere in their efforts and their support to workers. They must show this in deeds not words if they want to see equitable distribution of wealth and eradication of poverty instead of colluding with economic interests of international business to destroy these workers' expectations.

Finally, I urge the ILO to continue to strengthen all regulatory and enforcement measures and support for development of strong workers' unions worldwide to ensure the promotion of social justice affecting human and labour rights.

Mr. SANJEEVA REDDY (*Worker, India*)

The Director-General this year has drawn our attention to certain issues of vital importance such as occupational safety and health, promotion of youth employment and the work of the fishing sector. I fully endorse the Director-General's Report.

I fully endorse your stand to make decent work a global goal as strategized in the November 2004 session of the Governing Body. The Philadelphia Declaration that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity" still remains a distant dream in many developing countries.

I fully endorse the strategic objective to promote and monitor the application of labour standards with reference to expanding the recognition and the coverage of rights at work to all workers whether in the formal or informal economy. We have to gear ourselves to boost productive employment, social security and occupational safety. It is indeed sad to realize that worldwide fatalities due to disease and injuries remain at around 2 million annually. Concerns have been expressed that globalization may exacerbate some of the factors contributing to ill health and casualties at work, while some parts of the globe clearly benefit from more opportunities and a better workplace. We should, therefore, realize that

decent work should mean safe work and we are a long way from achieving this goal.

Due to globalization and privatization, the scope of outsourcing is increasing. The informal sector must deal with the increasing number of workers who need humane policies. Raising the level of intellectual participation in the trade union movement will generate economic growth through effective interfacing. The master/servant relationship in the workplace is giving way to increased consultation and participation in developing countries.

Yet another component of decent work is meaningful opportunities for youth employment, both to remove poverty as well as to improve productivity.

Before I conclude, I would like to draw the attention of this House to some of the recent initiatives in India, including: streamlining child labour abolition issues a purposeful action plan for combating HIV/AIDS; a minimum job guarantee as a prelude to full employment and universal social security; meaningful tripartite/bipartite dialogues for settlement of issues without resorting to confrontation the passage of a Right to Information bill; reforms to labour laws to remove irritants obstructing the flow of technology inputs; a compensation package on a performance cum time basis in place of the traditional time-based approach; the increased implementation on the part of employers, both in the private and public sectors, of wealth sharing with their employees to perpetuate ownership culture among workers and continuous training, retraining and upgrading of labour skills.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the Co-coyoc Declaration that states that the purpose of development should not be to develop things, but to develop man. Man is his own prophet of doom and the liquidator of nature's resources. At the same time if he has the will, he is capable of transforming himself into the architect of universal happiness.

Mr. ATWOLI (*Worker, Kenya*)

My fellow Kenyan workers agree with the Director-General's observation that we are living in a time of rapid change which is posing new organizational and policy challenges for all of us. The impact of globalization on the world of work, in particular the values for which we stand as embodied in the Decent Work Agenda, are today under very serious threat.

The accession to power of a new regime in Kenya, a Government democratically elected on a platform of reform and poverty eradication through employment and wealth creation, gave many Kenyans the hope of accessing decent employment and incomes. However, two years down the line, that hope appears to have been dashed as poverty continues to afflict more than 56 per cent of our people, while unemployment and underemployment, especially among young people, is in excess of 14.6 per cent.

This is not to say that the Government has not been doing much to change the situation, but rather, that globalization is to blame for worsening the socio-economic conditions of Kenyans. The opening of our domestic markets to products from developed economies, the lack of human and institutional resources, and unfavourable international trading arrangements, among other factors, have all conspired to make our economy less competitive on the global scene.

In view of all these considerations, the Kenyan workers endorse the efforts of the ILO to make decent work a global goal, and support the main means of action in realizing this goal which include: the need for the ILO to lead efforts to reinvigorate tripartism and contribute to the strengthening of trade unions, employers' organizations and ministries in charge of employment, labour and social affairs. This will expand the voice and influence of tripartism on national and global issues; the need for ILO constituents to campaign to make decent work for all a guiding principle for national, economic, social and environmental development strategies; to push for recognition of the significance of decent work for the international development agenda and its contribution to the goals of poverty reduction and a fully inclusive and equitable globalization, as called for by the Millennium Declaration; lastly, the need for the ILO to equip itself so as to contribute more effectively within its mandate to national sustainable development through the decent work county programmes.

There is no doubt that tripartism and greater cooperation and partnership with development partners, including those in the multilateral system, is the key to the globalization of the Decent Work Agenda. However, the Kenyan workers would wish to call for proper guidance from the Organization on the extent to which non-governmental organizations can participate in activities which are constitutionally the domain of trade unions and social partners in general. We feel obliged to say this because in the recent past non-governmental organizations' involvement in trade union affairs in various industrial concerns in my country has led to catastrophic industrial unrest and strikes resulting in huge business losses and lost employment opportunities for Kenyans. The majority of the affected industries have been in the export processing zones and the horticultural sector.

While we agree that some of the NGOs may have been raising legitimate concerns in the affected industries, we must reckon with the fact that there are procedures in place and registered workers' organizations to which these organizations should address their concerns. We as Kenyans workers, feel that it is such deliberate circumvention of procedures on the part of some NGOs which forces us to treat them with suspicion and call into question their motives in purporting to advocate workers' rights. The Kenyan workers are therefore of the view that there is an urgent need for regular continued strengthening of workers' organizations.

Original Portuguese: Mr. FERREIRA DO PRADO (Worker, Brazil)

"We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity ... We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people." Inspired by and committed to these values expressed in the Millennium Declaration, we turn to all delegates and participants here, urging them to close ranks in promoting social inclusion worldwide, resolutely combating poverty, creating decent work for young people, eradicating child labour and creating equal opportunities in a culture of safety and health.

However, our efforts will surely be in jeopardy if we do not determinedly oppose the scourge of corruption and its damaging effects for humanity.

The World Bank estimates that corrupt practices cost the world economy some US\$2.7 trillion per annum. This colossal figure is approximately 7 per cent of the world's GDP, which is around US\$35 trillion.

In order to combat this terrible evil, which unfortunately continues to be firmly established in all continents, the OECD in 1994 published a Recommendation on Bribery in International Business Transactions, advocating that such acts should be declared criminal offences. In 1996 the United Nations published its Declaration against Corruption and Bribery in International Commercial Transactions, calling all member States to undertake to classify acts of corruption as criminal acts. Also in 1996, the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption was signed and adopted. More recently, in 2003, the fight against corruption was supplemented by the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which is not yet in force.

It is a fact that corruption is transnational and affects private and public institutions and organizations throughout the world. This weakens all of us, and therefore all free men and women of good will need to ensure that those who are corrupt are punished and that any assets and goods are returned to public treasuries or private institutions.

"Corruption is not a recent phenomenon, but has been attracting more and more attention. Fighting it will be one of the principal challenges of the next century," said Vito Tanzi, Director of the Fiscal Affairs Department of the IMF. We all know that embezzlement of public or private funds delays and hinders progress and development throughout the world. In fact, the outgoing President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, said that the world is realizing that corruption is not just a political problem. It is an obstacle to economic development and social justice.

Recently, the South African city of Durban hosted a meeting of representatives of 135 countries, who discussed the need for establishing mechanisms to combat corruption. The event was promoted by Transparency International. In 2005, Brazil is hosting the world's main anti-corruption events, beginning with a seminar to discuss the United Nations Convention and the Fourth Global Forum on Fighting Corruption. The workers of Brazil believe that the ILO, with its prestigious system of tripartism, will substantially contribute to combating corruption.

In conclusion, we wish to express our satisfaction at the imminent adoption of two new Conventions, on safety and health at work and the fishing sector, because reducing occupational accidents in Brazil and effectively exploiting its extensive coastline for fishing are matters of great importance for us, the workers.

Original Russian: Mr. MATULIS (Worker, Belarus)

First of all, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this historic forum. The Workers' delegation of Belarus has carefully studied the materials which were provided for consideration and discussion at this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference. They quite rightly highlight the major contribution made by the ILO in the implementation of fundamental principles and rights at work. At the same time, we rather regret that the Director-General made only a brief introductory statement during the opening sitting, which

did not fully reflect the challenges facing the ILO over the next ten years. I would nevertheless like to share with you my opinion on one or two issues which were touched upon in his introductory statement.

Referring to the role of the ILO over the coming decade, the Director-General quite rightly stated that the ILO will have to play an increasingly active role in the development of national and international strategies to fight poverty, increase employment and turn globalization into a fair and socially cohesive process. However, in order to make the process of globalization a truly fair and democratically manageable process which opens up equal opportunities for all countries and peoples, the ILO's efforts will have to be concentrated above all on the social aspects of globalization.

Unfortunately, we are only just starting to do that. For the moment, the world is not yet our common home, and the process of globalization is not yet a source of benefit for all its inhabitants. Indeed, the opposite is happening as disparities in living standards in different regions of the world are growing. Hundreds of millions of young people in developing countries are paid less than US\$1 a day for the work they do, while their contemporaries in other countries may receive at least ten or twenty times more for the same work. This is just one result of the process of globalization, which is proceeding very unevenly.

Today, we effectively have a single global financial market, but not a global labour market. There are virtually no national barriers to impede capital, but the barriers to the movement of workers are insurmountable. This allows some people to multiply their capital through the ruthless exploitation of others, and the increasing polarization is making it possible for some states to dictate their conditions to others from a position of strength.

The ILO, basing its activity on the principles of tripartism could, in the next ten years, become the organizing force which will make it possible for us to overcome the clear imbalances which exist at the moment in the world economy. Tripartism itself could become the key to overcoming and dealing with the risks and contradictions which are inherent in globalization, both nationally and internationally. The ILO must analyse the ongoing processes of globalization and draw up rules of behaviour for States and for employers' and workers' organizations, with one overriding objective – achieving decent work for all. In this connection I would like to express my satisfaction that in the programme and budget proposals brought before this session of the Conference, the ILO's basic aim is defined as being to ensure that decent work becomes a global objective.

The Belarus Federation of Trade Unions supports strict compliance with international standards and promotes the ideas and principles of the ILO at home. We have numerous problems, but over the last three years we have managed to apply the principles of tripartism to deal with them. That is due very largely to the ILO.

Thanks to full social dialogue, based on the principle of equality of all three partners – Government, workers and employers – we have been able, over a fairly short period to implement strong guarantees of labour and social rights. For example, our minimum wage, since November 2004, has been set at the statutory subsistence level. The average pension

is now over 43 per cent of the basic minimum monthly wage. We have reduced unemployment to below 2 per cent. However, we would have even greater success if the ILO concentrated more on the problems of our region and boosted the technical assistance programme in Belarus with the participation of the Federation of Trade Unions.

Original Spanish: Mr. SANCHEZ MESA (Government, Colombia)

We would like to start with a brief reference to the need for a change in the modus operandi of the Conference. We join our voices with those who advocate a substantial reduction in its length and, consequently, in the costs for the ILO and the participating countries.

This will be possible without sacrificing the governing principles, enunciated by the Director-General, if we adopt adequate measures regarding the functioning of the different committees which take place during the Conference.

We urge the members of the Governing Body to sustain their efforts to find new and creative ways to turn the conference into a shorter, but equally substantive event. We know that it is not easy, but it is one of the unavoidable challenges we must face.

In his Report, the Director-General has acknowledged that we are living at a time of rapid change in the world of work, which poses numerous new challenges in terms of organization and policy-making, both to Governments and workers' and employers' organizations.

What changes do we have to bring about in our countries to face up successfully to the challenges posed by a globalized society and guarantee decent work to our people?

Our country, for example, is seeing the emergence of a new form of trade unionism. This might lay the foundation for a new type of tripartism based on a deep and well-developed sense of social responsibility. This type of trade unionism, without losing sight of its natural function – that is to represent its members. This new trade unionism remains faithful to its original function of representing the interests of its members, while bearing in mind the possibilities and needs of the society to which it belongs. It is a trade unionism that understands that obtaining benefits for its members is not synonymous with sacrificing business or entities that serve society.

While this type of trade unionism might seem natural to some, for us in Colombia it is not. Allow me to explain in what way we are starting a small, but significant, revolution.

In Colombia there is a unique provision unlike any other legal provisions, which is the so-called trade union contract. In accordance with its provisions, one or several workers' organizations can make arrangements with one or several employers for services to be rendered or a job to be carried out by its members. This is a type of outsourcing contract, where workers' organizations function like an enterprise without abandoning their function and role in defending workers' rights, by offering services to employers that would otherwise be offered by a third party.

Up until the beginning of this millennium, this provision was rarely used. However, the emerging economic trends in our country and the world led the Government to grant the trade union movement greater participation in the future shaping of the country. A trade unionism based on the same social

responsibility that is increasingly assumed by enterprises and that is the duty of Governments.

The provisions of the trade union contract are a valuable tool to involve workers' organizations that believe in social values in the search for new forms of decent work. What better way is there to guarantee the decent work the ILO demands than through a workers' organization.

We are faced with trade union organizations that did not hesitate to question old stereotypes and that, consequently, have assumed key role in saving enterprises which otherwise might have disappeared.

Let me give an example that for us, as Colombians, is highly relevant. Paz del Río is the country's biggest steel factory. The livelihood of 300,000 families directly or indirectly depends on that enterprise. Several factors, including excessive non-wage labour costs, had caused an untenable situation. Only when the workers increased their part of the company share capital from 12 to 43 per cent and gave up some of their benefits in exchange for greater participation, Paz del Río was able to overcome its problems. Today, the value of the company's shares on the stock exchange has passed from 1.9 pesos to 18 pesos and the previous losses have been turned into profit.

We also urge employers to support and help strengthen trade union activities which are a vital tool for building equitable societies and enterprises that continue to grow for economic and social benefit.

The changes that the Director-General is referring to in his Report might promote a tripartism characterized by a trade union movement that is increasingly committed to society as a whole, instead of personal greed. A trade union active movement that takes a leading role in the economic and social development of the country and is ready to meet the challenges posed by globalization. A trade unionism that defends the interests of its members by joining efforts to create decent work in the society to which it belongs.

We have noted with great interest the statement made by the Director-General in his Report, urging the ILO to lead initiatives to strengthen tripartism and to build the capacities of trade unions, employers' organizations and the ministries of employment, labour and social affairs.

We must act jointly to be able to strengthen the influence of tripartism in local and national affairs. We take the words of the Director-General as a sign that we have already made headway. We are convinced that, gradually, the Colombian trade union movement will become part of local and national efforts for a better future.

One of the four pillars of decent work is precisely social dialogue and tripartism, as has been pointed out by the Director-General in his Report. This is why we remain convinced of the value of dialogue as a tool to strengthen tripartism. Differences are the very reason for engaging in dialogue and the motivation for further exchange of ideas. There is nothing worse for democracy than the tyranny of silence and the absence of activism, simply because the other person does not think the way we do. In society where everyone thinks the same way, tripartism is devoid of sense. Tripartism is built through participation, not by avoiding dialogue.

In Colombia, we need to learn of the experiences of other countries with social dialogue and freedom

of association to strengthen our ideas and move towards resolving differences in our country.

We would like to extend an invitation to everyone to identify mechanisms to turn bi-lateral cooperation into an appropriate tool which will enable us to strengthen freedom of association and social dialogue. I am sure that this appeal will be heard.

We wish to conclude our intervention by referring to the special ILO cooperation programme in our country. The programme has been an appropriate and irreplaceable instrument to support activities aimed at strengthening freedom of association and social dialogue. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal to the ILO and donors to continue supporting the programme and to strengthen and sustain initiatives which are start-

ing to bear fruit. This is the case of the workshops that are held jointly with the ILO for researchers and tax experts entrusted with the investigations into attacks on trade unionists and trade union leaders, which are continuing to the gradual eradication of the scourge of impunity and its perverse consequences.

Our Government joins the appeal of the Director-General for decent work for the millions of people who depend on our goodwill and on our capacity to let go of obsolete ways of thinking and for bolder formulas that can help us to guarantee a better future for those who, through the use of democratic mechanisms, have placed their own future and that of their children in our hands.

(The Conference adjourned at 1 p.m.)

Fifth sitting

Tuesday, 7 June 2005, 3.15 p.m.

Presidents: Mr. Alsalim, Ms. Anderson, Mr. Finlay

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

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT

We shall now continue the discussion on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Original Polish: Mr. LEPIK (*Worker, Poland*)

On behalf of the representatives of the workers of the Polish delegation at the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, I would like to thank the leadership of the ILO for their very thorough and well-researched Report.

In what I am going to say I would like to concentrate on one of the fundamental ideas behind this Organization – social dialogue. The Polish Tripartite Commission for some years has been acting on the basis of a decree of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and in the course of those years we have seen both failures and successes. From 2001 onwards, the Commission has been backed by legislation and it seemed that this would stimulate an improvement in the way it functioned, but in fact this has not happened. On the one hand the Government perceives the Tripartite Commission as a body which should set the seal of approval on its activity, while the employers, who are guided solely by their own vested interests rather than the wider public interest, merely try to block any kind of agreement. This situation is not allowing us to solve vexed questions afflicting our country, such as increasing poverty and unemployment. We have 20 per cent unemployment, so it is very difficult under those circumstances to talk about decent work and decent pay.

We live in a country where more than three million people are unemployed. Unemployment has particularly affected young people. Young people not only face problems in finding work, but also live with the knowledge that the pension reform which has been inflicted upon them by the State will not allow them to enjoy a decent retirement because they have no possibility of paying any pension contributions. They see the dire situation in which their grandparents live, they see how precarious the livelihoods of their parents are, they see that their brothers and sisters are not being paid their wages on time, and they realize that their own fu-

ture prospects are bleak. Even if they do find work they experience the very same problems as their brothers and sisters, and when they want to assert their rights and join together in trade unions they will probably lose their jobs or pressure will be brought to bear upon them and “persuasive arguments” will lead them to drop their trade union activism and desist from asserting their rights.

They work at disgracefully low levels of pay, by European standards – the minimum wage – and they are not in any position to enhance their skills because there is no consensus on setting up any kind of compulsory training fund. I am pleased that the question of lifelong learning has once again emerged as one of the issues to be dealt with in the Conference committees this year.

