



Eighth sitting

Thursday, 9 June 2005, 10.15 a.m.

Presidents: Mr. Alsalim and Mr. Finlay

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT

Before starting our work I should like to give you a brief summary of the discussion held yesterday on the Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*.

More than 50 speakers from all three sides of the ILO, Governments, Employers and Workers, took part in yesterday's debate on the Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour* under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

They congratulated the Director-General for the quality of the Report and strongly supported his call for a global alliance to address a global problem. It was a practical discussion, where delegates reported on initiatives against forced labour in their countries, and provided further information to supplement the Global Report.

It was also a discussion grounded on ethics, where this violation of human dignity and freedom was roundly condemned by all, for what it does to the human condition.

The discussion included the importance of the following factors, essential if forced labour is to be eliminated: appropriate law, its effective enforcement and, in particular, penalties which act as real deterrents; sound information and awareness raising, ranging from statistical surveys to publicity and media campaigns; capacity building of governments and their social partners; rehabilitation programmes for victims; local as well as global alliances, based on social dialogue; and adequate financial and technical resources from the ILO for sustainable technical cooperation programmes.

The debate allowed for an exchange of information between donors and recipients, where there were specific instances of requests for technical co-operation. Several governments expressed support for further enhancement of the work of the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour. This discussion needs to be continued over the Action Plan that will be presented and discussed in the November Governing Body. Participants in the debate look forward to a solid strategic draft Action Plan based on rich discussions. Both Employers and Workers indicated a need to improve the interactivity that is supposed to be part of the Global Report discussion.

I shall now give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference for an announcement.

RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTIONS BY UGANDA, ST. KITTS AND NEVIS AND KYRGYZSTAN

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

It is a pleasure for me to announce the ratification by the Government of Uganda on 2 June 2005, of the following instruments: the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). I am further pleased to announce the ratification by the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis on 3 June 2005, of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the ratification by the Government of Kyrgyzstan on 6 June, of the Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention, 1925 (No. 17).

I also would also like to draw your attention to Knowledge Fair. You are all encouraged to visit the Knowledge Fair on Decent Work and the Informal Economy. It is a major side exhibition this year of the Conference and includes a multimedia presentation, DVDs and database presentations.

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

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT

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

Original Portuguese: Mr. DA COSTA PITRA NETO (*Minister of Public Information, Employment and Social Security, Angola*)

There is currently a pressing need to reflect upon the problems affecting Africa, with the entire continent, as well as countries throughout the world, being invited to participate in this process.

Given the present context of economic globalization, one of the greatest challenges for developing countries is finding a realistic balance between the competitiveness of our economies and the requirements of social justice.

Although globalization has contributed to an increase in trade and wealth at a global level over the last few years, these gains have been unequally distributed amongst the regions of the world. In some cases, the situation has worsened with regard to the effective exercise of human rights, poverty levels,

infant mortality, the break-up of the nuclear family, migration, child labour, unemployment and social protection.

In Angola, peace and national reconciliation have provided the Government with favourable conditions in which to implement its national reconstruction and development programme in cooperation with the social partners.

Against this background, relations between the Government and the social partners are being strengthened. The aim here is to consult the parties involved and gather observations on a wide variety of issues, and, in a way, to involve the partners in the implementation of plans or programmes aimed at improving the well-being of our people.

Investment in human resources through the training and empowerment of workers is one of our greatest challenges. In fact, it is essential in the development of our country. An indicative programme has been launched by the Government to improve skills amongst the national labour force, the objective being to provide training on a permanent basis and to elaborate and implement appropriate and sustainable development policies. Growth reached 10 per cent last year. As to vocational training, the Government is working hard to improve the capability of vocational training centres throughout the country; to improve and adapt courses to the requirements of the labour market and to enhance the performance of the trainers themselves.

With regard to employment policies, in the light of the present state of our economy, the primary and secondary sectors require particular attention. Likewise, we are now in the final stages of preparing a legal instrument establishing guidelines for the various programmes aimed at assisting young, first-time jobseekers.

There is also a set of measures in place to generate employment, with programmes aimed at micro-enterprises and developing a vocational certification scheme to provide a better basis for the certification of skills.

The Government of Angola, like all governments, is developing a countrywide programme against HIV/AIDS. Legislation has been approved defining means of prevention and treatment of workers affected or infected by the illness and establishing educational programmes within enterprises and public institutions. The legislation also provides for an educational module on HIV/AIDS to be taught at public and private vocational training centres nationwide. There is also a vast awareness and education campaign being run in the workplace.

We now have a basic law on social protection that sets out permanent provisions that are organized into a three-tier system: basic, compulsory and supplementary social protection. Such a system will decisively contribute to attenuating some of the most devastating effects of the war.

We would like to emphasize yet again that we are developing a scheme that will clarify levels of responsibility and the status of citizens and all economic agents in terms of social security, vocational training and active employment policies.

After 30 years of war that have wrecked our country, we are now more optimistic. We think we can move forward and are working on the basis of reconciliation and the full respect of citizens' rights. We are committed to complying with the basic principles that will govern contact with the world. We hope that the results of this Conference will

contribute to further consolidating peace in Angola and to improving the standard of living of our citizens.