What can we conclude from all this? I think we can say that the rights which we in this hall consider to be a matter of course are certainly not an everyday reality in Poland. It is a shocking fact that, at a time when we are trying to give the oxygen of publicity to the Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO, we are hearing young people say that this is all a Utopian fairy tale that has nothing to do with reality. Such a situation is unacceptable and is the result of the inadequacies of social dialogue in Poland.

Original Russian: Mr. VAZIROV (*Government, Tajikistan*)

The annual International Labour Conference gives us an opportunity to analyse and mull over some very important issues in the labour field and allows us to coordinate our efforts for future cooperation.

Tajikistan has always been and remains devoted to the ideals and principles of the ILO. The Republic of Tajikistan has already ratified 64 ILO Conventions and Recommendations and the ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), which concerns the abuse of migration and the provision of equal treatment and opportunities for migrant workers is currently before Parliament for ratification. On 8 April 2005, Tajikistan ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The Government of Tajikistan supports the ideas and conclusions set out in the Director-General’s

Report, particularly with regard to the elimination of forced labour and the enhancement of local potential in the framework of global employment for young people. Youth unemployment is one of the most pressing problems in youth policy in our country because, given the current social situation, alleviating unemployment is a key factor in reducing poverty. Many of our young people live in rural areas. In order to create new jobs and ensure decent work for unemployed young people, the Government has adopted a whole series of measures; in rural areas we are allocating land to young people as 75 per cent of the population of Tajikistan still lives in rural areas; in urban areas, we are trying to create new jobs for young people in industry, construction, trade and services. A large number of unemployed young people have been helped through the Migration Service of the Ministry of Labour on to vocational training courses before being sent to the Russian Federation and other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States under agreements on temporary work.

Thanks to a policy of peace and construction, the democratization of society and a market economy, the pace at which we are creating new jobs in Tajikistan has picked up speed. Our success in the area of social partnership has been made possible thanks to the achievement of peace and national consensus. Major investment projects have begun in the country, including the construction of the Rogunsk and Sangtuda hydroelectric stations, the construction of an aluminium smelter in the Khatlon Region and an extension of the existing Tajik aluminium smelter with the participation of Russian and Iranian companies.

I would also like to report that in 2004 we created more than 100,000 jobs and during the first five months of this year, we have created 50,000 new jobs.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that the Republic of Tajikistan still needs ILO support for the vocational training and retraining of its young people for decent work and in educating the employers' associations and officials in the Ministry of Labour and the trade unions in Tajikistan. I would also like to point out that most of the population of Tajikistan are young people: the average age of the population is 24. State youth policy is therefore a priority in the social policy of our President Rakhmonov and the Government of Tajikistan.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the organizers and participants of the Conference for listening to me and hope that we will be able to pursue further cooperation in the framework of the ILO.

Mr. POTTER (*Employer, United States*)

We find the short overview of the broader issues facing the ILO and its constituents found in the Director-General's Report to be a more useful format to the Conference than more detailed thematic reports of prior years. We agree with the Director-General that the 2005 session of the Conference comes at a critical point in our discussions regarding the role and mandate of the ILO in its focus and direction in the coming years.

For Employers in the United States – and indeed the entire Employers' group – the central question is whether the ILO will direct its resources towards practical programmes that benefit its tripartite constituents at the national level or whether the ILO will instead devote its time, attention and resources

to global debates and multilateral processes far removed from the world of work. In our view, the answer is clear – the ILO must remain focused on its core mandate of helping its constituents where they work.

Employers see the ILO as an organization devoted to helping to create the right national labour market environments that are conducive to business and enterprise creation, that promote employment, protect workers and provide adequate social protection during times of adjustment. Governments around the world are more focused than ever on the urgent need to develop national government systems for labour protection and employment-oriented policies, and the ILO could play a critical role in moving these efforts forward. The major challenge of our time is that minimum labour standards within the meaning of the ILO mandate are in place in most countries, but they are not adequately implemented. Closing this gap should be the primary mission of the ILO.

Much of the Director-General's Report is consistent with this view. Of the four action areas set out in the paper, we fully support the calls to enhance tripartism and develop the capacity of national ministries of labour, unions and employers' organizations to help increase employment and improve local labour conditions. We also agree that decent work country programmes have proven to be very valuable tools to allow ILO constituents at the national level to develop programmes to address their particular conditions. This approach works for the simple reason that no one size fits all. Solutions must be tailored to specific situations and the best way to do that is through country-specific programmes.

However, other action areas called for by the Director-General would move the ILO away from these practical programmes and devote considerable resources to global debates and processes of questionable value which we do not support. The value of decent work as a unifying principle is that it can tie together the ILO's four strategic objectives. But we should be clear that there is no universal definition of decent work even in the ILO context, never mind throughout the multilateral system.

Already, too much time and ILO resources have been devoted to global debates on globalization that are too far removed from the workplace to offer any real value for ILO constituents. The Director-General's Report calls for more activities related to a wide array of multilateral processes that are, quite frankly, ancillary at best to the mandate and purpose of the ILO. Indeed, this concern was the main reason why the Strategic Policy Framework was not agreed by the Governing Body.

We see no value in ILO action devoted to promoting the concept of decent work in a multilateral system and are certain that ILO resources would be much better used in practical capacity-building programmes like the decent work country programmes. Coherence results from working with other international institutions in this process and in other results-oriented programmes, not from the conclusions of high-level policy debates on globalization. Simply put, resolutions and communiqués from international meetings marking an anniversary of some earlier international meeting do nothing to help create national labour markets conducive to growth and employment.

The US Employers' delegation continues to see an important and indeed critical role for the ILO in working with its constituents at the national level to create labour markets geared toward growth and employment creation, while protecting workers and holding all actors accountable for their obligations to meet legal standards. Particularly in a time of declining resources, the ILO must remain focused on programmes that bring measurable results to its constituents and make a real difference in the lives of working people.

Finally, with respect to reform of the International Labour Conference, such reform should not be done piecemeal but must be based on a strategic vision of the value and purpose of the Conference. Consideration should be given to more focused International Labour Conferences with half of the agenda items we presently have, bringing with it economies and efficiencies to the ILO and governments. At the micro level, with the improving ILO web site hosting all the documents for the Conference, the ILO must devote resources to bringing a wireless infrastructure to Conference constituents so that they may work efficiently in committees, resulting in substantial printing cost savings. Such infrastructure improvements could also facilitate shortening the Conference because Conference reports would be available sooner than under the present system.

Mr. DE GEUS (*Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Netherlands*)

I will speak about two very important subjects, decent work and the battle against youth unemployment. In my speech I will also make two remarks about the ILO itself, in the field of costs and in the field of cooperation and the role of the ILO in the UN family.

In a world that is changing at a rapid pace, international coherence is gaining importance. Globalization, technological innovation and new understandings increasingly require a worldwide approach. The battle against poverty, the battle against forced and compulsory labour and child labour cannot be won without international cooperation and solidarity, and cooperation between governments, as well as between employers and workers. The ILO is a tripartite international organization at the forefront of the battle.

Work, by which I of course mean decent work, is essential in poverty alleviation. This is true for individuals as well as for society as a whole. Decent work is the motor that drives economic growth and is an excellent instrument to promote social cohesion and combat poverty.

In the light of this understanding, our task is to make the goal of full, freely chosen and productive employment the cornerstone of social and economic policy. This is a conviction that has wide support within the ILO and elsewhere. This notion was one of the outcomes of the High-Level Round Table on Promoting Full Employment which I chaired at the United Nations in New York in February 2005.

Making decent work a global goal, productive, freely chosen employment, is the best way out of poverty. I share the view of the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, that the United Nations Heads of State Summit in September 2005 to review the Millennium Declaration, should emphasize the importance of employment for men and women in poverty reduction. I believe it is essential for the ILO to keep pace with the wider United Nations reform

process. It is in the best interests of all constituents and not at least the ILO itself, to optimize efficiency and cost effectiveness and the comparative strength of the ILO in the United Nations family.

Investment in people is investing in society as a whole. This investment begins at a very early age, in the family. This is after all where children gain their first knowledge and experience of standards and values, language and culture. It was also one of the most important themes of the OECD Conference on Extending Opportunities: How active social policy can benefit us all, in Paris in March of this year.

Investment in human capital also involves providing sound education and good training, at a young age but also later in life, certainly in a world that is rapidly changing. I embrace this concept of lifelong learning in a world that continually imposes new demands in terms of work and occupation. For this reason the Round Table in New York recommended that the link between education and employment be strengthened so that people become more trainable and employable.

Education and training are the most effective weapons of what I call the battle against youth unemployment. This battle has rightly been given a prominent place on the agenda of this session of the Conference. We, the constituents of the ILO, will have to do everything possible to help young people find work. They are after all the human capital of the future, but only if they are well equipped for the labour market and find employment suited to their capacities. We must never put this capital at risk or any other human capital for that matter.

The Global Report shows that forced labour, both in its traditional and newer forms, is still making many victims. Globalization and migration have created an environment in which traffickers in human beings have become more and more active, and in which forced labour, for example through forced prostitution, is an ever more widely prevalent scourge. This wider prevalence is an important signal, to which we must respond immediately. International cooperation is essential. The discussion of the Global Report tomorrow provides an excellent opportunity to take the initial action required for this purpose.

During the ILO-supported Conference From Declaration to Action, held in the Hague in 2003, we decided to tackle the discussion of the Global Report differently in the future. I was pleased to see that this immediately bore fruit last year. As I recall, the debate was highly constructive and I hope that this will be the case again tomorrow. The subject of forced labour makes this all the more necessary.

There is much work to be done by the member States, by employers and workers. Decent work is high on the agenda and not only on the agenda of the ILO. The ILO has the capacity to share knowledge with other organizations and to stimulate other organizations in the United Nations family. Let us take full advantage of this capacity.

Mr. GAWANAS (*Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union*)

It is indeed a great honour for me, on behalf of the African Union, to address this Conference. I would like to convey greetings from Professor Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, who is himself an ardent supporter of labour issues and has personally asked me to inform this

august gathering that he is very optimistic that this session will add momentum to employment creation for African youth.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the industrious Director-General for an excellent report. This Report is quite comprehensive and very relevant to the world of work today. It will be very useful in mapping out strategies for employment creation throughout the world. On a special note, I would like to thank the ILO for supporting the needs and aspirations of the developing nations generally, and in particular the African region, through its long-standing technical assistance and programmes.

You will recall that the recent session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the African Union mandated the African Union Commission to develop implementation strategies for the promotion of decent work in Africa. We look forward to working with the ILO and the social partners in the development of this strategy. Like many other parts of the world, especially developing countries, Africa has experienced the twin problems of unemployment and poverty. Our formal sector is incapable of accommodating the employment needs of all our youth. The ever-increasing cost of living and declining living standards pose a serious challenge and constitute a threat to prosperity everywhere.

This session of the Conference, as well as the Report of the Director-General, cover many issues of paramount importance to Africa. Africans are determined to take forward our goal of ensuring that the current generation of young women and men entering the labour market will have the chance to find and keep a decent job. To this end, youth should be empowered to start and develop small and medium-sized enterprises. I believe the only organ of the United Nations to effectively address employment and poverty alleviation at this gathering. It is evident that consultations with wide-ranging sectors and stakeholders have a very significant role to play in promoting meaningful youth employment. In fact, sound labour relations and increased productivity are prerequisites for economic growth and socio-economic advancement of our people.

The African Union Commission recognizes the role played by the ILO in developing policies on employment and poverty alleviation for youth and women, as articulated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. I would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the ILO's support during the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, convened in 2004 by the African Heads of State and Government in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. This Summit adopted the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation, which will be our main instruments in promoting jobs and designing poverty alleviation programmes on the continent. They also adopted a mechanism to measure progress in implementation. I am confident that the Ouagadougou commitments will be further enriched by the discussions of this session.

Many of our countries have highly developed fishing industries in Africa. There is an item on the agenda of this session which relates to work in the fishing sector. This is one of the key items of interest to the African group in view of the fact that a considerable proportion of the African labour force is employed in the fishing sector. It is therefore important to have an international instrument to pro-

tect these workers from all the occupational hazards to which they are exposed.

In conclusion, I wish to inform you that the African Union looks forward to your continued cooperation and support. I wish you peace and solidarity amongst the nations of Africa, as well as amongst the nations of the world, and I wish you all a prosperous and successful Conference.

Original Russian: Ms. LEVITSKAYA (Government, Russian Federation)

The Report of Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, has confronted the participants of this Conference with the question of the role and direction of the activities of the ILO in today's constantly changing world.

The implementation after 1999 of a new strategy has enabled the ILO to frame its policy in the light of the existing situation in the world and to react fast to any changes.

At the same time, the ILO faces the difficult job of trying to find ways of combining the various strategies and ideas put forward by governments, trade unions and business circles.

Today, many of the global approaches of the ILO are supported by the international community and not only influence national development, but are also reflected in the documents of the United Nations, of the Bretton Woods institutions and of international summits.

Indeed the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the three complementary Reports: *Reducing the decent work deficit*; *Working out of poverty*; and *A fair globalization: The role of the ILO* retain this vision of the value and worth of labour in our contemporary world.

The correctness of the strategic objectives chosen by the ILO is borne out by the studies of the Organization and particularly the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, whose conclusions made it possible to enhance the social component in the work of international, financial and economic organizations.

In this context, we feel it is exceptionally important to draw the basic recommendations contained in the report on the social dimension of globalization to the attention of the participants of the Millennium +5 Summit, which is due to take place in September. These recommendations advocate the drawing up of an integrated and balanced policy in the economic, labour and social spheres.

Globalization must go hand-in-hand with the eradication of poverty, the achievement of full employment and a more equitable use and enjoyment of the opportunities and benefits from this world phenomenon.

We endorse the findings of the Report, namely that the ILO must play an increasingly active role within its mandate during national and international discussions about devising a poverty reduction strategy, increasing employment levels particularly for young people and women and preparing decent work country programmes.

The idea put forward in the Report on the introduction of strategic budgeting seems to us to be timely. It is important here that the proposed decisions would allow gains in efficiency over the previous period. In this context, the strategic goals identified by the Organization should, in practice, be achieved through a gradual implementation of

the priority tasks defined in the biennial programme and budget.

Our view of the further activities of this Organization is also connected with the need to carefully select priorities in its standard-setting activity.

The implementation of the concept of decent work is still a pressing political and socio-economic challenge for any State. A policy on decent work is a prerequisite for the development of free democratic processes and it is the basis for the flourishing of the individual.

Of course, each State's level of economic development will determine its own national strategy and programme for reducing the decent work deficit.

Our guidelines today are based on the globally accepted model outlawing social isolation and extreme inequality, but providing for state regulation of the labour market, competition between businesses and social solidarity between citizens.

Our efforts in the medium term will be concentrated on increasing the real cash income of the population, enhancing the flexibility of the labour market and labour relations, spreading decent work, enhancing the quality of employment and improving our system of vocational training.

Having signed the Millennium Declaration, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, our country is fully committed to promoting gender equality in all spheres of life.

The Russian Federation is striving to ensure close cooperation with the ILO above all in its global projects.

In the last few years our country has achieved tangible progress in social and economic development. It is, however, still vital to be able to react adequately to constant change.

The most pressing problems for us are poverty alleviation, overcoming negative demographic trends, solving problems associated with growing migration flows, and ensuring the financial viability of our pension system.

In this context we hope that our efforts in tackling these issues will be reciprocated by the ILO within the framework of its technical cooperation programme.

Original Arabic: Mr. DAHLAN (Employer, Saudi Arabia)

We all know how important the work of this session of the International Labour Conference is for a number of reasons, the most important being that many countries are passing through a highly critical phase, because the situation in the world is becoming increasingly complex owing to the devastating impact of globalization and the spread of the revolution in communication technologies. At the same time, unemployment and poverty are worsening because national development programmes and plans have fallen short of peoples' aspirations and have not supplied decent working conditions for young people, no matter whether they are employed, faced with redundancy or knocking on employers' doors for the first time.

Unemployment is a real challenge. It is a problem for both sides of industry throughout the world. No economy or country is spared by this dangerous phenomenon, which is spreading. The Government of my country, Saudi Arabia, finds itself in the same situation. We are endeavouring to meet the chal-

lenge by trying to match the needs of our rapidly expanding economy for skilled, trained manpower and the need to provide jobs for young people who are keen to participate in the honour of building their country and to be stakeholders in that endeavour. That is why our Government, in cooperation with the social partners, is seeking to guarantee the rights of foreign workers whom we welcome with open arms and on whom we bestow the requisite care and interest, despite one or two cases of exploitation and abuse, which are speedily punished under existing laws and regulations. Laws secure rights for all workers without exception. In our country, we apply international labour standards. We are proud to have acceded to the core human rights Conventions.

As a member of the Governing Body of this Organization, I take a very close interest in the Office's work and I fully appreciate the joint efforts made together with the Governing Body to choose the items placed on the agenda.

For proof, I need only to refer to the theme "Promoting youth employment – Tackling the challenge". A thorough debate of this issue should help us to get to grips with most economic, social and human problems.

A discussion of this issue must, however, cover every aspect. In particular, it is vital to devise and carry out programmes which encourage young people to join in special projects in various fields. We urge financial organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to focus on these important activities in nationally funded programmes and in the efforts made by both sides of industry to combat unemployment and poverty and to support small business.

Our Arab region is faced with some very delicate strategic, economic and social situations. This means that our governments bear a heavy responsibility, an historic responsibility. But multipartite international organizations like the ILO must also lend their genuine support to the efforts being made by Arab management and labour. As I said, the Arab world is going through a very delicate phase giving rise to very serious social, labour and human issues. This is why the ILO must attach the highest importance to the labour situation of young people, women and children in Iraq.

As for the situation of Arab workers in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories, the Israeli military occupation and the establishment of settlements still go on and on. International organizations, including the ILO, merely stand on the sidelines and have no influence or motivation to end these Israeli practices which are utterly at odds with international law.

The Employers' delegation of Saudi Arabia commends the efforts of the ILO mission to these regions. The mission tried to assess a situation in which humanitarian conditions, working conditions and employers' activity are constantly deteriorating. We appreciate the work accomplished by the mission. It did not hesitate to state that the economy is suffocating, that the development of businesses is being hampered and that poverty is widespread even among workers. The movement of persons, goods and services is severely restricted.

I would like to state here that we are a people in search of peace and we can solve this issue only by supporting the essential principles of this Organiza-

tion, which are aimed at protecting workers and employers.

In this Organization we strive together to implement the fundamental principles in which we believe. We must implement them in every country, however complex its situation. In this connection, I can only thank those who continue to help Iraq, an important member of the ILO.

I request the Director-General and all those present not to spare any efforts to support employer and worker organizations in Iraq, this country we all wish to build in order that it may once again play its role in all international organizations.

Original French: Mr. NORDMANN (Secretary of State, Federal Department of Economy, Switzerland)

I would like to thank the Director-General who, in this year of budgetary discussion, has provided us with a brief Report that prompts reflection.

We need to reflect on the value and dignity of work, but this does not mean resisting change or hankering after the values of the past.

That is why Switzerland supports the impetus given to the ILO by the Director-General since 1999, focusing the Organization's policy on the promotion of decent work as a global goal based on the four strategic objectives.

The fundamental values of the ILO are still valid today, albeit reshaped by the context of today's world. The ILO must play an active part in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in order to promote decent work as a global objective so as to combat poverty effectively. Decent work country programmes and strengthening tripartism are good initiatives to create synergies for sustainable action.

The ILO needs resources to carry out its mandate, and Switzerland supports the Programme and Budget proposals for 2006-07 at the level decided by the Governing Body last March. Switzerland urges the constituents of the Organization give it an operational budget that will enable it to pursue its activities effectively and successfully.

We are all faced with changes in the labour market and conditions of work. We want to promote decent work and find innovative solutions to rise to the challenges of competition and competitiveness of markets at a time when state incomes are dwindling.

A new approach is called for, if "our" ILO is to remain competitive and attractive. I would like to give you two examples.

Our Conference is a universal forum for the labour world, but can real progress in the world of work be measured at the Conference? For instance, there is a wealth of publications on competitiveness of the world of work in the context of globalization.

Switzerland welcomes the drafting and adoption of labour standards, provided they meet a genuine need. The integrated approach, if it is applied in practice, as well as the general discussions, are innovative instruments with a high value added. They enable the ILO to focus its action on campaigns, on action programmes or on technical cooperation, without systematically resorting to standard-setting activities.

I would like to suggest an experiment. We have already discussed this, but we have never dared to take the decision: in 2007 or 2008, let us hold a global plenary session of the Conference which would take place every other year, alternating with a "light", technical Conference.

In the technical year, we would have one or two committees to draft standards if necessary; a committee on the application of standards; and a discussion on the follow-up to the Declaration.

The following year, the global plenary session of the Conference would adopt the draft standards and the budget; there would also be general discussions, preferably based on an integrated approach. For the plenary, there need to be interactive panel discussions to break the current monotony of our discussions. The usual technical committees would meet as they do now. It would also be a good idea to abolish the Resolutions Committee, which no longer contributes any real value added to our work. More substantive resolutions could be submitted and dealt with more effectively in the context of general discussions or in the committees.

I share the opinion of the Director-General: the Conference, be it plenary or technical, must continue to take place in Geneva, not only for reasons of costs, because also it fits into the context of the international city of Geneva, where the ILO has its headquarters, close to the other specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

As regards the ILO's activities, I would suggest, along the lines of the proposal put forward by the United Nations Secretary-General last March, that we conduct an in-depth review of all our activities and mandates that are more than five years old. We could create synergies by discarding obsolete activities.

These two measures would generate economies of scale and operational savings that could be re-injected into new priority programmes with a higher value added and that would also help stabilize the level of the budget.

I hope my contribution to this general discussion will enable us to make the right choices for the future.

(Ms. Anderson takes the Chair.)

Ms. DYSON (Associate Minister of Labour, New Zealand)

I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his Introduction to the Conference *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*. The Introduction is a clear and timely summary of the issues and challenges that face us all as members of this Organization.

As the Director-General notes, it is precisely because the ILO is tripartite, and because it deals with what people actually do to make a living, that it is the body best placed to make a positive contribution to the quality of people's working lives.

New Zealand is proud to participate in this endeavour. We fully endorse the actions identified by the Director-General as necessary to making decent work a global goal through: strengthening tripartism; making decent work a guiding principle for economic and social development; and using the ILO's country programmes to make a more effective contribution to sustainable national development.

We commend the approach taken of using the framework of decent work as the guiding principle for the allocation of resources. If the ILO is to consolidate the Decent Work Agenda and succeed in "Making decent work a global goal", it needs appropriate levels of resourcing. These must be delivered within a framework of strategic budgeting and

results-based management for successful implementation.

New Zealand has traditionally had a strong tripartite dynamic, and we continue to look at ways to encourage tripartite participation across a range of economic and social policy initiatives. These include the implementation of public sector pay and employment equity, decent work initiatives and joint moves to improve workplace productivity.

We have recently formulated a Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand to 2015, which I will be launching later this month. The strategy is a promotional framework for occupational safety and health along the lines of that being proposed by the ILO. It was developed with input from the organizations most representative of employers and employees in our country, as well as other key stakeholders. This recognizes that to achieve real and lasting progress, full participation from all is necessary so that good health and safety practices become an integral part of workplace culture. We have seen that an inclusive approach pays rich dividends.

We have also started on the path of making decent work a key part of New Zealand's social and economic development frameworks.

We strongly support the connections drawn by the Director-General between employment, poverty reduction and productivity. New Zealand has seen strong economic and employment growth, pushing unemployment down to some 3.9 per cent. But we also have to grow economies in ways that enable people to have a decent quality of life rather than growth at any cost. Sustainable productivity through participation in high-quality work is an important means of improving the well-being of employees, their families and their communities.

The New Zealand Government has, through its employment relations legislation, promoted fairness and inclusiveness in workplace relations. We have also reviewed the employment strategy we put in place in 2000, to broaden our focus and place greater emphasis on the quality of work we undertake and the rewards we gain from it. We have established a clear overall objective of improving the well-being of New Zealanders, which requires improving both our social and our economic outcomes.

Much of this change is already under way in New Zealand. Industries, unions and our communities are working together to support each other's efforts to address skills and labour shortages, improve health and safety and make paid work more attractive and possible for a wider range of people. The New Zealand Government is committed to facilitating and supporting initiatives and progress in these areas.

The Director-General's Report also highlights the fundamental principles and rights that must also underpin the practical realization of decent work. The Global Report on forced labour, *A global alliance against forced labour*, makes shocking reading. It is almost beyond belief that today there can be some 12 million victims of this ancient evil in our world – three times the population of my own country.

Surely, the truest measure of our humanity is how we treat other people. In this context, forced labour is simply an unacceptable practice in a civilized world. In the twenty-first century we must leave such things behind us, remedy the conditions which contribute to these practices and take appropriate

action against those who perpetrate them. New Zealand fully supports any and all such efforts.

I conclude with the observation that it is sometimes easy to think of the ILO and its constituents as separate things. This is a mistake. The ILO is our Organization and we – unions, employers and governments – are all responsible for its performance. This Conference gives us the opportunity to think about how best to achieve the challenges outlined by the Director-General as we prepare for the future.

One way of doing this has been identified in the Report and I heartily support the Director-General's call for better participation by women in Conference delegations. The world of work is one that affects us all, and all perspectives should be represented in our discussions about it.

New Zealand believes that the ILO is in a strong position to contribute to the challenges of work in the twenty-first century. We look forward to continuing our support for it in delivering dignity to working lives and decency to work.

Ms. FILATOV (*Minister of Labour, Finland*)

I fully agree with the Director-General's Report that changes in world markets lead to rapid changes in working life as well. The anticipation of change is often difficult, as companies and jobs move from one country to another, the chains of production reaching between continents.

Yet globalization is a reality, and discussion about it and its impacts are part of political debate. What is new and encouraging is the fact that, although differences in views concerning the nature and impacts of globalization are still pronounced throughout the world, readiness for a joint dialogue has increased. Those considered to be opponents of globalization are beginning to speak the same language, opening a new stage in the governance of globalization.

The Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization provides a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the positive and negative impacts of globalization. We can and must make an impact on globalization. It is not too late for political action. Individual States have without doubt had a role to play.

Globalization is a process of change: the dependencies between different actors are intensified, and impacts are seen faster in spite of the geographical distance involved. This mutual dependency is a central feature of globalization. Dependency is a basis for worldwide cooperation.

Such factors as clean air and environment, peace, justice, social togetherness, health, stability, a functioning trade environment and, above all, decent work contribute to the security of the States in the world and to the well-being of their citizens. Work is the best way to eliminate poverty and improve welfare.

Finland aims to actively promote just and balanced global development. We support the endeavours of the United Nations to eradicate worldwide poverty and to share welfare in a more equitable way. The aim of the Government of Finland is to achieve coherence between different policy sectors in order to reach the same overall objectives. The governance of globalization should be based on jointly agreed rules supporting sustainable development, which above all cover human rights, the

basic rights of working life and protection of the environment.

In developing measures to maximize the positive impacts of globalization and minimize the negative, corporate social responsibility and good citizenship on the part of enterprise are often mentioned. Good enterprise citizenship entails considering workers' position, security and working environment. On the other hand, it has also been asked whether the nationality or domicile of companies in the globalized world has any significance. For this reason, I would like to underline that, without functioning local economies, there are no decent world markets, and without functioning local services, the functioning of global enterprises will be negatively affected. National economies functioning on a sustainable basis require democracy and good administration, as well as a sufficient income base. The companies that best implement corporate social responsibility understand this. It is important for them to support local cultures and guarantee decent working conditions. Confidence in the income received from work and in the continuation of employment contracts is the basis for a good working life all over the world. The ILO is to be congratulated on the fact that it has been able to further strengthen this message in recent years.

Participation and dialogue based on the organization of workers form a central part of the framework that builds confidence. For this reason, it is a subject of special concern that union membership has been on the decrease, including in developed countries. This threatens to undermine confidence in situations where the social dimension has so far played a valuable role. We have been presented with a worldwide challenge: core labour standards cannot become a reality merely on the basis of governmental declarations. They can only exist in circumstances where the social partners can organize themselves, and where a balanced discussion on terms of employment can be held. In global competition, there are not necessarily sufficient prerequisites for this dialogue without the support and encouragement of governments.

In promoting decent work, developing countries should be supported in making good use of their knowledge and production capacity. At present, the rules and financial architecture of international trade are not as democratic and complete as is needed to achieve this objective.

To accelerate the rate of growth, there is a need for development aid that more accurately takes into consideration the employment needs of developing countries. Without the strong involvement of the International Labour Organization, this will hardly be successful. It is now time to forget disputes over the mandates of international organizations, and instead increase cooperation and strengthen the economies of developing countries suffering from poverty. We should also involve representatives of employers and workers more intensively in this endeavour.

Mr. RYDER (*representative, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*)

The Director-General has invited us to a process of active reflection on the future of this Organization, and the ICFTU wants to respond in the spirit of strong support for the ILO expressed by our 18th World Congress, which met last December 2004.

We identify fully with the lines of action set out by the Director-General as necessary to the overriding task of making decent work a global goal.

Indeed, the ILO should take the lead in reinvigorating tripartism, in having the multilateral system act with the cohesion needed – but still lacking – for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in building on the considerable achievements of recent years to drive the Decent Work Agenda forward, from the many declarations and resolutions in which it features to the hard-edged realities of national policy from which it is still too frequently absent.

So, we strongly endorse the proposed focus on decent work country programmes, with our affiliates as key actors, and international labour standards as a key component.

And the ICFTU understands, too, that progress at the national level depends crucially on a supportive international policy environment. The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has made balanced and realistic proposals for action to create such an environment. It has been a failure of the last decade and more that the international community and its institutions have shied away from this type of action. Persistence in that failure would be truly irresponsible and would leave working people to pay the price.

The current situation in the textile and garment industry around the world provides a vivid illustration of the consequences of incoherence in international policy-making. Whatever the merits or demerits of decisions taken by the World Trade Organization concerning this sector, it seems beyond dispute that the millions of workers – predominantly from the developing countries – who have seen their livelihoods disrupted or disappear as a result, have been badly served by a multinational system which has ignored their employment and social impacts.

The ICFTU urges the ILO to persist in its efforts to have the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, in particular, join with it to give substance to the follow-up of the World Commission. The clamour for a fairer globalization is growing louder. And it is, above all, those that want to see a sustainable and open global economy, capable of serving the cause of international development and winning the war on world poverty, that have an interest in ensuring it is heeded, and the ICFTU numbers amongst those organizations.

We remain convinced, too, that the ILO has a most important role to play in respect of the occupied Arab territories, acting within its mandate and bringing to bear its skills and its expertise. Our affiliates in Palestine – the PGFTU, and in Israel – the Histadrut, met recently under ICFTU auspices, also look to the ILO and are ready to bring their combined weight to the task of moving the peace process forward.

We expect and we ask a great deal of the ILO and of its leaders. The Director-General is more than justified in pointing to the imbalance between those demands and the resources made available to the Organization. If the programme and budget debates of recent months have shown us anything, it is that we need to be serious in equipping the ILO with the means to match the challenges ahead. In our view, the recommendations for decision by the Conference represent a strict minimum – or in reality something less than that.

The international trade union movement has also been engaged over recent months in its own profound process of reflection about its future. The ICFTU's World Congress six months ago committed it to the creation, with our friends in the World Confederation of Labour and fraternal national centres, of a new, unified trade union confederation, bringing together all of the democratic and independent forces of world trade unionism. We believe that we can realize this ambition sufficiently quickly, that this might be the last occasion on which a General-Secretary of the ICFTU addresses a session of the International Labour Conference.

We see our task as creating a new trade union internationalism capable of providing the representation that working people need in the globalized economy, an effective and representative constituent of an ILO which is dynamic and influential, and a partner to engage with business at the international level.

To be successful in these endeavours requires trade unions to adapt their methods and their structures to contemporary realities but also to stay faithful to their basic principles. And the ILO has to do exactly the same. We share a fundamental and essential commitment to the defence of fundamental workers' rights, and the pressing need before us is to ensure that they are respected everywhere and always as a foundation on which decent work can be built and social justice secured for all. The distance that separates today's realities from that ambition is considerable, as the reports before this Conference demonstrate, but that distance is also the measure of the challenge before us all.

Mr. PETOCZ (*Government, Slovakia*)

During the past ten years the International Labour Organization, either in cooperation with other international agencies or on its own, has adopted a number of political or legal documents. By their focus and content, they have contributed to the shaping of modern social policies and to the improvement of the labour and social relations in its member States in the era of globalization. The Reports of the Director-General refer to these documents and initiatives.

The 2002 policy statement of the Slovak Government tried to reflect this new global environment and called for considerable changes in labour and social policy in Slovakia. Indeed these changes in labour law relations have subsequently been achieved in the course of implementation of the reforms, including a substantial amendment to the Labour Code prepared with the consent of all social partners.

The new Employment Services Act was adopted as well as other amendments to the labour and social legislation. All these legislative changes aimed at increasing and stimulating employment growth, reducing unemployment, improving labour market flexibility and thereby strengthening and improving the business environment.

Acting through the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Slovak Government invested a great deal of effort into the pension reform. A three-pillar pension system has been introduced and legislatively regulated by three key acts.

The first pillar is the Social Insurance Act. The second pillar is regulated by the Act on Old-age Pension Savings. The third pillar is covered by the

Act on Supplementary Pension Savings. These pillars represent the sources of financing of pensions.

The first pillar is mandatory. Pay-as-you-go, including all persons of active age and their employers who pay mandatory contributions to social insurance system. The funds received are immediately disbursed to current pensioners in the form of pensions. As of 1 January 2004, the first pillar began to function under new rules.

The second pillar is a savings pillar and came into force on 1 January 2005. It includes the opening of personal pension accounts in pension management companies and presently incorporates more than 30 per cent of the active population.

The third pillar is a voluntary pillar. Its purpose is to enable participants in supplementary pension savings system to acquire additional income in the form of supplementary pension benefits in old age.

When preparing the new pensions system, Slovakia took into consideration and built on the experience of more than 20 countries that have successfully implemented similar reforms.

The conclusions of the Seventh European Regional Meeting in February 2005 in Budapest invited the International Labour Organization and its member States to adopt measures for the prevention of illegal work. The Act on Illegal Work and Illegal Employment came into force on 1 April 2005 in Slovakia. The Act defines illegal work and illegal employment, stipulates their prohibition and regulates inspection of, and sanctions for, their breach.

As a result of globalization and rapidly changing markets, business in Slovakia faces enhanced competition. Our policy of flexibility and security works well for enterprises and employees, providing them with new opportunities for training and skills upgrading in order to improve their employability, as well as job search assistance, income support and social protection. Tripartite social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour legislation compliance are important elements of the national macroeconomic strategy of balance, flexibility and security.

Since 1 December 2004 there have been certain changes in the area of social dialogue at the national level. The Council of Economic and Social Agreement has been substituted by the Council of Economic and Social Partnership. This Council is a consultative body. It expresses its opinions on essential issues of economic and social development, national budget and proposals of a generally binding legislation, important for employees and employers.

The Slovak Government emphasizes, inter alia, one of the conclusions of this year's European Regional Meeting in Budapest on the development of technical cooperation and assistance provided by the ILO to its constituents in individual member States. This technical cooperation and assistance should be prepared and implemented within time-bound decent work country programmes. The decent work country programmes will be attentively followed by the tripartite constituents in Slovakia.

Original Spanish: Mr. ESPINAL ESCOBAR (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, El Salvador)

I am extremely pleased and proud to be taking part in the International Labour Conference on behalf of the Government of El Salvador and on behalf of the President of the Republic, Don Elías Antonio Saca, who will have me convey the warmest of greetings to the President of the Conference, the

Director-General of the ILO, the delegations attending and keynote guests who grace this international forum with their presence.

My country, El Salvador, is currently questing for national progress and participative developments, which depend to a large extent on employment and improved labour relations systems, as well as on genuine social dialogue which will contribute to the full enjoyment of nationally and internationally recognized labour rights.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my country's support for the main topics contained in the Director-General's Report and the Programme and Budget proposals for 2006-07, through which the International Labour Office strengthens and expands its strategic goals for our regions.

As mentioned in the Report, we believe that priority must be given to the implementation of national programmes based on the four pillars of decent work. For this reason, the Government of El Salvador is committed to ensuring that these issues, which have so much social content, are at the top of our national agenda, because they contribute to the dignity of our workers.