Original Arabic: Mr. DKHIL (Minister of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Tunisians Abroad, Tunisia)

The general orientations put forward by Mr. Somavia are very interesting indeed, especially since they underline the need to consolidate progress to move forward towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to strengthen a multilateral system that will take human development priorities into account, and make decent work, with all its components, a global objective.

The world of work is facing new challenges posed by globalization, in particular, growing unemployment and intensifying competition, resulting in the loss of millions of jobs in our countries.

All of this means that we are called upon to take a new look at labour relations in order to improve productivity in conformity with precise standards which have been agreed between the social partners, so that we can safeguard our enterprises and, of course, our jobs, while at the same time, maintaining workers' purchasing power.

We call for strengthened dialogue on these matters, at both national and international levels, under the aegis of our eminent Organization.

Forthcoming international meetings – such as the Millennium +5 Summit to be held in September in New York, at which Heads of State and Government will review progress under the Millennium Development Goals – will be a good opportunity to debate this issue, and to raise awareness of the need to integrate the idea of decent work in national development strategies so as to promote employment, alleviate poverty, and provide the necessary international aid and assistance for a fairer globalization and well-being for all.

We are convinced that the World Solidarity Fund, established at the initiative of Tunisia, is an important international mechanism which can contribute to implementing the Millennium Declaration.

Tunisia attaches a great deal of importance to the social dimension of development, which can help achieve economic development and social progress in a climate of cohesion, solidarity and dialogue between the social partners, viewing human beings as both the end and the means of all development efforts.

To this end, the President of the Republic of Tunisia has made the correlation between the economic and social dimensions of development one of the key principles of his approach to development, which has proven to be both relevant and effective. This approach has enabled major achievements in the area of human development, which have won international recognition. Tunisia has succeeded in meeting its objectives under the eight Millennium Development Goals, particularly with regard to alleviating poverty: the poverty rate has gone down to less than 4.2 per cent; infant mortality to 22 per thousand; there has been an improvement in maternal health education and training has been extended; illiteracy reduced and equality between men and women improved, while the role of women has been strengthened.

Tunisia has launched a comprehensive scheme involving programmes, mechanisms and incentives to promote employment, particularly for young people, which is the main priority under our Presiden-

tial Programme for 2004-09. This scheme has enabled us to achieve a high level of absorption of additional entrants in the job market among higher education graduates, as well as vocational training graduates. This policy has contributed to a better match between labour supply and demand, reducing the unemployment rate to 13.9 in 2004.

The annual Report by the Director-General entitled: *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* once again highlights this issue, which remains a matter of considerable concern in view of the appalling suffering of all sectors of the Palestinian people, in blatant contravention of the most elementary fundamental rights as recognized by international labour standards. We hope that the ILO will step up its efforts in this area, particularly through activating the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection, to ensure decent work for Palestinian workers.

As you are aware, in November, Tunisia will be hosting the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali instituted in 1998. This event is aimed at the advent of a global knowledge-based society that is balanced and accessible to all, and allows all countries to benefit from the rapid growth of communication technologies as a means of development, and to generate employment for young people and management. We are counting on greater representation of all the stakeholders in this event: governments, employers and workers, as well as other representatives of civil society, so as to play an active part in this Summit and contribute to its success.

Mr. WAGSTAFF (*Worker, New Zealand*)

I bring warm greetings to all delegates from the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions and the workers of our country. I will address my comments to the Director-General's Report, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*.

The NZCTU endorses the Report's focus on the issue of the value and dignity of work in contemporary societies and the firm commitment to establish decent work as the right of all workers.

The Director-General's Report is forward-looking and strategic, as it should be. The NZCTU supports efforts to understand the future of work, emerging trends and globalization and to develop strategies to spread decent work around the globe.

The quality of work is a fundamental importance to all workers, and New Zealand workers are no exception. We have been making real gains in the realization of decent work in recent times.

The election in 1999 and the subsequent re-election is of Labour-led Government three years later, has coincided with a much-improved environment for New Zealand workers and unions.

The economy as a whole has seen sustained growth over the period, feeding through to more job opportunities. In fact, unemployment has dropped to the point where our unemployment rates are now amongst the lowest in the OECD, an achievement many considered unrealistic a decade ago. There is now a new problem – a severe skills shortage and a lack of labour in some areas of the economy. While this brings problems of its own, it has enabled workers to move just beyond taking what they can get to exploring different and more rewarding career options.

We know from bitter experience that unregulated capitalist expansion, with a reliance on market forces, will not alone provide any basis for decent work.

In the New Zealand context, our experience of neo-liberal employment resulted in, amongst other things, a severe contraction in union density and a decline in the quality of work.

Employers became more obsessed with cutting the cost of labour and began to embark on a low wage, low skill, low productivity spiral. Now, in a more positive environment, unions are, through a process of social dialogue, more engaged with employers and the Government in significantly improving work. The tripartism promoted by the Director-General has and is playing a very significant role.

A welcome feature has been the commitment by the Government to use the state sector, where rates of unionization are, on average, far higher than in the New Zealand private sector, as a model for the establishment of decent work. As a result, tripartite structures have been established and key employment strategies, such as pay and employment equity, retirement income, health and safety and work/life balance, have been developed by unions, employers and the Government working together to secure enduring and lasting solutions.

Much remains to be done, but I want to make it clear that the vision, articulation and ongoing support of the ILO's commitment to decent work has and will continue to play an important role.

However, the spectre of a neo-liberal anti-worker agenda still hangs over New Zealand, with the main opposition parties in this year's parliamentary election promising more of the same failed policies of the 1990s if they are elected to Government.

Like rust, neo-liberalism never seems to sleep and a neo-liberal agenda represents the antithesis of decent work – no dialogue with unions, no tripartism, greater inequity, less security and less dignity for workers.

Institutions like the ILO must continue to push and promote the real alternative to these policies – the Decent Work Agenda – to combat the resurrection and spread of anti-worker, anti-union neo-liberal policies.

Within the framework of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and under good employment law, decent work can be a reality, but it will not succeed without a concerted plan of global action for decent work that the ILO is well-placed to deliver. Nor will it succeed without the concerted effort of organized labour, employers and governments to show respect for one another, enter into dialogue and take deliberate action to emulate the ILO's commitment to decent work.

I want to comment on another crucial matter in the Director-General's Report and that is the disgraceful issue of forced labour. It is hard to imagine a more indecent form of work than forced labour. In my own region, the Asia-Pacific region, forced labour is a daunting challenge. On a regional basis, with almost 9.5 million workers suffering forced labour, we have more than 75 per cent of the world's forced labour. A coordinated approach is required with interventions necessary in places of origin, transit and destination. Freedom from forced labour will be achieved only when national stakeholders, at all levels, make a genuine commitment

to bring to an end to this gross violation of human rights.

The relevance of the ILO has never been greater and the NZCTU supports the Director-General's Report as the basis for continued ILO activity in the future.

Original French: Mr. BILGEN (Minister of Labour and Employment, Luxembourg)

With your permission, I would like to extend the congratulations of Luxembourg and the President of the European Union to the President of our International Labour Conference. I would like to thank our Director-General for his thought-provoking Report that aims to consolidate, at all levels, the link between economic globalization and sustainable social development based on decent work particularly, in the context of the fight against forced labour.

Globalization at all levels is no longer simply a possibility, it is a reality and it is up to us to channel it so that we can ensure that everybody benefits from it. Decent work for all is the cornerstone of this enterprise.

The answers to the questions raised by the Director-General regard both the form and the substance.

With regard to the substance, I would like to bring to your attention a quote from 1981, "In view of this [present-day] situation", namely the conflict between capital and labour, "we must first of all recall, a principle [...]: *the principle of the priority of labour over capital*. This principle directly concerns the process of production: in this process labour is always a primary *efficient cause* while capital, the whole collection of means of production remains a mere *instrument* or instrumental cause". I have just read the beginning of Chapter 12 of the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* by His Holiness the late Pope John Paul II, who is unanimously mourned by politicians throughout the world, including even the most liberal.

I would like to link this quote on the one hand to the thoughts of the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, who repeats in his introductory Report that decent work for all must be the basis of any reflection on fair globalization for the benefit of all, and on the other hand to the explanations of the European Commissioner for Trade, Mr. Mandelson, who, at a recent ILO/European Commission Conference, clearly indicated that the policy of international trade was not intended to bring down social policy, but that "multilateral trade liberalization can [...] foster long-term economic growth [...]. And it can do this in a way that will help combat poverty and raise living and working standards".

My Government has been following the actions of the new Director of WTO with great interest regarding his taking account of the elements that would lead to fair economic and social globalization.

Because of the determining action of the ILO, there is an emerging general consensus in all forums that economic growth, social policies, employment and environmental objectives mutually reinforce each other. The European strategy, known as the Lisbon strategy, clearly laid down this path and it is consistent with the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization: growth is necessary, but is not an end in itself, it should serve to build social cohesion and create decent work.

All that remains is to find the way and the financial means of implementing this growing universal awareness. If we want to pursue just objectives such

as decent work for young people and occupational health and safety, we must not be blind to the fact that we need basic financial means, particularly in the case of developing countries. Development assistance must be adjusted. The European Union has decided to increase this to 0.7 per cent of GDP until 2015. My country currently spends 0.85 per cent of GDP and we intend to raise that to 1 per cent by the end of the decade. I think that basic financial resources shape the actions advocated by the ILO.

My Government believes that the most direct way to achieve this is by integrating the objective of decent work for all into the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Summit in September is a unique opportunity. A globalization with objectives shared by all, makes for a globalization that is accepted by all. Enriching the Millennium Declaration in this way is therefore unavoidable.

The social dimension of globalization will benefit from national strategies, particularly as regards developed countries. Furthermore, national programme for promotion of decent work can bring added value to this enterprise, but the details for this must be developed further.

The Director-General, Mr. Somavia, has been continuing to make our Governments aware of this to ensure that there is consistency, both nationally and within international organizations. The agenda of all the international organizations should henceforth be governed by a concern for fair globalization.