I should like to commend the Director-General and the Office for the report on social policy, *Youth: Pathways to decent work*, which has contributed to making the development of youth employment one of the core themes of this session of the Conference.

In this connection, and in conjunction with the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, in El Salvador we have begun a participative process for the framing and implementation of a national policy for developing youth employment.

In this connection, and in cooperation with the Salvadorian Vocational Training Institute, we have determined the main training and job-access programmes designed for young jobseekers, particularly those with the limited economic resources, while also supporting local employment and self-employment initiatives.

With the technical assistance of the ILO, we are also shaping a national employment policy with the active participation of the Government, businesses and workers.

Furthermore, as part of this endeavour, and within the framework of national programmes for decent work, in Salvador we have begun, with the valued support of the ILO, the Decent Work and Social Inclusion of Young People through sport Programme. This programme seeks ways and means of using sport as a strategic tool for promoting employment opportunities and securing the social and economic inclusion of young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour for the efforts made at the global level to rid us of this scourge. I would like to greet the donors, without whose support the Programme would not have had the huge impact it has enjoyed thus far.

Furthermore, as regards the prevention of occupational hazards. I would like to inform you that in our subregion of Central America and the Dominican Republic, we have undertaken an unprecedented tripartite initiative based on social dialogue which is known as FUNDACERSSO with the aim of improving the health and safety of workers.

This effort fully reflects one of the core themes of the Conference: the global strategy on occupational

safety and health. This will be achieved through a new international standard-setting instrument.

In the Government of El Salvador, we are counting on social dialogue by bringing together and working with various sectors of society to drive forward a consistent, legitimate and sustainable compliance culture.

Thanks to the leadership of our President, Don Elías Antonio Saca, El Salvador is striding forward with a fervent political will to build a compliance culture in terms of labour standards. Proof of this lies in the recent appointment of the National Commission for Labour Modernization in which government bodies, workers' and employers' organizations and business take part, as well as academic and research institutions; this Commission is a concrete mechanism for political cooperation and social dialogue.

Lastly, we are confident that harmony between workers and employers generates progress for all. In El Salvador, we are fostering a government with a human face; a government which is close to the people and considers social needs not as an extra something, but rather as the very basis of all our endeavours.

Original French: Mr. THYS (representative, World Confederation of Labour)

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage the efforts of the Director-General in giving the International Labour Organization the place it deserves. It is indeed crucial that the ILO be on the same level as the Bretton Woods institutions and also the World Trade Organization.

At this current time, marked as it is by the imbalances of neo-liberal globalization, the ILO has an essential role to play. The ILO is different because of its standard-setting function and its tripartite structure. In order to assume its role fully we think that the system to ensure compliance with standards must be strengthened. The World Confederation of Labour has always been very committed to this process and believes that such strengthening action would only be possible under certain conditions. First of all, increased structural funding must be made available and then, as we have said on several occasions, it is essential that the three groups, Worker, Employer and Government, together undertake to improve standard-setting activities and not to weaken them.

In September, the United Nations Summit that will assess the progress accomplished in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will be held. We can already say that the efforts that governments have made with regard to the volume of aid granted are insufficient. The global objective of attaining 0.7 of GDP by 2015 will be impossible to achieve in these circumstances.

We believe that, without active political will, these objectives will never be attained and we would like to add that a global action campaign to reduce poverty is an initiative that must be pursued.

As we were saying, the neo-liberal model of globalization is gaining ground and has considerable influence on the international situation, on workers and peoples. This observation has led the trade union movement to raise questions about its own functioning. Following economic upheavals, we needed to react and do everything to defend the rights of workers. This is why the World Confederation of Labour is in the process of negotiating with the In-

ternational Confederation of Free Trade Unions with a view to creating a new international trade union organization which will also be open to other democratic and independent organizations which are not affiliated either to the World Confederation of Labour or the ICFTU. We are making major efforts to ensure the success of these negotiations and are convinced that the trade union movement will be strengthened by this.

Moreover, we would like to draw your attention to the question of the occupied territories. The situation in the Middle East must be clarified. We are deeply concerned at the misery, unemployment and difficult conditions affecting the Palestinian people. It is clear that only a negotiated and peaceful solution will significantly improve the socio-economic situation of the country. The World Confederation of Labour wishes to reiterate that only respect for the UN resolutions which stipulate the effective recognition of a Palestinian state will lead to just and lasting peace in the region.

We would like to conclude this brief statement by insisting yet again on the need to promote decent work. At this point, we should like to highlight yet again the efforts made by the ILO through its World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. We welcome the report entitled *A Fair Globalization, Creating Opportunities for All*. Indeed, action to promote the right of every woman and every man to a decent job remains a priority. It is essential that work should allow a worker to live in dignity and not just to survive by resorting to precarious strategies. Nor should we forget that wherever it exists, decent work is at risk. Ever increasing flexibility is required of workers; delocalization has become a daily occurrence; wages are falling and workers are being forced to compete rather than show solidarity. There you have a few examples of the consequences of a process of globalization which places the economy at the centre of everything and whereby the human element is no more than a means to an end.

The ILO must do its utmost to promote decent work. This is one of the best means of reducing poverty. The trade union movement, as always, is at the side of the ILO in this task. There is a pressing need to move towards a world where social justice is a reality.

Original French: Ms. SASSO MAZZUFFERI (Employer, Italy)

The Director-General in his Report has made us think about the ever closer ties between social policy and economic policy, with a view to promoting the evolution of the labour world.

Employers resolutely subscribe to this approach.

In my experience, the work of the Governing Body and its committees is following the same guidelines, pragmatic and consistent with the trends that have been noted by the most notable international organizations. Indeed combating poverty, as well as job creation, are in my opinion among the pillars of the ILO's action and it is precisely on economic policies, based on growth and competition, that these pillars are consolidated.

Competitiveness presupposes increased effort in the areas of research and innovation. Italian Employers are particularly committed to these genuine keys for economic and social development. Consolidation of social achievements in our country, as well as in Europe, obviously has to go through a strengthening of these elements, and we remain

convinced that if sustained and consistent efforts in these areas are not made as of now, even the future of our country could be jeopardized. We must work with the same urgency on education and training that are essential in order to attain our objective by taking account of the rapid technological evolution and the necessary adaptation of human resources and labour methods.

It is necessary for the strategic orientation of the economic policy to put these priorities as the highest-ranking objectives.

For the group of Employers and for Italian Employers, we need greater dynamism in the small enterprises sector. It is essential for the future economy of many countries, not only in developing ones.

But first and foremost a favourable environment to do business must be set up and supported. We see in that subject one of the most effective means of promoting independent work for young people and women who could create their own businesses and thereby escape marginalization and unemployment and underemployment in too many countries they live. To my mind, this is one of the most desirable elements of decent and productive work.

The technical cooperation of the ILO and the Turin Centre are precious instruments for action that could be of great assistance to develop the labour market and especially to help the poorest countries.

In addition, Italian Employers draw attention to the fact that major assistance needs to be given to small and medium-sized enterprises that merge in order to become bigger to be able to stand up to more aggressive competition and keep not only the number of jobs that they have now but look towards the possibility of creating more.

In a globalized market the future of excessively small businesses may be at risk. These are the challenges awaiting us and which we have to handle with positive determination, because we are convinced that where there are challenges and hopes there can be no decline.

The ILO can show its effectiveness yet again by supporting the countries and social partners that are committed to a process of modernization. There are many difficulties and risks, but we must not underestimate the many opportunities that this process can offer.

To promote a "culture of creativity in all fields of life" is the suggestion of the Director-General, and I consider that particularly appropriate at our time of the many changes associated with globalization. This is a positive vision of the future that I share that should underpin all our Organization's programmes.

Mr. PHETO (Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Botswana)

Let me preface my remarks by commending the Director-General for his concise but clear Report on the progress made by the International Labour Organization in executing its mandate, the challenges encountered in the implementation of strategies and programmes adopted and insights into the future direction for the Organization. His emphasis on consolidating progress to move forward is timely. It is an acknowledgement that some progress has been made in pursuit of the goals and objectives that the ILO Members have set for themselves.

The journey started way back in 1999 when this Conference laid the foundation for decent work. Ever since that time, we have been laying building

blocks to make the Decent Work Agenda a reality. More countries can now talk about their initiatives to integrate decent work into national policy. Some countries can even proudly demonstrate the utility of this integrated approach in their socio-economic development. Notwithstanding this, what is clear is that the destination is still far; hence, there is no room for complacency.

We must look beyond the accomplishments we have made, and focus our attention on what is required for the future. In cherishing and protecting the fundamental principles of the International Labour Organization, we should lift the Organization to greater heights in terms of the achievement of its goals and objectives. If we are to move forward, we must be ready to accept better means of executing this Organization's mandate. We must also be ready to consider a new generation of ILO programmes that blend well with ideas that continue to emerge from a variety of conferences worldwide.

I am grateful for this opportunity to participate in this process of reflection with a view to charting the way forward. We can now make the year ahead a year of achievement, working together for the ILO. The ingredients are all there as the agenda for this Conference touches vital issues that we all share: youth employment and social economic factors which help or hinder young people in getting decent jobs, promoting a safer and healthier working environment. These issues are placed at the core of the International Labour Organization's mandate. Structurally, the International Labour Organization is a classic example of tripartism which is ideal for shaping consensus on social and economic issues.

The world of work is dynamic. The many rapidly changing patterns in the world of work demand the constant attention and intervention of governments and employers' and workers' organizations. As rightly pointed out in the Director General's Report, the International Labour Organization's constituents are at the forefront of the struggle, and rightly so, because we are better placed to influence decisions that can deliver better, a quality of life at work.

The partnership between governments, employers and workers has made and continues to make a vital contribution to national and international efforts to expand labour markets, raise levels of decent employment and fight poverty. I am optimistic that, if we can continue to nurture and fully exploit the immense potential of this partnership in developing strategies for decent work, then our destination is guaranteed. I have no doubt that this session of the International Labour Conference will work towards the full realization of this potential.

More importantly, progress towards the attainment of decent work is inextricably intertwined with the process of globalization. Economic stability is a prerequisite for decent work. For developing countries, the decent work deficit prevailing in our countries is deeply rooted in their inability to compete globally, hence the inability of our economies to create jobs. Without jobs there can be no decent work. My delegation therefore welcomes the reopening of the debate on the fair social dimensions of globalization. I believe our efforts to promote commonality of issues, ideas and approaches within the multilateral system will result in the convergence of policies and programmes, and the maximization of resources.

The agenda item of promoting youth employment is of critical importance to Botswana because of the

difficulties of integrating young people into our labour market. This problem persists in spite of efforts made by the Government to increase investment in education and training. Youth unemployment is compounded by our economy's limited absorptive capacity for labour and lack of experience among young people. The Government's efforts to overcome this problem are based on a broad, multi-dimensional approach with emphasis on training and skills development to meet the needs of the labour market. The private sector has a key role to play in skills and entrepreneurial development for young people. I am optimistic that the outcome of the work of the Committee on this subject will be helpful in our endeavours to promote decent work for young people.

Finally, the International Labour Conference has so far served its purpose very well. It has fulfilled the mandate of the International Labour Organization to our expectations. The Conference has been a rich laboratory of new ideas and insights into the world of work, as the Director General points out in his Report, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*.

Any improvements to the organization of the Conference must place constitutional obligations first. Only that way can we account for the resources that member States put into the organization. Every session of the Conference has been time well spent.

Original Turkish: Mr. BASESGIOGLU (Minister for Labour and Social Security, Turkey)

I wish to extend my appreciation to the Director-General, Juan Somavia, for his Report entitled *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*.

Especially in our world today, where the need to establish balance in the triangle of liberalization, socialization and globalization has gained prominence, an evaluation of this kind has more significance than ever. In the days to come, the realization of a similar evaluation within the framework of our tripartite structure and in a spirit of social dialogue would, of course, make an important contribution towards our joint efforts to solve the existing problems.

I sincerely share the view emphasized in the report that the adoption of decent work as a fundamental principle of national economic and social development strategies contribute effectively to the establishment of peace and the reduction of poverty. In this context, I would like to report that we have made great strides in developing national labour standards, establishing equality in employment and extending social protection to cover the entire population, and have done so in an environment of powerful social dialogue.

We consider the international efforts and the contributions made by the ILO with respect to youth employment to be an important investment in the future of our countries and, as such, we fully support them. Besides this, the issue of child labour is another area which necessitates the joint efforts of the social partners and non-governmental organizations.

Turkey actively combats child labour, with specific attention to girls, within the framework of the National Policy which relies on the support of a wide array of stakeholders including workers, employers, government and civil society.

Achieving broad-based and ongoing social dialogue between workers, employers and the Government within the process of restructuring industrial relations in Turkey is one of the fundamental philosophies of my Ministry. In the meetings held last year by the Economic and Social Council and the Tripartite Consultation Board, both representing the two top-level social dialogue institutions in the country, important framework decisions were reached to lower unemployment and to eliminate the problems encountered in the application of the legislation governing labour activities.

My Government, which attaches special importance to the field of social policy, has recently taken significant steps in this regard. In this connection, the Social Security Reform Bill has been submitted to Parliament with a view to establishing a modern social security system that would be easily accessible, financially sustainable and capable of providing effective protection against poverty.

Furthermore, the Revised European Social Charter, one of the most important international instruments on the protection of economic and social rights, has been submitted to Parliament for ratification. In addition, draft laws containing significant improvements on trade union rights and the right to collective bargaining have been drawn up following tripartite consultation and with the contributions of a council comprised of distinguished academicians and experts.

One of the fundamental and extensive reforms which we have achieved to ensure higher standards for our citizens in the field of human rights is the recently adopted Penal Code. With this comprehensive law, considerable improvements have been made which have implications on various areas of work life, including the right to organize and freedom of expression.

In addition to this, severe penalties have been introduced for those involved in illegal migration, human trafficking and illegal employment. I firmly believe that these sanctions will greatly contribute to the effective implementation of the Law on the Work Permit for Foreigners, which came into force in 2003.

The importance of alleviating poverty and establishing social justice for social and global peace is the fundamental philosophy of the International Labour Organization. One of the test cases in this connection is the Palestine problem, which has been unresolved for over half a century now. The report entitled *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* indicates that a new environment is emerging, reviving our hopes for solving this vexation. Now, we sincerely wish that this opportunity will not be wasted and that just and lasting peace will be established. The reinforcement of the Palestine Fund for Employment and Social Protection set up within the ILO, by means of new contributions, will provide a significant support for these efforts. Mindful of this fact, Turkey made a contribution to the fund in 2004, as well as, in the same year, emergency food aid worth US\$1 million.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my belief that with this session of the Conference we will take another successful step towards alleviating poverty and ensuring full employment in the world.

(Mr. Finlay takes the Chair).

Mr. TELJEBÄCK (*State Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Sweden*)

The importance for each individual to be self-supporting through work under good and safe conditions cannot be overstated. But in reality, all over the world people are still being denied the rights to dignified jobs and working conditions. The ILO Global Report this year gives us frightening but important insights into the extent and circumstances of the slavery and forced labour of our times. We all bear responsibility for this. The ILO report gives us support and a road map for fighting it. There is no patent solution. Targeted measures will have to be taken on various planes, permeating both national and international activity and based on cooperation with international agencies.

The two protocols to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons have a pivotal role to play here. Both were ratified by Sweden recently. At the same time, I would like to underline the continuing vital importance of the ILO normative activities for the international fight against slavery and forced labour. Vigorous action also has to be taken, of course, by individual countries. The Global Report indicates the importance of making trafficking in persons a criminal offence. Sweden recently enacted legislation to this effect, and we urge other countries to do the same.

But legislation is not enough. National action plans must be devised and all relevant players in the community must be involved. Private enterprises and private individuals should also take action. Only by concerted, vigorous action for change can we hope to succeed.

Women and children are particularly in danger of falling victim to trafficking in persons and slavery. New forms of forced labour often involving trafficking in women and children have aggravated the problems and made active measures more urgently necessary. Children and young people, girls as well as boys, must therefore be guaranteed access to education, a livelihood and job creation measure.

The aim of full employment is firmly established within the ILO. The Organization's conviction that this helps to combat poverty has impacted on other international agencies. As we have said so many times before, the connection between employment and the fight against poverty is pivotal. Fair and open rules of conduct for international trade also have potential for contributing to economic growth.

Young persons who are denied entry into the labour market are at the same time deprived of the chance of economic independence and individual development. Many other young persons have inferior working conditions, often purely temporary jobs and deficient social safeguards. This trend has to be reversed, and we must therefore concentrate particularly on creating job opportunities for the young.

The ILO report entitled *Youth: Pathways to decent work*, which was prepared for this Conference, contains carefully drafted material for constructive discussions. It highlights the integrated approach, stressing the importance of cooperation and accentuates the central role of the social partners. It also stresses that measures are needed both at macroeconomic and microeconomic levels to create economic employment for young people.

Good working conditions are a prerequisite for guaranteeing an employee a decent life. The history of the ILO has been shaped by that conviction. The Swedish perspective in that respect contributes to higher productivity. This is a win-win situation.

During the Conference, discussions are taking place on the design of a new framework instrument on improved occupational safety and health at work. This framework will furnish guidance for a systematic preventive work environment management at the national level, with national programmes being shaped on a tripartite basis. Sweden has great confidence in this approach. We are convinced that these methods create good prospects of healthier and safer jobs for workers. The campaign for safer work and more humane workplaces must never cease. It is a continuous process which is constantly facing new challenges.

Mgr. TOMASI (*Apostolic Nuncio, The Holy See*)

The future that challenges the international community and individual countries is marked by increasing awareness that only together can we make progress and find the right path to a truly human life. The rapid pace of change may give rise to doubt and to the temptation of isolation and momentarily derail the move forward. The process of globalization continues; making it inclusive and removing the obstacles that obstruct its beneficial impact for all is the commitment that emerges from this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference.

Clearly the spirit of solidarity and of enterprise that flows from the unique tripartite collaboration of States, workers and employers shows a model of interdependence that could enrich other international organizations at this time as we search for reforms devoted to a more effective service to the whole human family.

The road towards decent work for a decent life, in a world where the globalization of solidarity is an active agenda, indeed starts with young women and men and the promotion of their employment.