In all the cases I have just mentioned, developing bipartite, and above all tripartite, dialogue in all countries is a necessity. Furthermore, bringing tripartism into the international organizations, in a certain way overriding, but also taking into account their respective mandates could be decisive.

My Government would therefore like to see the creation of a globalization forum, which should be a multi-party forum, the form of which remains to be decided, and not a gathering of thousands of people, but a body that could ensure permanent coordination at the highest level between the international organizations involved in globalization.

In the European Union, the promotion of decent work and the enhancement of the social dimension have been indissolubly embodied in the objectives and priorities of development assistance. The European Commission has been using trade policy to develop good practices for social policy and employment, through the general system of preferences and through a new system called General Preference Plus for those developing countries that have ratified the major Conventions of the ILO and the United Nations.

Finally, it is precisely the study of such good practices, and in particular transnational practices, that can ensure that work, particularly of the ILO, progresses. It is this path we must continue to tread.

Original Portuguese: Mr. FONSECA VIEIRA DA SILVA (Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, Portugal)

Once again we find ourselves here dealing with matters of great international importance.

Among these I wish to concentrate my attention upon the challenge of employment for the young. Whenever there are job creation problems in the labour market, there are groups of persons who are particularly vulnerable to that trend. The young, particularly those looking for their first job, are in most cases one of the most seriously affected

groups. Their lack of work experience, specific skills and sometimes basic training worsen the difficulties, particularly when there is a slow-down in the process of job creation. I would add to this that, frequently, the jobs which are offered to the young are among the least secure and least stable.

For all these reasons then, young people must become a priority target for job promotion policies. Not only because they are a group with specific difficulties, but also because these are persons at a stage of life where the effectiveness of actions to reinforce their employability can have the most leverage. Furthermore, they are at the beginning of their working lives and any action in favour of them can have long-term benefits, either by reducing the risks of later exclusion or by contributing to the sustainability of economic growth. These are three good reasons why active policies and their cost-benefit relationship have great potential, if the quality and selectivity of such policies is guaranteed. From my point of view, there are a number of international examples here we can call upon, there are two broad types of measure which can enhance the employability of the young, namely vocational training and incentives to place the young into the labour market.

In the first case, a training policy to enhance employability must guarantee entry into the labour market for young people with basic qualifications and skills which will not only make them immediately employable, but also give them the basis for better adaptability. There is an essential link here between the worlds of work and education and flexible systems of basic training. Furthermore, it is necessary for young people already in the labour market to continue to receive training, and be able to keep themselves up to date, and this is particularly true for the less-qualified members of the population. Finally, it is important that education, training and work tracks be module-based and interactive so that they can be matched to individual requirements, for example in the certification and validation of skills acquired at work, or in providing a facility to go back to school or back into vocational training.

On the employment side I think there are two major pathways. One is support for job creation, including self-employment, entrepreneurship and encouraging the hiring of young people. It is also important to provide for in-house work placements as part of a system of specific opportunities for entering the labour market. This is a strong initiative in my own country, aimed at achieving a closer relationship between education and the labour market.

However, for these policies to be successful, it is essential to consolidate a real partnership between employment policies, the educational system and the business world.

Efficient placement of young people is one of the principal guarantees we have to build solidarity between generations, and it is also the most powerful instrument we have to sustain proper levels of social protection. Consequently, it is essential to mobilize the social partner in this area. We must create an integral system of lifelong learning. This is an increasing challenge for all sectors of society, and it is certainly an essential part of a renewed social contract, a social contract for employment, development and social cohesion.

Original Spanish: Mr. CALDERA SÁNCHEZ-CAPITÁN (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Spain)

Yet again this year the ILO Conference is proposing that we think together about the situation in the world of work and more specifically on certain aspects such as forced labour, occupational safety and health and youth employment. This joint analysis of the labour-related aspects of a globalized world is an essential instrument to provide a social floor to the global economy.

This year, the analysis reveals some of the most negative facets of the world of work such as forced labour. If we are committed to the objective of decent work we must highlight the fact that there is still an excessive number of cases where the right to choose work freely is being violated. This does not only challenge the basic principle of labour but all of the value, the human right to freedom, which must permeate all facets of social life.

As the Director-General of the ILO has pointed out, in order to achieve a fair globalization and decent work, we must eradicate forced labour. In the light of this situation, we must reiterate the importance of ratifying ILO Conventions on the abolition of forced labour, which are a benchmark for the social dimension of globalization. We must also ensure the effective implementation of these Conventions because given the great diversity of social situations in a globalized world, forced labour can have many faces. Multinational enterprises, for example with headquarters in industrialized countries can operate in countries where compliance with ILO Conventions is not guaranteed. A healthy balance between economic and social aspects of the global economy can ensure that the activities of multinational enterprises do not only take advantage of these negative social conditions, but instead contribute to overcoming them.

Corporate social responsibility has become increasingly topical as has been shown, for example in my country. The Spanish Government is carrying out a series of activities to promote the development of best practices for corporate social responsibility. In the case of multinational enterprises, this social responsibility must include the adoption of good-practice codes for activities in countries other than where headquarters are located, and also in cases where the company outsources work to other enterprises. Through these codes, we will be able to ensure that labour conditions in branches or subcontractors will meet the standards concepts of decent work.

The best way of doing this is by using the ILO Conventions as a reference, starting with those concerning the abolition of forced labour. In industrialized countries, we find various forms of illegal work in particular in connection with the phenomenon of migration. Migrants in an irregular situation, are extremely vulnerable to working conditions where basic labour rights are not respected. This has negative social and economic repercussions as it creates unfair competition. In extreme cases, which unfortunately do exist, this can take the shape of genuine forced labour such as the trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Spanish Government, in agreement with employers and trade unions, is applying a new migration policy that considers economic migration as a phenomenon that is essentially linked to the labour market. This policy also takes account of the need

that, precisely because of this labour aspect migration policy must serve to prevent the emergence of black market economies. The black market economy attracts illegal migrant workers because it favours unfair competition, where work without labour guarantees becomes a competitive advantage in economic terms which causes social instability, undermines social cohesion and can lead to forced labour. Spain has issued work permits to some 700,000 migrant workers with the help of employers and trade unions. We think this is the way forward.

Before concluding, I would like to say that we attach great importance to the discussions on promoting youth employment by this Conference, not only because this is one of the primary objectives of Spain's employment policy, and because Spain, along with other European Union countries, has been one of the promoters of the European Youth Pact. With regard to this issue, the ILO can both develop its role as an international regulatory body and promote international cooperation. In this connection, Spain is initiating this year, in the framework of cooperation with the ILO, an ambitious project to promote youth employment in Latin America, which we hope will establish good practice not only for its results for the employment but also for creating new formulas of cooperation with the ILO providing the requisite international dimension.

As I started off by talking about globalization, I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of global action based on cooperation between countries, with international institutions such as the ILO as the driving force and mediator. Without any doubt, this Conference's work will help attain this objective. Therefore, you can count on the support of the Spanish Government, especially after our election as a regular member to the Governing Body.

Ms. CHAO (*Secretary of Labor, United States*)

The United States Department of Labor and Jordan's Ministry of Labour have worked together on many programmes and issues over the past year, and we look forward to continuing that strong relationship.

The topic of this session of the Conference is very timely. President George W. Bush has placed job creation and economic growth at the heart of his national economic agenda, and the United States believes that the best way to create jobs is indeed to encourage the conditions that foster growth, encourage innovation, and help workers invest in new job skills.

As a result of these and other policies, the United States has one of the highest growth rates of the industrialized nations, basically over 4 per cent in 2004. The national unemployment rate in America is about 5.1 per cent, which is lower than the average unemployment rate of the decades of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The American economy has created over 3.5 million new jobs since May 2003. America's workforce numbers about 148 million and one-third of the workforce changes jobs every year due to new opportunities. Our economy is very vibrant and very flexible and, as new jobs are created, President Bush recognizes that workforce investment is critical to maintaining a high standard of living for American workers and the fast pace of

technological change today requires workers to continually upgrade their skills.

So, the United States has launched, through the Department of Labor, a high-growth job-training initiative. This programme encourages and identifies the emerging growth sectors of our economy and helps workers get the training that they need to take advantage of opportunities in these high-growth sectors which will offer obviously good-paying jobs with high-growth potential.

Now, nowhere is the need for high-quality training more important than it is for young people, and the United States is encouraged to see that the ILO is discussing youth opportunities. We are eager to share information about our experience in youth employment, and we look forward to working with everyone around this plenary session.

Another challenge that we all face, of course, is forced labour, which is severe and worldwide in scope. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, as she emerges in her new responsibilities, is especially cognizant of this problem. No country is immune. It is indeed a sad fact that traffickers are luring unemployed or underemployed people to countries such as the United States; their victims arrive to find themselves confined against their will, and often they are forced to work in brutal and inhumane conditions.

Some must endure physical and sexual abuse and many others are exploited as bonded labourers.

The President, George W. Bush, has made the battle against trafficking of persons one of his highest priorities and the United States Government has developed and is deploying a wide array of resources to identify and prosecute traffickers and rescue and rehabilitate their victims.

And the United States has also put on notice to sex traffickers that we will not only prosecute them, but we will also prosecute American citizens who take advantage of their services by going abroad to commit crimes against children.

President Bush has underscored his commitment to fight trafficking with a pledge of \$50 million to support the work of anti-trafficking organizations worldwide and today the nations of the world face many challenges as the barriers of time and distance are conquered by technology.

So, it is only by working together to foster growth, opportunity and freedom that we can ensure that all of the workers in the world, especially those most at risk, have a chance to fulfil their full potential and build better lives for themselves and their families.

Original French: Mr. SPIDLA (Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Union)

I should also like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia for his Report, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*. The Report rightly emphasizes that, in a world in a state of upheaval, the value and dignity of work should be at the heart of our agenda more than ever.