There is a sense of urgency to the search for a response to the fact that globally, less than half of the youth available for work had jobs in 2004, and that an estimated 59 million young people aged 15-18 years are in hazardous forms of work. Pope John Paul II had Already asked during his visit to the ILO in 1982: "can we tolerate a situation in which many young people may find themselves without any prospect of one day finding a job and which, at the very least, could leave them with lifelong scars?"

In developing countries, lack of innovative technologies make it difficult to translate research findings into productive initiatives. The priority to be given to education and formation, especially in a knowledge-based economy, is evident. At the same time, youth employment should be conceptualised and the whole economic structure of developing countries needs to be sustained in its evolution and enabled to compete fairly in the world market.

Decent jobs for young people have a critical payoff. Their creativity supported by an adequate technical culture and a sound sense of responsibility can make up for their limited experience and even open additional jobs through the micro-enterprises they may launch with the granting of appropriate credit. The communities where young people are not employed lose hope. The creative energy of the young,

not channelled towards productive goals, is dispersed and wasted. In fact, the risk is unfortunately real that lack of jobs and employment opportunities push the young into the destructive underworld of drugs, violence, criminal activities and even terrorism.

Speaking on 1 May 2005 to many workers attending his first Sunday audience, the new Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI said "I hope that work will be available, especially for young people, and that working conditions may be ever more respectful of the dignity of the human person".

The creation of decent work for all in a sustainable world has been a longstanding common base for a fruitful dialogue between the ILO and the social doctrine of the Church. The dignity of every human person requires access to work in conditions of personal security, health, fair remuneration and safety. Work is a right and the expression of human dignity. My delegation therefore sees unemployment as a real social disaster and supports international organizations, employers, labour unions and governments as they join forces to strengthen juridical norms of protection and promote the implementation of existing Conventions. There is a shared vision that work is the motor for development and poverty elimination, for unlocking the hidden resources of nature, for personal and professional fulfilment and family support, and for social participation in the well-being of society.

As the popular saying goes – think globally, act locally; fundamental principles and strategic objectives need to be an integral part of the daily existence of people to make a difference. In the words of the Director-General's Report, a common effort is demanded "to maintain and increase this advocacy of a decent work perspective in economic and social policies locally, nationally and internationally", and to implement decent work country programmes, so as to move in this positive direction. However, a more determined outreach to the most vulnerable categories of workers is called for. Coherent action against forced labour, at the national and international level, can eradicate this most indecent work which should have no place in the modern world. The estimates provided for the first time at this Session of the Conference are their own commentary. Today at least 12.3 million people are victims of forced labour worldwide. Obviously the human person is treated as an instrument of production, his or her freedom and dignity are violated, the rights that flow from work stifled. When work is isolated from the broader context of human rights, the worst forms of exploitation take over.

An important sign of the continued dynamism of the ILO is the commitment to focus on forced labour as well on all segments of the world of work that are the most marginalized. The workers of the sea have not been forgotten. For fishers, a much needed instrument that holds the potential for improving the life of 90 per cent of these most forgotten people is the proposed Convention that will hopefully be approved and opened for ratification at this Session of the Conference. Fishing is a complex and also dangerous profession with many occupational accidents, deaths and injuries. The proposed Convention concerning work in the fishing sector and its proposed Recommendation would make all kinds of professional fishing safer and create a decent workplace.

For the first time, an integrated approach and framework is proposed for the protection of workers against injuries and sickness related to their work. The combination of norms, clear lines of responsibility and mechanisms for compliance should strengthen prevention and increase the well-being of workers together with their productivity. It is a deep shock to read the figures that fatal and non-fatal accidents are estimated at 270 million, that some 160 million workers suffer from work-related diseases. So an instrument dealing with renewed commitment for more effectiveness in the field of occupational safety and health is really timely, opportune and welcome.

New questions and problems are always arising as the economy, technological advances and the globalized organization of society evolve. Work remains central in building up the future, but the human person is the protagonist of this work, and safeguarding his dignity and centrality in all new realities is the best guarantee for a more just and peaceful world.

Original Turkish: Mr. KILIC (Worker, Turkey)

At the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, I expressed my concern over the developments in the Middle East and the unjust occupation of Iraq. I have to state with sorrow that my concerns are still continuing. Before delivering my speech, allow me to reiterate my desire for all unjust occupations to be ended, and for peace and friendship to reign throughout the world.

I would like to congratulate the Director-General for his Report entitled *A global alliance against forced labour*. Low union membership, poverty and inadequate legal provisions lead to inhuman labour practices, even extending to slavery, in most parts of the world, including in developed countries. Such inhuman practices are widely encountered by migrant workers. Similar problems related to migrant workers also exist in Turkey. In 2003, the Minister of Labour adopted legislation to facilitate the issuance of work permits for migrant workers to prevent their exploitation. In addition, the Ministry has implemented effective policies aimed at persons entering our country in pursuit of illegal employment. In the light of these developments, I should say that the statements in the report prepared by the Committee of Experts criticizing Turkey's implementation of ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 182 are somewhat exaggerated.

The Director-General clearly states in his Report that trafficking and smuggling networks play a far less important role in Turkey than in the Schengen States.

Our country has made considerable progress in harmonizing domestic legislation with the provisions contained in ILO Conventions to national legislation. However, the provisions of 1948 Convention No.87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and the 1949 Convention No.98 concerning the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining are not fully implemented yet. The burden of notary public involvement in gaining membership and resigning from trade unions creates difficulties. The problems faced during the procedures to obtain authorization for collective bargaining also create difficulties, as do the relatively high threshold requirements. IMF, the World Bank and WTO are benefiting from capital, trade, services and manpower, while workers are suffering from poverty. The unfair distribution of

wealth is increasing as a result of deregulated global competition. The problems resulting from the gap between the poor and the rich still exists. The workers and their rights are used as an instrument for competition and privatisation processes are accelerated by globalization.

As I said, the problem resulting from the gap between the poor and the rich still endures, and these privatization processes are used as competition instruments. Efforts to build a fair globalization are inadequate. These problems will continue to be on the top of the agenda of future Conferences.

Since the outset, we have endeavoured to realize the ILO's strategy for decent work in our country. Despite rapid economic growth, the high level of unemployment have not decreased, and policy-making favours the growth of the informal sector. As a result, workers are deprived of social protection and paid sub-subsistence wages. All these factors are obstacles to the ILO strategy for decent work. We urge our Government to find a solution for chronic unemployment, and for the shortcomings of the Job Security Act and the social security system, which excludes a large part of the population. In doing so, and when amending the Social Security Act, measures must be taken to protect acquired rights. We request our Government to create new job opportunities and to remove all the obstacles to the creation of trade unions.

Negotiations between the EU and Turkey are expected to start as of 3 October 2005. Various groups opposing Turkey's accession to the EU seek to cast the negotiations in a negative light. The most common arguments are undoubtedly the accusations concerning the so-called Armenian genocide. Armenian citizens in Turkey state clearly that there was no genocide perpetrated by the Turkish people against Armenians. We can never accept an unfair accusation of genocide, as these assertions disregard historic facts, realities and documents. It was a matter of administrative provisions being implemented during the First World War.

Original Russian: Mr. EREMEEV (Employer, Russian Federation)

I would start by expressing support to the spirit of innovation which pervades the Report of the Director-General *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*.

Representatives of the Russian business community, and the Employers' group as a whole, have been saying for a long time that we should enhance the political role of the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body. In our view, that is what this document seeks to do, and it raises important questions for us, the Members of the ILO, about where our Organization is today, and where it should go from here.

Over the last decade, the world has undergone far-reaching political, economic and social changes. The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization is a convincing demonstration of the multifaceted nature of contemporary processes. So many things have changed, but one thing remains the same, and that is human initiative – the inexhaustible spirit of free enterprise – which is the same today as it was 100 years ago, and it is this that is the main motive force of economic and technological development. This is the reason that we need to think seriously about how to increase the practical capabilities of our Organization – how to

make the ILO a more effective instrument of development and support for enterprise in its member countries. Only then will theoretical discussions about the eradication of poverty and the need to increase employment have any chance of being implemented on the ground and being converted into real jobs and a real improvement in the living standards of individuals, both men and women. Only in this way can the fall in the interest of the business community in ILO activity be halted.

We need to focus ILO priorities on practical programmes to develop enterprise and thereby create jobs, but this does not have to come into conflict with the traditional areas of activity of our Organization such as social protection, vocational training, occupational safety and health and the development of social partnership. The experience of many countries shows that an active role taken by the State in regulating the labour market and redistributing income in accordance with political imperatives can coexist perfectly well with favourable conditions for entrepreneurial activity and economic growth. Furthermore, if we do not take into account all the factors of modern labour relations, then the aspiration of making decent work a global goal will remain a pious wish, and I repeat that without closer attention to programmes that are of practical interest to the business community, its scepticism with regard to the ILO will only increase.

The ILO was founded 85 years ago for the purpose of establishing international labour standards and these should remain a major part of its activity. However, it is clear that the emphasis in this work has to be shifted. The modern labour environment no longer fits into the legal frameworks that were established many years ago by those labour standards. According to the International Labour Office, of the 185 labour standards, only 73 actually meet contemporary needs, so our future job should not be simply to churn out more standards, but to work on updating the current ones, promoting them and ensuring that more are ratified.

Finally, how can we enhance the effectiveness of the ILO in its core tasks? I think the proposals of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization with the regard to Policy Coherence Initiatives are very relevant here. Many of the issues facing the ILO, (such as economic growth, how to encourage entrepreneurship, employment, labour migration and the informal economy) overlap with the mandates of other international organizations and cannot be solved by the ILO alone. For example, taxation and credit policies are very important instruments of social policy, and, in discussing these issues, we must consult other relevant international organizations, for, otherwise, the objectivity of the ILO's activities will doubtless suffer in many ways. The ways and means of actually coordinating these policies have still to be worked out, but it is definitely a pressing need and we have to address it.

We face similar tasks at country level. To transform the concept of decent work into a national policy involves a significant increase in the coordination of interests and activities between the ministries responsible for implementing economic and social policy.

In order to retain and strengthen our advantages in the age of globalization, the ILO has to promote the interests of its members in deeds as well as in words.

The ILO began the new millennium with a new concept, which was that its main aim would be decent work. The general direction of the ILO programmes to achieve decent work are encapsulated in its four strategic goals: rights in the world of work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue.

Developing international labour standards and helping to apply them are certainly among the most important areas of activity of the ILO, and are the ones from which the ILO, to a large extent, derives its authority in the world. The adoption of the Declaration in 1998 was something which gave the Organization new impetus.

Measures to implement that Declaration have had a major influence on the programme and budget of the Organization, and discussion of the Global Report has become a major part of the debate during the Conference. This year, the Global Report is devoted to the elimination of forced and compulsory labour. Statistics, introduced by the Director-General, show that for more than 12 million people living on this planet, this is one of the most intolerable forms of exploitation of man by man and yet, for those 12 million people, it still remains a cruel reality.

I believe that a determined stance by governments and social partners against forced labour should be reflected in the state policies of the participating countries. In order to eradicate this phenomenon, we need to draw on all the possibilities available to each state – legal, financial, economic, cultural and educational means. In this connection, I would like to point out that in the Republic of Belarus, we attach a great deal of importance to these questions.

In March this year, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, issued a decree on measures to combat trafficking in human beings. The aim of the document is to prevent and completely eradicate trafficking in human beings in all its manifestations. In connection with this decree, the Government has passed a series of measures to tighten up the law, such as by strengthening the legal safeguards and protection afforded to citizens of the Republic of Belarus travelling abroad.

The idea of converting this concept of decent work into a global target is something which requires determined action on all fronts: within international organizations, regional organizations and at national level.

We have noted with satisfaction the development of decent work country programmes which, according to the Director-General, will gradually become the main mechanism for implementation of the ILO's Programme and Budget for 2006-07.

In our view, the country programmes meet several important needs. They are based on strategic aims of the ILO but also allow us to take into account the situation in a particular country and look at that country's needs and priorities. The implementation of the programmes allows us to develop the potential of the national ministries of labour, and of employers' and trade unions' associations as the main partners in the ILO. These programmes also serve an information purpose, promoting the concept of decent work as one of the key components of a national policy of sustainable development.

As far as Belarus is concerned, the priorities of the country programmes should be pension reform,

employment promotion and the development of social dialogue and tripartism. The proposals devised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection for the decent work programme of Belarus have been sent to the ILO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. I hope that in the near future we can sit down with the Office to work on implementing these programmes.

Original Portuguese: Mr. LIMA GODOY (Employer, Brazil)

The Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, has asked national delegates for their opinions and their guidance on a number of matters related to the present and future of the ILO. Given the limited time available I will concentrate on what strikes me as the most important aspects from the standpoint of Brazilian employers.

We agree on the crucial importance of promoting decent work so as to convert this aim, which has already been established within the ILO, into a global goal. To this end, it is essential to strengthen the tripartite approach in national and world affairs to make sure that trade unions and employers' organizations are prepared and to raise the standing of ministers in charge of employment and labour. ILO constituents must also work hard to place employment and decent work at the heart of national strategies.

However, we are convinced that the only possible way to eradicate job insecurity and degrading unemployment, especially in developing countries, is to build an efficient and competitive economy that is capable of producing and sustaining the necessary substratum of wealth.

We face this challenge in an environment marked by irreversible globalization that is both promising and exclusionary – not only in the realm of the economy – but also in the habits, customs, values and hence the needs of humankind. Only through a combined effort to increase the efficiency of our economy and our public administration, only by reforming institutions, routing out waste and focusing on acquiring and disseminating knowledge, will we be able to make it possible for everyone to have a job without having to renounce better living standards that human progress offers the more capable amongst us.

Each country requires employment policies based on contractual roles that encompass both flexibility and a minimum indispensable degree of security for workers. This means encouraging investments in human labour-intensive sectors and promoting the entrepreneurial spirit, entrepreneurial activities and the employability of people – and this by democratizing theoretical and practical knowledge. On this basis, our country is today committed to bringing about far-reaching reform to the legislation governing trade union organizations, collective bargaining, rules for contracting labour and the settlement of the disputes inherent to employment relationships. Working to make this reform come true in a modern context should be the principal goal of the ILO Decent Work Country Programme for Brazil.

In the international sphere, it is essential that the ILO should continue to strive to persuade the multi-lateral system to promote worldwide macroeconomic policies that lead to effective actions with a view to fairly disseminating the necessary means for development. Alongside the proclamation of principles and setting of standards, such action should also involve, the transfer of scientific and

technical knowledge as well as – and why not – financial resources, based on the model that made the European Union feasible. Finally, these actions should be aimed towards opening the markets of the rich to the goods and services of the developing countries.

We are quite aware that the funds provided by the constituents are inadequate – as is mentioned in the Report of the Director-General – but we in the Southern hemisphere are familiar with shortages. That is why we are confident that the ILO, as we do in our companies, will be able to deal with this inadequacy by increasing the transfer of resources to the most needy regions and by widening technical assistance programmes. For our part, the Brazilian employers' organizations hereby reiterate their willingness to contribute to an accurate survey of labour and production patterns in our country.

Among the main trends observed in Brazil, we should like to highlight the consolidation of the market economy and the growing awareness of the importance of the entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurship in creating productive and sustainable businesses and jobs. These values must therefore be introduced into the culture of social organizations. They must go beyond the private sector to embrace the public and the so-called tertiary sector, as well as the educational and occupational training sector. It gives me great satisfaction to inform you that, in this regard, Brazil's enterprises are developing a wide range of vitally important activities across the country through an association of organizations known as the "S" system, which provides educational and support services to workers throughout the country, across all sectors of the economy.

In conclusion, in stating the huge importance that Brazilian employers attach to the ILO and to this Conference, we support the enhancement of its approach, through the improved use of modern Information and Communications Technology. Furthermore, the Conference should remain the incomparable tripartite gathering that it is, marked by a sentiment of universal fraternity and the belief that a world of decent work can be built through the idealistic tripartite harmony that is practised in this House.

Ms. FLUMIAN (Under-Secretary of Labour, Canada)

It is a real pleasure to share this podium with such an engaging personality, and acceding to your request, and the insistence of my colleagues, Canada will contribute to the efficiencies you asked for. We will not read every third word, but we will be brief, to the point and eloquent so that you can be proud of the sensitivity we are showing to your request and our timeliness and our productivity.

(The speaker continues in French.)

The Honourable Minister Fontana, our Labour Minister, regrets that he is unable to be with us today because of his parliamentary duties, nonetheless he extends his very best wishes for the success of the Conference.

It is for me a very great pleasure to be here in Geneva and thus to have the opportunity of addressing the International Labour Conference and of commenting upon the Report of the Director-General.

(The speaker continues in English.)

This year's agenda includes timely and important global issues – youth employment, occupational

safety and health, and conditions of work in the fishing sector. It is my hope that all delegations will work together to ensure that the discussions result in globally endorsed outcomes that will have positive impacts for workers and their families.

Canada recognizes that young people represent the entire future potential of the economies and societies of the world, and therefore we need to foster the conditions for productive and decent jobs for youth. Through its Youth Employment Strategy, the Government of Canada invests in Canadian young people by helping them acquire the skills, knowledge and work experience they need to participate in the labour market.

We also recognize that the situation of young people requires immediate attention. Through its tripartite constituency and global alliances, the ILO is particularly well-placed to act as a catalyst in mobilizing action on youth employment across countries and between regions. Canada is very pleased to be supporting ILO technical cooperation projects in Asia and Africa aimed at promoting youth employment. We will continue to seek specific opportunities to work together and, in taking stock, we will examine the Youth Employment Network.

The enormous economic and human costs of workplace injuries and illnesses demand that the world turn its attention to the development and implementation of effective prevention strategies. The Government of Canada is working with the ILO and our partners in the Americas on initiatives to strengthen labour administration, improve the enforcement of safety and health regulations, and eliminate hazardous child labour. An ILO promotional instrument that can be globally endorsed will help to raise awareness and the recognition of safety and health as a fundamental workplace right.

In his introduction to the Conference, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, the Director-General refers to the series of significant reports he has submitted for consideration over the past years, and invites us to reflect on the future directions of the Organization.