Globalization is one of the causes of this. By dismantling frontiers and barriers to trade, it is creating new opportunities for progress and peace for humanity. It allows new global stakeholders to emerge, and if we can promote its social dimension, it can then contribute to the alleviation of poverty and to the promotion of employment.

It is this unparalleled integration which make it so important that the four actions described by the Director-General in his introduction be implemented.

Despite the efforts made by the ILO, and many others, much still remains to be done to strengthen the contribution of productive employment and decent work to global priorities and initiatives. This is all the more important in the run-up to the Nations Summit in September.

I should like to stress the promotion of decent work for all. In this century, the least developed countries will see an enormous increase in their working-age population, at a rate of more than 2 per cent per year. Providing decent jobs to all – men and women – is essential. Therefore, young people in particular need to be targeted. Through decent work in conditions of health and safety, and the extension of welfare protection to all, poverty can be alleviated effectively, communities will see greater stabilization, and democracy will make headway.

Europe, for its part, will see its workforce shrink in the next few decades. Many regions of the world will witness an ageing of their population. The Decent Work Agenda provides a timely response to this change. It recommends more investment in human capital, in the quality of work, in modern welfare systems and in equal opportunities for all. This goal is the focus of the partnership for growth and employment launched by the European Union in March.

The promotion of decent work is, therefore, an across-the-board response to the challenges facing the world. It also contributes to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly poverty alleviation, and to recognition that globalization is still unequal and not shared by all. This is why the goal of decent work for all should be taken into account to a greater extent in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, which will be discussed this autumn at the United Nations Summit.

The European Commission supports the proposal in the Director-General's Report with regard to preparing decent work country programmes. Such programmes will surely be a very good way of stimulating bipartite and tripartite social dialogue and involving other stakeholders in civil society. They should also allow, in accordance with national traditions and requirements, a more comprehensive and integrated approach to these questions, ensuring that decent work is the driving force behind sustainable development and not just a simple product of growth.

This approach should also dictate the agenda of the international organizations responsible for ensuring fairer globalization. This is why I feel that the launching of a globalization forum, which would provide the opportunity for discussions between multilateral institutions and all the stakeholders affected by the social dimension of globalization, is a proposal which is worthy of our attention.

Decent work should be something that we can offer to our young people throughout the world. The implementation of joined-up, integrated policies is the way to achieve this. Constant consultation between all the stakeholders affected by globalization should be encouraged and promoted. These are three principles that the Ministers of the European Union welcomed last March.

The European Commission and the Council of Ministers have included promotion of decent work

and the strengthening of the social dimension of globalization in the objectives and priorities of development cooperation.

The European Commission will, therefore, be actively pursuing its close cooperation with the ILO. It shares the analyses and proposals contained in the Report submitted by the Director-General to the Conference.

Original French: Mr. BOISSON (Employer, France)

I would, first of all, like to thank and congratulate the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body for the quality of their Reports, which are excellent material for discussion at this Conference.

Without going into detail on the activities to be carried out, I would like to refer to some issues that I think essential.

In the last few years, the ILO has made a lot of progress. We have gained new assets and new tools, and I would like to refer to the most important of these.

First of all, the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, of 1998: this is a crucial element, as it marks a political commitment for all the member States of our Organization. It was welcomed last year by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization as a valuable tool of governance for balanced economic and social development.

Follow-up is also of major importance, because this is what makes the Declaration effective. Together, the Declaration and its follow-up have played a key part in expanding the role and profile of our Organization.

The Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*, gives valuable information for providing relevant guidance for technical assistance.

I think that the Global Report should provide an opportunity, at each session of the Conference, to issue a meaningful and substantiated communication on the situation of workers in the light of the fundamental principles and rights at work. Perhaps the Global Report should be more precise and very objective, in order for its observations to be really well supported and verifiable. In other words, it should be an authoritative, somewhat "scientific" document. I think there is room for progress in this area, particularly with regard to the present Report on forced labour.

The second point I would like to make is the growing importance of technical cooperation and assistance with – and this has just been referred to by the Commissioner of the European Union – the establishment of enhanced decent work programmes at national level, which have correctly been described by the Director-General as an important and effective innovation.

A third point is that attention should be given to the integrated approach, as well as to the strategic renewal that has just been launched by the International Labour Standards Department and which should enhance the efficiency of our standard-setting system.

The General Survey on Hours of Work shows the absolute necessity of this.

The Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), which is of great symbolic value, was adopted almost unanimously in 1919, but only 51 countries have ratified it. More serious still, the Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Conven-

tion, 1930 (No. 30), referred to in the Global Report, was voted for by 78 countries but has been ratified by only 30. In other words, 61 per cent of the countries who voted for this Convention have not ratified it.

I think this is a very vivid example of the gap that exists between Convention provisions and the situation on the ground, and this seriously jeopardizes the efficiency and credibility of our institution. We feel that it is inconsistent to vote for Conventions here and then not to ratify them.

Concerning occupational safety and health, I am not sure that the choice of a Convention and a Recommendation really fits into the rationale of the integrated approach. However that may be, it would be a serious failure if the contents of the Convention adopted then found their expression in only a small number of ratifications.

Finally, a number of positive developments include: the work of the Subcommittee on Multinational Enterprises; the Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy; the thinking that has been actively pursued, and which was the subject of a symposium last week, on corporate social responsibility; and the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which has succeeded in pulling the debate out of the ideological, sterile confrontation in which it had got stuck. This, then, is the progress that has been made, and which, as the Director-General has said, should be consolidated.

For the future, I would like to insist on one point – but I think it is an essential one. In his Introduction: *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, the Director-General says that the four strategic objectives – fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue – are, and I quote, “an integrated concept of the principles and policies [that are] ... a contemporary expression of the ILO’s enduring values and mission”.

I think we can only agree with those words, and I think the analysis given is most appropriate. I think the time has come to harmonize our strategic objectives and to bring them into an interdependent and concerted synergy. It is clear that not one of them on its own can make progress separately from the others.

That means that – in a way yet to be determined and requiring urgent consideration – we have to rework our doctrine and update it, not as a theoretical and intellectual exercise but with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the ILO in order to enable it to provide its Members with invaluable assistance to cope better with the risks and challenges of globalization and to make the best of the opportunities that it offers.

In other words, it is a matter of helping each country that so desires to design and carry out social policies in the light of its own economic, social and cultural policy, and by building in our common values, which, I believe, are at the very heart of the mission of our Organization.

Original Spanish: Mr. GALLARDO FLORES (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Guatemala)

The Government of Guatemala is again pleased to be able to participate in this session of the International Labour Conference, since we are convinced that our International Labour Organization is supplying indispensable cooperation and assistance in order to meet the challenge of improving the appli-

cation of the international labour standards and national labour legislation.

The application of our own labour legislation, principally that which applies to fundamental rights at work, constitutes the principal objective of the Government of Guatemala. Today, we can say that we have matured as a country. We have understood that respect for human dignity in the workplace and the establishment of fair labour conditions are the fundamental prerequisites for social harmony, productivity and above all the overcoming of existing social inequality.

Guatemala must no longer be seen as a country which is constantly grappling with serious labour problems. We would like to be seen for what we really are – a people permanently battling to overcome the political, social and economic obstacles impeding our own development. That is why we so much need the support of the ILO and the trust of other member States, since confirmation that we are now fulfilling our commitments is the best proof that our conviction that we are doing so is correct.

Just as there are new opportunities for our countries, there are also new problems. It is therefore opportune that the Director-General has directed our thoughts and attention to the existence of contemporary forms of forced labour which, and this is a fact, is to be found chiefly, in countries like ours, where children are threatened with various shameful forms of exploitation. For this reason, Guatemala invites all Members, all delegations meeting in this session of the Conference, to force strong bonds and solidarity enabling us to give effect to the recommendations contained in the Global Report on forced labour.

It is also necessary to highlight how perspicacious it was of the Director-General of the ILO to draw attention, in his Report, to the need to work on at least four strategic sets of actions to make decent work a global goal.

It is certainly vital to consolidate tripartism and to make social dialogue an effective instrument for development. This can be done only if we strengthen our own capacity, by developing that of our workers’ and employers’ organizations, and if we professionalize government itself.

Decent work should be an integral part of our economic and social policies. This is the only way in which we can achieve effective development and place nations on an equal footing.

Guatemala, together with our neighbouring countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic, has made a historic step forward. All our governments have reaffirmed their commitment to abide by their labour laws. Furthermore, we have devised plans designed to deal with the most serious labour problems in the region. The world can assess our firm will and our vision of the future from the contents of a document entitled “Building progress – enhancing our capabilities”, which was recently presented by the working group of deputy ministers of trade and labour of the countries in the region.

However, the challenges and the obstacles still remain. Hence for Guatemala, international cooperation is vital, particularly the technical support which we received from the ILO. We understand the budgetary situation of our Organization and we pay tribute to the efforts of the Director-General to establish an intelligent budgetary strategy. We consider that the best form of support we can give to these efforts is to make sure that Guatemala will

improve, that Guatemala will be a country which is different, where its history of non-compliance will be a chapter of distant history which will only serve as a reminder to rising generations of the turning point when we began a new life for our people.

Original Hungarian: Mr. CSIZMÁR (Minister of Employment and Labour, Hungary)

According to the *Conference guide* issued for the 93rd Session, the Plenary discusses the Report of the Director-General. Traditionally, this Report reviews the activities of the ILO in the preceding year, or revolves around a professional issue. The document that lies before us, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, is more of a document designed to spark debate – as indicated by one of its subheadings, “A time for reflection”.

I wonder what could have prompted the Director-General to break with the traditions of the last years and decide not to submit a bulky thematic report? The Director-General answered the question himself by saying that “the period ahead is likely to be critical to the shaping of the ILO’s role and of the multilateral system for the decade to come”, and by asking the constituents to provide support.

According to the Director-General, the ILO possesses all the means and programmes necessary and viable in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century for the fulfilment of its mandates. I agree with this assessment completely. In my view, the introduction of the strategic policy framework, and that of the results-based management has transformed the Office into an efficient institution, and the Organization, due to the Decent Work Agenda and, its efforts in promoting fair globalization, does have a long-term strategy in place.