We are facing both the challenges and the opportunities of a truly integrated global economy, with unprecedented levels of worldwide competition and rates of change driven by technology and commerce. Globalization brings with it enormous opportunities for economic growth and better living conditions around the world. But at the same time it brings risks to such areas as the environment and labour, which must be managed at an international level and with greater care.

This Organization has already recognized the need to be more responsive to the demands of the world economy. Following on from the World Trade Organization's recognition – at its 1996 Singapore meeting – of the ILO's role as the most appropriate body to address the labour dimensions of worldwide integration, the ILO adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, a new type of instrument that embodies a global commitment to core labour standards. The Declaration represents a new approach to enhancing and promoting the most fundamental amongst the Organization's many standards. We need to continue this kind of innovation well into the future.

The ILO will also need to find new ways to tie together the twin objectives of economic growth and labour standards. Economic growth without norms

protecting workers is neither humane nor sustainable; but norms and standards without economic growth will not provide the jobs and productivity on which people depend. We need to see these two goals as supporting one another, and not as pulling us in opposite directions. We also applaud the work of the Director-General in putting the Organization on a path to study reform, including the appointment of women in the senior ranks of the ILO.

(The speakers continues in French.)

The Director-General also talks about the need to pay greater attention to the emergence of new forms of work and production, as well as to the importance of the ILO of achieving a better understanding of the impact of these changes in terms of its mandate and its future work.

The world of work has radically changed. We are witnessing significant demographic changes, accompanied by increased diversity in the labour force. New technologies have transformed the way in which work is carried out and exerted pressures on workers, who are now forced to constantly update and refresh their skills and to make themselves available at all times. At the same time, workers are seeking to strike a balance between work and family. We also see emerging new forms of labour relations, as employers competing in a globalized economy need a flexible and dynamic labour force.

In response to these far-reaching changes, the Minister of Labour of Canada has undertaken to review the federal standards of the Canadian Labour Code to ensure that Canada's laws and programmes remain pertinent and respond to the current needs of the world of work, which are constantly changing.

The ILO also needs to give thought to the way in which these standards can be made more pertinent to today's work context and the way in which better support can be given to its Members so that they can frame appropriate laws and policies and apply their labour laws in an effective manner.

The Government of Canada supports the work of this Organization, its strategic goals and the promotion of decent work as a global goal. I should also like to underscore our commitment to working in cooperation with the member States of the Organization, the employers, and the workers to try and secure the enduring relevance of this Organization and its contribution to the world of work.

Mr. PLASKITT (*Parliamentary Undersecretary, Department for Work and Pensions, United Kingdom*)

I am very pleased to be here in Geneva for my first session of the International Labour Conference, in fact my first international engagement since being appointed to Tony Blair's Government last month, and I am particularly pleased that my first visit is to this year's session of the Conference on youth employment, because getting young people trained and into work are crucially important objectives for all of us.

Recent demographic change presents new challenges. In societies like the United Kingdom, where populations are ageing and skill shortages are emerging, young people are critical to filling the gap. In developing regions, where the numbers of young people are increasing significantly, generating jobs of good quality is essential. Getting the next generation off to the right start is a vital social goal for all of us.

Internationally, there is increasing recognition of the critical importance of youth employment. Last year, the World Commission's Report on the social dimension of globalization recognized the urgency of facing this challenge, and again this year, the Commission for Africa's report, "Our Common Interest", makes special reference to promoting youth employment.

The findings of the Commission for Africa emerged out of the wide-ranging consultation with communities, businesses and organizations across Africa. The recommendations were developed through a unique collaboration of Commissioners, from leading businessmen to political activists and politicians, from both G8 countries and from across Africa.

Indeed, the Commission was set up to discuss the progress that has been made in Africa, the challenges faced, the opportunities available, and what G8 countries can do to get behind African governments in support of development. Now, amongst other things, the Commission identified youth employment as a critical issue for achieving greater prosperity and security in Africa.

The Commission has not just produced an important analysis, although it certainly has done that. It is also a call for action, and it is in all our interests in the end to see Africa prosper. It is a young population and it is a continent with so much unfulfilled potential.

The Commission recommends expanding the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network to include 25 additional sub-Saharan African countries. The Youth Employment Network is a framework we can use to exchange our experiences with other countries.

And so I am delighted to announce today that the United Kingdom is joining the Youth Employment Network. The United Kingdom has one of the highest youth employment rates in Europe, above both that of the European Union and the OECD averages. This represents to us a considerable change over recent years, and we have achieved it by a combination of macroeconomic stability and a completely new approach to welfare.

An essential part of our labour market policy is having education, skills and training policies in place aimed at creating an adaptable, flexible and productive workforce. We also recognize the need to ensure that regulation does not deter the creation of jobs and, in particular, we want to encourage entrepreneurship. Youth unemployment represents a huge waste of potential, and the United Kingdom's New Deal for Young People provides support to people aged between 18-24 who have been unemployed for six months or more. As a result of the New Deal, the number of young people unemployed for that length of time has fallen by three-quarters, now to its lowest level in 30 years. Despite these successes, we acknowledge the need to do more. We need to smooth the path from education into employment, and we need to ensure that no young person lacks the opportunity to fulfil their potential and, although we are proud of what we have achieved in the United Kingdom, we are still keen to learn from the experience of others. The Youth Employment Network is an excellent framework through which this can happen, and we hope that others will consider joining so that we can make progress at the speed dictated by the changes now taking place in all our society.

It is important also that we do not lose the impetus from the work of the Commission for Africa, especially the vital link it has made between employment and social and economic development. So, the G8 heads will meet in Gleneagles next month to discuss this report and take it forward.

To conclude, whether a young person's background is poor or prosperous, one thing does not change. There is a potential to fulfil and a life to be made rewarding. By our efforts here we can and must help.

Original Arabic: Mr. GUIDER (representative, Arab Labour Organization)

My speech today will not be a traditional one, for many reasons. These reasons can be summarized as follows.

First, several years have passed, and rights are being lost; the international community, with all its principles and charters, was unable to do anything in the face of aggression by the occupying forces in Arab Palestine, as well as the economic embargo that has aggravated the problems faced in daily life by Arab workers in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and the Shebaa Farms area in South Lebanon.

Second, the double standard applied by a number of international organizations and institutions, the arrogance of the only superpower in the world today, and interference in the internal affairs of the Arab region – all this has led to instability in many of our Arab countries, such as Iraq, Sudan and Somalia.

Third, the political and economic pressure aimed at subjugating the Arab community in some Arab countries, such as the case against the Syrian Arab Republic now and other Arab countries.

All these reasons made me choose a non-traditional speech because, as we say in Arabic "enough is enough".

The most difficult thing for a human being is to suffer from oppression, injustice, and slurs on his religious beliefs, social traditions and customs.

Do you think that a Muslim Arab whose land has been violated since 1948, who is being inhumanly treated, who is being falsely accused of lying and committing perjury and who raises his arms asking for justice from the international justice institutions that apply a double standard against him. Do you think a person can thrive in these conditions?

We want to be free from all foreign occupation. We want to be free according to our own standards so that we cannot accuse each other of violating each other's rights. We want peace, we want stability, we want prosperity. We want to prevent foreign occupation in all its forms. Do we not have the right to this as an Arab nation on this earth?

The international community failed to protect the human rights of Arabs at the international level; it failed to ensure a decent existence for the Arab on his land and to save him from all aspects of violence and occupation. More than 10 per cent of Arabs today live under the oppression of direct military occupation.

For all these reasons, I call upon you, on behalf of the Arab-Labour Organization (ALO) which I represent here, to stand with the oppressed in the face of the oppressors and to apply in practice, not only in word, the international principles and systems that govern the work of this Organization.

The agenda of our Conference includes technical items of major importance, such as the abolition of

forced labour under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. It also gives special attention to the issue of youth employment, to which the ALO and the social partners in the Arab nation attach special importance. We also have an Appendix to the Director-General's Report, entitled *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*.

We the Arab Labour Organization would like to extend our thanks to the international community, to the ILO, and to its Regional Office in Beirut, We would like to see increased cooperation between our organizations, particularly in the field of technical cooperation and joint activities.

We confirm the recommendations made by the Arab Labour Conference on the need to develop the use of Arabic in the ILO and to give full support to the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection.

In conclusion, I would like to say to you all that our Arab nation is able, God willing, to continue its progress and its struggle, and to face all the challenges in every aspect of life, because no legitimate right can ever be lost.

Original Portuguese: Ms. TAÍPO (*Minister of Labour, Mozambique*)

The Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*, reflects the deep concern of the ILO as regards citizens' rights and particularly the rights of workers. There are almost 12 million people in the world suffering from this scourge, and therefore we must all join forces to eradicate this evil.

In Mozambique, the Constitution clearly states that the fundamental rights and freedoms of men and women shall be respected and guaranteed. Thus, in 2003, Mozambique ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

We believe that the ILO should play a bridging role between the most vulnerable countries and the developed countries in finding strategies to guarantee, on the one hand, the socio-economic sustainability of the countries involved and, on the other, greater sensitivity of countries as regards respect for human dignity.

The Director-General in his introduction, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, says that progress is mixed and that concern is increasing that too many countries are making too little progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The Extra-ordinary Summit of the African Union on Employment and Poverty Alleviation held in Ouagadougou in 2004 emphasized the need to place job creation at the top of the agenda in order to reduce poverty on a lasting basis. Will we be able to fashion our financial policies to achieve this objective?

Mozambique and my Government are resolutely committed to combating absolute poverty. Recent data suggest that there has been a decrease in poverty over the past six years, from 69 per cent in 1997 to 54 per cent in 2003. Despite the Government's efforts, the number of people living in absolute poverty is still very worrying, and this clearly affects the Government's action as regards job creation.

The President of Mozambique, Mr. Armando Guebuza, elected by universal suffrage in December 2004, is determinedly developing an enhanced policy to promote employment, and placing men and women at the heart of this policy. In line with this

policy, Mozambique's Parliament recently approved a programme, giving priority to creating conditions conducive to increasing employment through incentives for vocational training, which generates self-employment, and through special employment programmes for disadvantaged groups.

The Director-General suggests in his introduction, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, four interlinked sets of actions to achieve the goal of decent work, including the need to reinvigorate tripartism. In the case of Mozambique, I am delighted to say that cooperation between the social partners is extremely fruitful. It should be noted that our current Deputy Minister of Labour was previously Secretary-General of the Workers' Organization of Mozambique. There is also a huge effort under way to bridge the gender gap in all areas of society. There are indeed 11 women in the Government, including the Prime Minister.

It is our aim to guarantee that our young people, our sons and daughters, acquire the proper training they need, to meet the requirements of the labour market, and that new jobs are created for them. Our young people guarantee the future. We should not marginalize them by depriving them of opportunities to be well rooted in society and joyfully build their own families.

We do not want the future to find us wanting. As the Chinese proverb says: "In this world we do not inherit from our grandparents, we borrow from our grandchildren". What we do today will have an impact on the next generation. Let us create more jobs. Let us present a secure and sustainable future for this and future generations.

I am confident that, with our complete trust, self-denial and will, together we can bring a real, just, social dimension to this world. We can free ourselves from absolute poverty and create more jobs and more prosperity.

As the Minister of Finance of South Africa said, at the opening of the April 2005 session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the African Union, "To do nothing would be intolerable. To do something is not enough. To do everything we can is our clear duty".

For the culture of decent work I am very grateful to you all.

Original Spanish: Mr. RODRIGUEZ BARRERA (*Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Development, Panama*)

I would like to greet you with fraternal greetings from Martin Torrijos Espino, the President of the Republic of Panama. It is an honour for me to represent my country here today.

As of 1 September 2004, the new Government of Panama has given a high priority to fostering quality employment and decent work as well as occupational safety and health for all Panamanians.

This process was launched by ensuring that the new economic policies address the existing economic imbalances manifest in a fiscal deficit amounting to 7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), an excessive number of civil service personnel, glaringly inefficient allocation and management of resources for public investment and a decrease in funds for financing of key entities for development, such as the Social Security Fund.

Economic policies in Panama must focus on correcting these economic and financial imbalances while creating an enabling environment for economic growth, investment and quality job creation.

In order to redress public finances, the Government has obtained approval for progressive tax reforms, which contemplates increasing public funds through increased direct taxation and modern tax administration. This will ensure a more equitable tax system, without affecting the financial conditions of businesses or decisions to invest in the country.

We have also undertaken reforms in our social security system to ensure the financial recovery of the competent institution, without detriment to the fundamental principles of universality and solidarity. It is clear that this requires the participation of all sectors.

The Government, for its part, has provided financial contributions and made efforts to enhance administrative efficiency and move towards greater institutional transparency. The objective is to eliminate delays in the payment of tax, improve the quality of services provided, and promote broad social security coverage.

The Government of Panama attaches great importance to this issue, while keeping sight of its responsibilities and adhering to the international ILO Conventions. We are grateful for all the assistance provided by the ILO in this matter.

The Government and the Panamanian people will soon be deciding on a strategic macro project for national development, that is the widening of the Panama Canal in order to uphold the relevance of this waterway; enhance the country's potential as a destination for national and foreign investment, and create a considerable number of quality jobs.

Some of the most important factors for growth and investment are judicial guarantees, transparency in public administration and governability. The Government expends intense efforts to address these issues by combating corruption and establishing clear rules for domestic and foreign investors.

In the field of macroeconomic policy, we have made considerable progress with the free trade agreements negotiated or currently under negotiation. These processes have been undertaken with the participation of and in consultation with all sectors of society. At the same time, the Government is aware that meeting our targets for investment growth and decent employment not only depends on ensuring healthy macroeconomics, but also on harmonizing other comprehensive sectoral, economic and social policies that allow us to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the economy as a whole, including those production sectors which are falling furthest behind.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the important role of the ILO in efforts to create a fair globalization and opportunities for all, with due importance given to female employment and youth employment, in order to achieve the type of development that reduces poverty.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Development in Panama, with the assistance of the ILO and the Inter-American Development Bank, is working on updating information on the Panamanian labour market concerning supply and demand of labour, with substantial quantitative and qualitative information. We have strengthened our programmes for vocational training, assisting our young people in finding their first job, while trying to meet their needs through public and private investment programmes aimed at incorporating some 10,000 young people in the work market in 2005. This ex-

perience was the basis for a new programme entitled "a rational plan for youth employment" designed in cooperation with the *Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and the Family* and with the assistance of the ILO.

We are aware of the rapid changes under way in the world of work and the way in which these changes can affect the ILO in its programmes and in its technical capacity. This is why the Government supports all initiatives aimed at creating more and better jobs to meet the needs of the most vulnerable segments of society. Those initiatives must not only offer assistance, but also enhance the productive capacity of those groups.

We support the initiative of the ILO and of the Presidents of Central America, the Dominican Republic and Belize to hold a tripartite subregional conference on employment, with the aim of adopting a declaration on decent work. We welcome the willingness of the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, to participate in the event.

Our labour policies for the next five years have, as their main axes, the promotion of a new labour culture based on a new labour relationship that can guarantee social peace and a conflict-free workplace for all social and economic actors, and that will contribute to fostering economic growth on the one hand, and the development of productive capacities through the increase in human and social capital generated by globalization.

The Government of Panama has made considerable progress in the development of comprehensive economic policies, employment policies, social policies and labour policies, in strict observance of the four pillars of decent work and the principles enshrined in international standards contained in the major ILO Conventions.

Mr. KIM (*Minister of Labour, Republic of Korea*)

The Korean Government highly praises the various programmes and the activities of the ILO which have been promoted under the motto "Decent Work for All", based on the vision and leadership of the Director-General, Mr. Somavia.

The ILO *World Employment Report* released last March has indicated that about 184 million people in the world are unemployed or underemployed and 550 million are working in extreme poverty.

Given the severity of the world's unemployment problem and the ILO's mandate and competence in this area, the Korean Government believes that the priorities for the ILO programme and budget should be on addressing employment issues.

The rapid progress of globalization has presented us with an enormous opportunity for the development and creation of wealth. However, globalization itself should not be the ultimate goal, nor should it undermine social cohesion.

Globalization must act as a catalyst to enhance the quality of working lives. In this sense, the decent work goal initiated by Mr. Somavia as a global agenda is very appropriate and timely.

To achieve the goal of decent work, ILO's mechanism represented by labour, management and government has a significant role to play.

Under such circumstances, the Korean Government fully supports the ILO's efforts to achieve social integration and reduce poverty, based on its guiding principle of "decent work for all", so that more people can enjoy the benefits of globalization.

Today's labour market, which has changed along with globalization, is facing challenges such as social conflicts arising from labour market polarization, the working poor, youth unemployment, and so on. Though these challenges take different forms from those of the past, we believe that they too should be overcome through the efforts to achieve the goal of decent work.

In this context, the Korean Government has adopted decent work as its national agenda under the motto "Better jobs for more people". This initiative, pursued to maintain policy coherence with the ILO, is aiming at the creation of 400,000 jobs this year.

In particular, by establishing the Presidential Commission on People and Jobs this June, the Government will strive to strengthen policy coordination between the ministries responsible for economic and social affairs, which the ILO has been emphasizing as the essential steps towards decent work.

The Korean Government will invest US\$6 billion over the next three years to innovate employment assistance services by improving public employment services and building a regional employment network, and by establishing a lifelong vocational training system that will meet the demands of the labour market.

To narrow the gap between working classes and alleviate social conflicts caused by labour market polarization, the Government is pushing for legislation to protect non-regular workers. These efforts will be pursued by collecting public opinions including discussions at the Tripartite Commission. The Government will design and implement mid- to long-term plans to improve working conditions and develop vocational ability in non-regular workers.

The Korean Government also notes the importance of social dialogue and tripartism as pivotal pillars in achieving the goal of decent work.

Through the Tripartite Commission, the Government is making efforts to establish "win-win industrial relations based on dialogue and compromise" while at the same time trying to institutionalize the "reform measures for advanced industrial relations laws and systems" as soon as possible, which reflect international standards and Korean realities.

The 14th ILO Asian Regional Meeting is to be held in Busan, Korea, this October. Here the tripartite discussions will be carried out among member States on the theme of "Making decent work an Asian goal", with an aim to establish the key motto of the ILO.

To make this meeting meaningful and memorable, the Korean Government is planning to organize a special session of labour ministers to discuss how to achieve decent work through skills development.

I believe that the meeting will provide a unique opportunity for the social partners in Asia and the Pacific to seek means to realize the Decent Work Agenda in this region. I am sure that the meeting will confirm the importance of the role of the ILO which, so far, has been more than successful on this front.

Mr. DE PAYVA (*Worker, Singapore*)

We welcome the timely discussion to address the challenge of youth employment.

In its 2005 survey, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific reported that an estimated 38 million young people

aged from 15 to 24 are unemployed in Asia. Of these, 10 million are in South-East Asia, or about five jobless youths for every unemployed adult in the region.

In preparation for these discussions, we in Singapore jointly organized in April a regional forum with the ICFTU Asia and Pacific Regional Organisation for young union leaders from 21 countries, to share experiences and ideas on what should and can be done to tackle the challenge of youth employment, and how trade unions can be involved.

In Singapore, our challenge is to ensure that our formal education system is able to equip our young men and women with the necessary skills to meet the new demands of a global labour market in high-tech, higher value-added industries, such as life sciences, nanotechnology, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

To meet the needs of the new generation of workers, trade unions must evolve and offer services beyond traditional union protection. To attract more young workers to join and become involved in the labour movement, the Singapore National Union Trades Congress (NTUC) launched the "Young NTUC", a new labour youth wing, during this year's May Day celebrations.

While addressing the challenge of youth employment, we must continue to address the needs of mature workers. Many are in low wage jobs, or unemployed, because they lacked the necessary skills to compete in a globalized world economy. In Singapore, our priority remains job creation and employment, with accessible and affordable education, skills training and social security.

Attention should also be focused on one of the most fundamental rights of work – occupational safety and health. Each year, more than 160 million workers suffer the consequences of unsustainable forms of work, or work-related diseases. The development of the new ILO instrument to promote and enhance occupational safety and health will play an important role in addressing this issue.

We welcome our Government's commitment to halve Singapore's present occupational fatality rate by the year 2015, by introducing a new occupational safety and health legal framework to boost safety at Singapore workplaces.

We are also urging our Government to look deeper into the work systems of companies and review the safety training framework for workers, in consultation with employers and trade unions. Ensuring safety and health at the workplace is our shared responsibility.

A safe working environment is not just about having a safety management system at work, or simply employing a safety officer. It is, more fundamentally, about showing respect for workers' lives – an obligation which all employers must fulfil. A worker's life should not be in danger because of shortcuts to achieve economic efficiency.

We also welcome our Government's intention to ratify the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), this year. Singapore will now have ratified five of the eight core Conventions. While urging the ratification of more Conventions, we will continue to review our laws and practices to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work are upheld.

In conclusion, it is the shared responsibility of governments, employers and trade unions to ensure

that the social dimension of globalization is adequately addressed.

The ILO is the only international organization that brings together the tripartite social partners to engage in meaningful dialogue and cooperation. We must all be committed to achieve real progress in ensuring the continued protection and enhancement of the welfare of the hundreds of millions of workers in the world.

Mr. SENEVIRATNE (*Minister of Labour Relations and Foreign Employment, Sri Lanka*)

We have noted the Director-General's desire to focus this year on consolidating progress and moving ahead on the major ILO reports presented in the last years which have been a major contribution to the global debate on the role of the ILO in the multilateral system.

The introduction of the concept of decent work in 1999 forms the central pillar on which our thinking has been based both in the Governing Body debates and also in national policy-making in member countries. Achieving decent work goals has stimulated considerable interest at national level, both in influencing policy and implementing projects and generating interest amongst the tripartite constituents. Decent work cannot be achieved without changing the thinking and the social values of the employers and the trade unionists. It is not easy.

The Director-General in his Report emphasized the need for decent work country programmes to be established in each of the member countries as "an important operational innovation". I am proud to state that Sri Lanka is currently drawing up the National Plan of Action for Decent Work and we are very hopeful that it could be completed before the Asian Regional Conference to be held in October. As stated in last year's Director-General's Report, *Working out of poverty*, decent work is the quality road to poverty reduction and greater legitimacy of the global economy.

The establishment of a new cluster for increased employment and industrial relations in the national council for economic development is another important stage towards integrating issues of importance to labour into national economic policy considerations at the highest level.

I am also very concerned about the welfare of migrant workers and their families. In this light, currently action is being taken to document all the families of migrant workers throughout the country.

Being one of the 11 lead countries of the Youth Employment Network, the delegation from Sri Lanka looks forward with profound interest to the deliberations at the committee, the plenary session, and the side events on youth employment which are scheduled during this session of the Conference.

We thank the ILO for its rapid mobilization in Sri Lanka for the initial assistance in assessing the livelihood and labour market situation in the Tsunami-affected areas. The ILO, with the support of the Ministry, was able to prepare a rapid income recovery programme which was included in the main government programme for rebuilding Sri Lanka. The United Nations Resident Coordinator for Sri Lanka pointed out at the OCHA briefing in Geneva recently that the most important need in the medium term was livelihood assistance for fishermen.

We commend the ILO's approach of building partnerships with front-line humanitarian agencies

for the employment-intensive recovery which is now under way in Sri Lanka.

Mr. YITZHAKY (*Government, Israel*)

I would like to commend the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for the excellent preparation of this Conference and for the thoughtful remarks he has submitted as an introduction for reflection at our Conference.

We have indeed reached a stage in which taking a pause for reflection would be a timely step for reassessing past achievements and future goals and priorities.

Among the subjects mentioned in the Director-General's introduction, I would like to focus on employment as a useful framework for poverty reduction, especially concerning weak or vulnerable segments of the population.

The struggle against poverty is one that occupies the State of Israel to a great extent, primarily by promoting employment and increasing job opportunities, especially among certain groups of the population, such as single-parent families, young people and discharged soldiers. For these groups, special projects are arranged, mainly to provide employment grants in order to integrate them into the labour market. Indeed, the figures indicate a drop in unemployment and a rise in the rate of participation in the labour force.

Of course, another means of combating poverty is grants and allowances for people who cannot be integrated into the workforce, such as senior citizens and the handicapped.

As part of the overall policy of promoting growth in the national economy and coping with the phenomenon of globalization, the Government launched a comprehensive programme of structural changes: in the sea ports, the banking system, privatizations in the communications sector and more. This is in addition to broad reforms in the tax system, the gist of which is reducing tax on labour and on companies.

Another important reform undertaken last year was the increase in the retirement age from 65 years to 67 years for men, and from 60 years to 62 years for women.

The objective of the reform is to increase participation in the labour force, to deal with the ageing population and the increase in life expectancy. These facts can inflict a heavy burden on the public budget, both by actual pension payments and by payments of guaranteed income to a person who does not have any pension schemes and any other source of income.

In addition, within the overall social policy framework, the Government decided to support a proposed bill for a mandatory pension. A few months ago, this Bill passed its first reading in the Israel parliament, the Knesset. According to this Bill, each employee will have a pension plan in addition to his or her basic pension, in order to guarantee a proper level of income and sources for sustenance in old age.

At the same time, the Government is taking steps to ensure decent work conditions and to prevent harmful employment in certain sectors and for certain groups of workers, such as employees of labour contractors, companies that provide labour-intensive services, and migrant workers. In order to do so, special, enhanced regulations for these groups of workers have been enacted and supervi-

sion and enforcement has been intensified to ensure they are upheld.

I would like to note furthermore that Israel has recently ratified the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), thus lending our support to the world effort to abolish the worst kinds of child labour, and indeed to help build a new and better future for young persons wherever they are.

Original French: Mr. MORDANT (Worker, Belgium)

My statement will focus mainly on youth employment and social protection. If I had to remember just one sentence of the very interesting Report which has been submitted to us for our consideration as part of this debate, it would be that the facts and figures "...demonstrate the enormity of the youth employment challenge, in terms of quantity and quality of jobs. The cost of ignoring this challenge and the benefits of tackling it are immense." The situation in my country, Belgium, is worrying. At the end of March 2005 unemployment amongst the under-25s was close to 20 per cent, compared to 8 per cent for the whole of the working population. The 25 EU countries are affected by the same problem and the same rate.

At the same time, European Governments confronted with ageing populations are panicking: how are they to finance healthcare and pensions for the most aged members of the population? The answer that is given to this question is very often, make those who already have a job work longer and to a greater age.

No, ladies and gentlemen, no.

Focusing on getting people into, or back into work, or extending the careers of the oldest workers and in the process eroding the right to work and social protection, is not the solution. It is quite the opposite. What we need is good quality jobs, including good quality jobs for young people.

We know that youth employment and the working conditions of young people depend on overall economic activity and on the resultant demand for labour and the growth of the formal economy.

Now, as is highlighted by the Report, the so-called "developed" countries are far from having implemented ambitious plans in this area.

We have to consider widening the basis of the financing of our social protection.

It is not logical that income from labour alone should bear the burden. We as workers have gained this social protection thanks to a tough struggle. We have paid for it and we want everyone, including the young, to benefit from it.

Thus we will guarantee a future for all.

But we are told that changes have affected the demand for labour and that what is needed now is skilled workers, whereas young people do not have experience. Human beings are not born "ready for work". Why, all of a sudden, at a time when more and more is being said about the social responsibility of undertakings, should undertakings no longer have a role to play in the field of training?

But I do not want to focus solely on the concerns of old Europe when the world is suffering from far more serious evils than the consequences of longer life spans obtained thanks to a high level of social protection.

Young people in the world are not only unemployed. The very concept of unemployment is no longer meaningful when most unemployed young

people no longer enjoy social coverage. Young people in the world are not only unemployed, they are also very often extremely poor, exploited and sick.

It is up to the State to play a central role in bringing about solutions.

It is also the State which must head the debate about employment, including youth employment: through macroeconomic initiatives, education, guidance, individual training in companies, tutoring, day-release schemes, promotion of self-employment and also the fight against discrimination in recruitment.

The support of the social partners is an asset, indeed a *sine qua non* for the success of the measures taken. But it is not only up to the private sector to take up the challenge, the public sector also has a role to play in youth unemployment, both as employer and as trainer.

Of course, you cannot advocate state initiatives without discussing financing.

Some developing countries are bankrupt and it is impossible for them to invest in ambitious macroeconomic policies and work on infrastructure or policies requiring a sizeable workforce as recommended. That is why in the interest of young people all over the world, I invite the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, to launch, within the competencies of the ILO, an extensive reflection on alternative possible ways of financing these programmes, including the Tobin Tax and the cancellation of debt with a transfer of the funds thereby released to macro and microeconomic sustainable "take-off" policies and also the establishment of a steering assistance committee to be set up within the International Labour Office.

Original Russian: Mr. GRYSHCENKO (Employer, Ukraine)

It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Ukrainian employers and to express my gratitude to Mr. Somavia and to all the organizers and participants of the Conference for the atmosphere of constructive social dialogue which prevails in this room.

I should like to emphasize the fundamental and multi-faceted nature of the Director-General's Report, the contents of which will allow us to carry out a dynamic analysis of the strategic directions of the activities of the ILO in implementing its programme aims.

There is a basic theme to the programme and budget, under examination by the Conference, which is turning decent work into a global goal. We fully support this fundamental document because it proposes the further development of fundamental principles and rights at work. We hope that the strategic goals of the programme will be implemented in regional technical cooperation programmes. We appeal to the governments of the main donor countries to support the compromise version of the draft budget, which is aimed at further improvement of the forms and methods of the ILO's work.

I should like to turn my attention to a few specific points. Under item 4 of the agenda, the development of a new instrument establishing a promotional framework for occupational safety and health, we believe there should be a declaration. There are currently 39 special Conventions and Recommendations on occupational safety and health in force, but they have been ratified by only a small number of ILO member States. For that reason there is no need

to adopt yet another Convention and expect such a Convention to be actively ratified. Given that at the current session it is proposed that we conclude work on a draft Convention and Recommendation on working conditions in the fishing sector, I should like to note that certain provisions of these drafts are excessively detailed and contain conditions which are too strict, to the point that their adoption would provide an obstacle to their active ratification.

I should also like to address item 6, the effective strategy for promoting youth employment. The National Union of Ukrainian Employers is today working to counter negative trends in employment and promote full and productive employment, first and foremost for young people. One of the results of the Seventh ILO European Regional Meeting in Budapest was the holding of two national forums for the effective development of employment resources with the participation of the Government and employers' and trade union associations at which national programmes for maintaining and developing employment potential were presented. What is more, in Ukraine a new law is coming into force which provides incentives for employers to hire young specialists and give them their first job.

Globalization is increasing inequalities in the socio-economic development of countries. Growth in the volume of trade and investment at a global level is primarily in the interests of developed countries, which have, concentrated in their hands the levers controlling the global economy and have established the unfair economic rules of the game. As a result not only is there stagnation in the real sector of the economies of the weaker countries, but there is also a fall in the level of social protection for workers. Given the lack of effective compensatory measures, such results could cancel out the gains which society is expecting from the positive aspects of globalization.

In the context of the transformation of the labour market in our country, one of the most important issues facing us is the irregular status of Ukrainian citizens employed abroad as migrant workers – according to experts there are 4 million of them. The host countries must not only recognize that fact as soon as possible, but must also make the necessary amendments to their legislation in order to legalize and implement recognition of the rights of such workers and should speed up the process of ratifying Conventions Nos. 97 and 143, which set standards for the employment of migrant workers.

The consequences of globalization are many and varied. We support a globalization which will strengthen our rights, and which is open and democratic, because the global economy must meet global social standards.

From the point of view of the Ukrainian employers, the role and influence of the ILO in the current climate must grow. A basic component of the new decisions and transformations should be the creation of decent work conditions, and the development of social standards and safeguards. We are convinced that the ILO cannot be a mere observer in the area of international economic structures, but rather must cooperate with them in order to ensure decent working conditions on a global scale. This is why we are asking you to support the Ukrainian position on the need in the ILO for a framework to carry out a separate examination of global political economic processes and to search for possibilities to attenuate the

social and economic consequences for countries neighbouring of the EU.

Mr. THAILUAN (*Worker, Thailand*)

On behalf of Thai workers, I would like to inform you that the report of the Committee is a fruitful one. However, nothing is mentioned about the double standards occurring in employment in Thailand at present.

Thailand is now facing problems concerning this new type of employment – one with a hidden agenda. The outsourcing method has been adopted and is resulting in two different types of workers in the same workplace: permanent workers and sub-contracted workers. These two groups receive different remunerations. Permanent workers receive a reasonable salary and good fringe benefits with bonus, living allowance, car allowance, uniform and housing while subcontracted workers receive no benefits apart from their wages. Moreover, they have to supply their own uniforms, shoes and working tools.

This type of employment has spread rapidly and is preferred by Thai employers and also foreign employers who invest in Thailand. They establish a Thai broker company or sometimes the investment company establishes its own company. The company recruits workers who were previously unemployed or elderly workers to work in factories (many of them well-known) in car manufacturing, car appliances, electronic equipment, food catering, metal or plastic production. Some workers are sent to work in banks. Employers prefer this kind of worker because of reduced labour costs, but these disadvantaged workers suffer from low wages, no fringe benefits and no career path.

As the Worker member for Thailand, I would like to request the ILO to study the matter of double standards in employment urgently, to alleviate the hardship of these disadvantaged workers. I have already reported this matter to the Prime Minister directly on National Labour Day. The Prime Minister accepted the request to solve this problem and I will subsequently report the result to the Chairperson.

The next significant issue is the weakness of tripartism in Thailand. Low employee membership in various tripartite mechanisms is a big problem. As I reported previously to the Conference, the Government tried to reduce the role of the worker in tripartite mechanisms. I have already requested the ILO Office in Thailand to look into this matter but the problem has not been solved yet. Indeed it has become more serious. Now, workers lose their right to tripartism, many tripartite committees are not proportionate to the size of membership, and the number of government representatives in the committee outweigh workers' and employers' representatives. Moreover, the right to appoint workers belongs to the Government, thus weakening the role of employers and workers. Some keep quiet because they are afraid of not being appointed. At present, the important tripartite mechanism of Associate Judge of the Labour Court is going to lose the right of election. The law on election by employers and workers is going to be amended and the Government will itself select the employers' and the workers' representatives. If this is successful, all workers throughout the country will suffer.

Finally, I would like to request the ILO in Thailand to play a larger role in the issue of rights for Thai workers.

Original Russian: Mr. SHCHERBAKOV (representative, General Confederation of Trade Unions)

In his introduction to this discussion, the Director-General of the ILO quite rightly directs the attention of the Conference to the urgent need to create in all countries the political, economic and social conditions required to implement decent work for all.

The choice of strategic objective made by the ILO in 1999 – decent work for all based on full and productive employment, respect for the socio-economic and political rights of workers, and appropriate social dialogue – was absolutely right. It is not by chance that the Decent Work Agenda which the ILO is promoting consistently is gaining wider and wider global recognition.

The General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) welcomes the ILO's intention of promoting the development and implementation of so-called decent work country programmes. We believe that all the current budgetary difficulties of the ILO notwithstanding, we must do our best to find the necessary resources for this. Such technical assistance must be provided above all to countries with unstable social protection systems. We are referring here not only to "traditional" developing countries but also to countries with transitional economies. Implementing such a project should increase the role of ILO regional offices, and they in turn should use to the greatest extent possible – the potential offered by the social partners. We are glad to note that active participation in this process of trade unions and employers was emphasized as an essential condition in the Director-General's introductory remarks.

The most important foundation underpinning decent work is productive, full and stable employment. But the employment situation in the countries of our region, for example, is far from perfect. In none of these countries are trade unions satisfied by government measures in this area. Suffice it to say that the official level of unemployment in Azerbaijan is 10.7 per cent of the economically active population; in Kyrgyzstan 8.9 per cent, Kazakhstan 8.3 per cent, Moldova 7.9 per cent, Ukraine 7.8 per cent, Russia 7.4 per cent. This means that all these countries have either reached or are nearing the 10 per cent unemployment figure so critical to socio-economic stability.

A significant portion of the unemployed are women and young people. In the unstable economic conditions of CIS countries many young people, even highly educated ones, are obliged to seek unskilled and low-paid jobs in the informal sector, where they are subjected to ruthless exploitation. It is time that the ILO intends to pay special attention to this vulnerable group. However, we cannot agree with the proposal of the Director-General to encourage greater participation of youth in informal activities. This measure could be adopted only as a palliative one because it does not fit into the understanding of decent work. We hope that the appropriate Conference committee will be able to make constructive proposals in this area.

We agree with the Director-General that the ILO and its Members must speed the process of eradicating forced labour in the world. Let us recall that one of its sources is the growth of illegal migration. For

a number of receiving countries in our region this has become a real scourge. Millions of illegal migrants in CIS countries are virtually slaves because we not only have no legal mechanism for regulating migratory flows at the CIS level, we have no specific national policies in this area. Last November, the GCTU held a seminar on problems of labour migration in CIS countries. We put forward our vision of a solution to the problem of migrant labour at the government level and called on our member organizations to actively recruit migrant workers as members to ensure their protection.

Having declared decent work its main guiding principle, the ILO must do its utmost to mobilize its resources to attain this goal. First and foremost this concerns standard-setting activities, which have noticeably weakened in recent years. Of course it is fitting to do away with outdated Conventions and Recommendations adopted in response to the conditions at the turn of the last century, but at the same time we must renew the array of legal instruments available to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, the challenges of globalization. This does not rule out a search for new forms and methods of work for the ILO – for example, the free-ranging tripartite discussions proposed by the Director-General. In our view such free-ranging discussions could allow useful debate, but these should not replace the tried and true mechanism of developing Conventions and Recommendations.

The Director-General rightly reminds us of the importance of stricter monitoring of universal compliance with ratified Conventions and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The GCTU has always advocated ratification and strict observance of ILO Conventions in CIS countries, and has indeed assisted that process. This year we once again turned to the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of CIS Member States to request ratification of a list of ILO Conventions dealing with the most important aspects of labour relations. The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly supported our initiative and recommended to national parliaments that ratification be hastened.

In conclusion, I should like to note that our Confederation shares and supports the conclusions contained in the annex to the Director-General's Report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. We believe that solving these thorny problems and contradictions will be possible only through a political settlement based on the relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions and on multilateral agreements.

Mr. DOWLA (Employer, Bangladesh)

I should like to compliment the Director-General for presenting an excellent Report, showing the institutional and personal concern for several topical issues relating to the economic and social development of the world.

I have read with great interest his observations with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. I agree that the ILO has a unique role for developing an international awareness for giving top priority to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as well as mobilizing assistance for the poorer countries. The ILO's unique tripartite structure can be of significant help in this respect at the national and international level. Equally important are the decent work country programmes, about which the Direc-

tor-General states “they will enhance the capacity of the tripartite voice of the world of work to be heard and taken into account in policy-making at local, national and international levels”.

As we stated before previous sessions of the International Labour Conference, employment and better conditions of work in the developing countries crucially depend upon their improved access to the markets of the developed countries and inflow of foreign direct investment. This was elaborated upon in the UNCTAD Least Developed Countries Report, 2004, which is the first comprehensive empirical study on the relationship between trade and poverty reduction in the LDCs. This report emphasizes that trade liberalization alone cannot be adequate for job creation and poverty reduction in the LDCs. According to this report, persistent mass poverty in the LDCs is not due to a lack of their knowledge of the global economy, nor to insufficient trade liberalization, but is the cause and consequence of underdevelopment. Expansion of domestic production capacities, through which poverty reduction can be achieved, requires increased flows of foreign aid and development assistance to the LDCs. It is interesting to note that development assistance to the LDCs has declined, not only in quantum, but has also moved towards human welfare needs, rather than infrastructure development.

This, coupled with inefficient domestic resources mobilization, has been hampering investment activities and hindering poverty reduction.

Following the UNCTAD report, and to make the approach more coherent, the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the ILO and other regional development organizations, should work more closely than they have done so far, to enable the LDCs to respond to the opportunities which are being created by trade liberalization.

A strengthened trade-oriented development policy should encourage developing countries to create supportive roles for supportive conditions for trade and investment as part of their national development strategies.

Bangladesh, in spite of our underdeveloped economy, opted for rapid trade liberalization in the 1980s. The move paid dividends as export-oriented industries flourished quickly, which, in turn, led to an increase in exports at an annual average growth rate of nearly 14 per cent of GDP. Domestic investment increased rapidly and over 2 million new jobs have been created in the ready-made garments sector alone. Employment in some of the ready-made garment factories has had a beneficial impact on various aspects of human development. The positive impact on health-care practices, family planning and education is widely noticeable. Female empowerment and greater roles for women in household decision-making have also been quite significant.

Original Serb: Mr. LALOVIC (Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, Republic of Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro)

It is my great honour and pleasure to be able to address you on behalf of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in my capacity as Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Policy of the Republic of Serbia.

At the beginning of my address, I would like to take this opportunity to stress the great satisfaction of the citizens and leadership of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on receiving a positive as-

essment in the feasibility study for association with the European Union, as well as with the progress made in cooperation with numerous international organizations. A lot of work is yet to be done, but the fact that we have been recognized as a respectable partner for our European neighbours gives rise to optimism and makes it our responsibility to continue with the reforms we have begun. Reform in transition countries is painful, but it is a process that we must undertake. We want to reform our society along the lines of the model of developed and advanced countries and incorporate the concepts of international solidarity and justice into our system. We recognize the standards of the International Labour Organization as our own and, therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the situation in Serbia and Montenegro and of the reforms we have begun.

In the Republic of Serbia, in the field of labour legislation, an Act on Labour has been passed, which has consistently implemented the Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO as well as the Directives of the European Union. This Act encourages the strengthening of social dialogue through collective bargaining, as well as the striking of a balance in guaranteeing the rights and interests of employees and employers.

The Act was drafted in full cooperation with the International Labour Organization, and the Organization's proposals and suggestions, have been accepted and incorporated into the text of the Act. In addition to this Act, another two Acts have been adopted, namely, the Act on Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes and the Act on the Social and Economic Council.

Social dialogue between representatives of trade unions, employers and the Government of the Republic of Serbia plays a significant role in overall social reform, especially against the backdrop of transition. With a view to securing social dialogue, social partners were involved as active participants in the drafting of these laws.

The Act on Occupational Safety and Health has been harmonized with European Union Directives and is pending in Parliament. Once it has been adopted, a national strategy for occupational safety and health will also be elaborated.

Since April 2004, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy of the Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, have been implementing the project *Development of Labour Inspection for the 21st Century*. Structural changes, along with further promotion of knowledge and training of inspectors in an appropriate legal framework, will considerably improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the labour inspection service, and will assist in the establishment of a preventive policy in this field. The promotion of labour inspection is not only one step further towards European standards, but also an incentive for foreign investment in the Serbian economy.

The promotion of youth employment is an issue which should be given the highest priority in national employment strategies. In societies with ageing populations, we cannot allow our young people to remain unemployed and let their work and abilities be insufficiently utilized. Bearing in mind that the unemployment rate among the youngest sections of the population in Serbia, is 44.83 per cent, which is three times higher than the average rate in the European Union, the promotion of youth employ-

ment occupies a very prominent place in the National Employment Strategy adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2005-10. The National Employment Strategy promotes the idea of lifelong learning through the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the educational system, and is aimed at matching the knowledge and skills acquired at school with the needs of the labour markets. Youth employment depends, to a large extent, on the quality of the educational system and its ability to adapt to technological and structural changes. The objective of the employment strategy is to increase the employment rate among young people by 20 per cent by 2010.

In the process of reforming labour legislation in Montenegro, the following laws have been adopted: the Labour Code, the Act on Employment and the Act on Safety at Work, harmonized with the standards of the International Labour Organization and European Union Directives.

In Serbia and Montenegro, this year will be one of intensification of further reform of the labour market and labour legislation, the improvement of the living standards of employees, the encouragement of entrepreneurship and other activities geared to achieving GDP growth. Naturally, we will be able to accomplish the above goals more easily, rapidly and efficiently by examining the achievements of the countries which have already completed the task ahead of us. Serbia and Montenegro has the advantage that it can learn from the experience of other, now advanced and modern, countries, while not disregarding the specific features of its own region. Unemployment and poverty remain the greatest problems of our country, but I am confident that, in partnership with the International Labour Organization, we should be able to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable sections of the population in Serbia and Montenegro.

On this occasion, I would like to express full support for the activities undertaken by the ILO, as a universal forum, in the context of the social dimension of globalization, which have made this dimension acceptable to all the participants on the international scene. The role of the International Labour Organization is even more significant in the year marking the fifth anniversary of the Millennium Declaration when the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals is analysed.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the International Labour Organization for its great commitment in our country and assure you that Serbia and Montenegro is firmly committed to safeguarding the fundamental principles of social justice and tripartite cooperation, in the spirit of the founding principles of the International Labour Organization.

Mr. SALIMIAN (*Worker, Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Proud of representing the workers of Iran, I wish to express my views, as well as the views of our workers' organization. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his valuable Report and hope that the Conference, with the deliberation of the social partners, will lead to decent work for the workers of the world.

As you know, the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations have been set as guidance and a model for all its member States, for regulating national planning and in realizing the objectives of peace and social justice until 2015. The necessity of blending these intentions with the

goal of decent work and attracting the cooperation of social partners for achieving this goal is an important matter which must be high on the policy agenda, as well as regulating labour relations at national and international levels. This emphasis, which was stated by Mr. Somavia during his recent visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, is also the main demand of the workers' organization of our country.

In these early years of the third millennium, globalization and privatization are favouring wealth accumulators which contradicts the objectives of decent work, weakens workers' rights, and reduces their welfare and economic standards. In this connection, the powerful countries have started the war machinery, along with the tools of exploitation. Presently, we are witnessing the blatant violation of human rights and workers' rights in countries like Iraq by the United States and its allies. The Iraqi people have been bound and reports indicate that people are compelled to forced labour. Similarly, the persistent violation of the oppressed Palestinian workers by the usurper Government of Israel, with the support of the United States, has hurt the heart of millions of workers of the world. Its elimination requires effective efforts and steps by the ILO.

Coming to my country report, the most severe problem faced by the workers of our country since the last decade is the phenomenon of temporary labour contracts in jobs of a permanent and continuous nature. This year the theme of May Day in our country was the eradication of temporary labour contracts (TLCs). No doubt the TLCs' lack of job security and stability has resulted in the emergence of different social damages. Efforts are being made by some government officials to reduce the supportive aspects of labour law. Escalation of the unemployment crisis, dismissal of workers, the spread of child labour, the delay in payment of wages, etc., are the varied paradoxes. The necessity to comply with the goal of decent work has increased the responsibility of our country's Government in the observance of labour law and international labour standards.

Last year during the May Day celebration the Supreme Leader asked the Ministry of Labour to regulate the TLC. Unfortunately, this cancerous tumour, which has shaken the foundation of workers' households, has not been taken care of. The TLC is neo-slavery and exploitation of workers and does not suit the Islamic republic system. Therefore, I hope that before the patience of the workers in our country wears out, the authorities will take steps to resolve this problem.

Regarding the minimum wage, at last year's Conference, I talked about the agreement between the social partners for bridging the gap – the severe gap – between escalating inflation and a reduction in the purchasing power of workers. This gap has emerged, among others, due to the non-increase of wages in the years 1982-85, 1988 and 1990. Unfortunately, this year the Government did not act on its last year's agreement on the excuse of ratification of the Price Stabilization Act by Parliament. The Supreme Labour Council fixed the minimum wage of workers at 1,220,000 rials, whereas the minimum salary of government employees was 2 million rials. This is open discrimination. On 27 April 2005, the labour leaders and workers' organizations, in a nationwide protest, objected to this decision and gave the ultimatum that if the wages are not amended, then they are going to stage a nationwide one-hour

sit-down strike, at 13 hours on 16 July. But we hope that the matter will be resolved peacefully by further negotiation in the Supreme Labour Council.

Terrorist operations around the world have resulted in heavy casualties and on a number of occasions our workers have become the victims of shells fired by the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO). Finally, keeping in view the recent visit by the Director-General to our country, we hope that the demand of our workers, which has been pending so many years, regarding the reopening of the ILO Office in Tehran, will be realized in the near future.

Mr. BEJTAJ (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Albania*)

Since its readmission to the ILO in 1991, Albania has given a particular importance to collaboration with the Organization, considering it a true authority on balancing economic and social development. I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude on behalf of the Albanian Government to the ILO and its experts, who, through a large number of technical programmes and projects, have helped to develop and strengthen the legislative and institutional infrastructure in the field of employment, social partnership, social security, economic rights, safety and health, etc.

Albania has opted to join the big family of the European Union. We are aware that this is a process which takes much time and effort but the Albanians are intent on achieving this goal. We are working hard to set up standards, ratify the fundamental Conventions of the United Nations and in particular those of the ILO, which respect basic human rights and the rights of workers. Albania has ratified a considerable number of ILO Conventions, including all eight fundamental Conventions. A new version of the Labour Code, produced under the supervision and with the assistance of the ILO, has been in force for two years. This document offers the best balance on the relations between social partners, thus paving the way for a sound economic development. I want to stress here that Albania has had stable GDP growth of 6 per cent for the last five years.

Employment still remains a priority of the Government. We strive to offer employment to everybody, and make sure that whatever offered is decent work. Care has been taken over the unemployed due to the privatization of the economy. The ILO helped a lot in that respect. Furthermore, Albania recently amended again the Social Insurance Bill, aiming to better promote social protection for all and especially for basic social risks, such as old age, sickness, disability, unemployment and poverty. This amendment marked progress on bringing our legislation into line with the relevant European legislation. It also helped to abolish discrimination among various categories of pensioners.

I would also like to note that the report of the Director-General, *A global alliance against forced labour*, raises many important issues, most of which are relevant for my country. Albania has not inherited "traditional" forms of forced labour, but there is evidence of "modern" forms of it. Children are trafficked by criminal networks for forced begging, drug-dealing or sexual exploitation, mainly outside Albania. Migrant workers in neighbouring countries do not enjoy adequate social protection provisions. Internal labour market characteristics, including weak labour inspection, are facilitating the growth of new forms of forced labour.

Being aware of this situation, we are working with our full force against all forms of forced labour. The Albanian Government has already approved the Strategy on the Elimination of Child Labour and is working on drafting another strategy to minimize the informal labour market. In a broader view, Albania is a Poverty Reduction Strategy country. In November 2001, Albania launched its Poverty Reduction Strategy and it is seriously committed to fighting poverty, as one of the roots of forced labour. Albania is also committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

As can be seen, forced labour concerns are already incorporated into a range of different policy frameworks at the national level. We have done a lot, but this is not enough. The Report of the Director-General calls for action. We should work to have a comprehensive national action plan against forced labour and to establish immediately a national taskforce on forced labour under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, where a special position will be given to employers' and workers' organizations.

I would like to conclude by pointing out the increasingly important role the ILO has to play when facing the challenges of globalization, poverty and decent work. As an ILO Member, we trust that this Organization will continue to work for a more equitable society, in line with the principle that universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.

Mr. SEN (*representative, Trade Unions International of Public and Allied Employees*)

The 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference is taking place in an unprecedented difficult phase of the world situation. Never before have the jobs of the workers and employees been so in jeopardy and workers rendered so completely insecure in respect of their jobs, their economic benefits, social security and trade union rights.

We have been raising this point in the ILO repeatedly. Hopefully, last year's Director-General's Report on the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has, to a great extent, vindicated our point. On the other hand, the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference takes place against the background of the gross violation of international law and the United Nations Charter as seen in the invasion of Iraq and repeated threats to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syrian Arab Republic and Cuba, in wanton defiance of world public opinion and international opposition by the world trade movement. Now the invading forces are committing the most inhuman, immoral and unethical torture on prisoners-of-war in Iraq, which is causing concern in civilized society in all countries.

After about two decades of putting into practice the World Bank/IMF's dictated neo-liberal economy it has proved to be definitely anti-worker. Our Trade Union International (TUI) is concerned primarily with public service and allied employees. Public service and allied employees in general, either in developing countries or in advanced capitalist countries, have become direct victims of this neo-liberal economic regime by way of privatization, contract appointment, longer working hours, abolition of departments and the introduction of drastic cuts to other benefits.

Social security, pension benefits and other financial gains are now being reversed, putting the working class in grave insecurity. Hundreds of thousands of workers are losing their jobs, and unemployment has assumed formidable dimensions and poverty has increased. The statutory pension system that was in vogue for several decades for public service employees in different countries is threatened with privatization to boost the stock market and private companies, in tune with the profit-raj of globalization.

Last year's Director-General's Report confirms our contention that, for many people, "the benefits of globalization are today a mirage". The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization vindicates our contention against globalization when it says "Worldwide, many are convinced that the rights of capital are better protected than the rights of workers."

The ILO report on employment portrays a dismal picture, estimating that global unemployment hit a record 185 million last year or 6.2 per cent of the world's workforce. The figure includes only those in the formal sector of the economy. Unemployment is the highest among younger workers. This year, the Director-General's introduction to the International Labour Conference *Youth: Pathways to decent work* and loses its relevance against the background of formidable unemployment among the youth.

As we mentioned last year, looking at the bitter experience of the current globalization, we are unable to make out how globalization, which has for about the last 20 years benefited only the profit craze of big and multinational capital mercilessly, at the cost of labour, can be converted into fair globalization, leading to the realization of decent work.

The Director-General's Report last time rightly mentioned the necessity of proper respect for international labour standards, fundamental principles of rights at work. The Report also mentioned its absence in different countries. From TUI, we have also complained to the ILO about the flagrant violation of international labour standards in India, as evidenced particularly in the case of the government employees' strike in June 2003 in the State of Tamilnadu.

TUI recognizes the important role played by the ILO at the present time and desires further strengthening of its role in the formulation and implementation of international labour standards, despite financial, political and other forms of pressures by the dominant economic powers and neo-liberal forces who seek to impose their economic and military hegemony.

On behalf of the Trade Unions International of Public and Allied Employees, representing 20 million public employees in different countries, we strongly feel that there should be more consensus-based and non-discriminatory functioning and decision-making of the ILO with the involvement of all segments of the trade union movement, so that the ILO with its Governing Body and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) are able to properly deal with the fast developing situation the world is witnessing today.

Finally, the suggestions made by the Director-General regarding "the form and style of the Conference" deserves in-depth consideration by all concerned.

(The Conference adjourned at 7.45 p.m.)

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