The ILO is capable of addressing and promoting the most important demand of people, which the Director-General expressed as “give me a fair chance and a decent job”.

Taking all this into account, my Government supports the adoption of the Programme and Budget proposals for the years 2006-07. Now I would like to ask my colleagues and the social partners to support the Decent Work Agenda in the framework of cooperation with the various international organizations in formulating and implementing coordinated policies.

Recent regional meetings, including the seventh European Regional Meeting that took place in Budapest in February of this year, all confirm the fact that such an international joining of forces is possible. In Budapest it became evident that even a conference of this magnitude, by applying appropriate techniques and being very thorough during the preparatory phase can be interesting, interactive and meaningful.

Hungary has always been committed to the efforts of the ILO, which I can mostly explain by the fact that the ILO has always focused on values. As described in the Decent Work Agenda “work is a defining feature of human existence ... it is crucial for the welfare of families and to the stability of societies”.

We are building a society that is based on work and the security of families. We would like to live in a country where it is possible to work and where working is worthwhile; where everyone who is able and wants to work can find work; where work commands respect because it provides an honest living and security for families. With a view to real-

izing these objectives, we adopted a plan for future measures, a total of 17 points, which favour and support an active approach to job search instead of providing passive unemployment benefit, promote compliance with the law, favour legal employment and penalize unregistered, illegal employment.

I honestly hope that these measures will further improve the labour market position of Hungary, which is already favourable, even by international comparison.

The Hungarian delegation will do everything in its power to ensure that the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference is successful in its efforts.

(Mr. Finlay takes the Chair.)

Ms. STO. TOMAS (Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippines)

The Director-General provides us with a stimulating synthesis of the ILO’s response to changes in the world of work. It is true that dramatic developments in technology have created a virtual global village. But the same developments that connect us with vivid immediacy also highlight the stark contrasts existing in the world’s human condition.

We all need decent work. Whether we are in America or in Afghanistan, we need to survive with dignity. This is why we continue to do battle with forced labour, youth unemployment and working conditions that do not promote occupational safety and health.

On land or at sea, fair standards constitute our first line of defence. We are proud of the Organization we belong to. “The International Labour Organization” vigorously addresses these concerns.

In the Philippines, we try to do our share. On 17 May 2005, we ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), rounding up our ratification of the eight ILO core Conventions and bringing our national ratification record to 32. Tripartism is an accepted way of life in my country. We actively promote decent work. Youth unemployment is the subject of interventions that target students, out-of-school youth and young people in conflict situations. We have a dedicated institution for occupational safety and health. But clearly, our efforts are never enough. Like the rest of the world, like the ILO, we are caught up in a quiet crisis. Our resources do not match the demand for our services. Put simply, our budget does not cover all the things we need to do.

We mirror the quiet crisis of the International Labour Organization. Doing more with less is often at times easier said than done. At the same time, we realize that individual countries would have difficulty increasing their contributions or their level of funding assistance given increasing in-country demands. This is the reason why nationally, as well as in the ILO, we need to accelerate fiscal and organizational reforms.

We understand that 80 per cent of the ILO budget goes into personnel services and only 20 per cent for actual programme interventions. The budgetary distribution is also similarly biased in favour of Geneva as against field operations. While this distribution may not be intended, it remains that our priorities are most clearly indicated by where our resources go. After all, we are supposed to put our money where our mouth is. We recognize that historical determination is sometimes what makes for

resource allocation but we can no longer allow history to dictate our future. We must act now and allow me therefore to make a few suggestions.

Let us redress the imbalance in budgetary allocation in favour of the field. To do this, we must target the budgetary shift so that in the next three years, the field and the central office may be equally provisioned.

A devolution of decision-making initially to the regions would certainly accelerate programme implementation and decrease time and money that may be dissipated on layers of programme or project review. At the same time, accountability for results must accompany the devolved authority.

Those among us who rely on ILO technical assistance to sort out national labour issues would certainly welcome access to the ILO's pool of the best and the brightest. This must be signalled by pay differentials in favour of field assignments for ILO specialists, and at the same time, field experience must also factor into upward mobility or, if you will, promotions.

I realize that the search is on for more interactive discussions of the issues that plague the world of work. We are confident that under your leadership in this 93rd Session of the Conference and with the inspired stewardship of the Director-General, the quiet crisis that we all face may reach an early resolution.

Original Spanish: Mr. JIMÉNEZ AGUILAR (Employer, Spain)

The Report of the Director-General refers to the rapid changes occurring in the world of work and the challenges they pose for governments and the social partners. Aware of this, the employers' organizations of Spain have given a new impetus to our social dialogue process by signing, last year, with the Government and the trade union organizations, a declaration on competitiveness, stable employment and social cohesion dealing with issues affecting our economy and our labour market.

As the Minister of Labour has said, we have carried out a process of regularization of migrant workers in the last few months, in close cooperation with the Government and the social partners. In addition, for the fourth year running, the employers' organizations and trade unions in Spain have concluded a framework agreement for the negotiation of collective agreements. Therefore, we can come to the Conference with the satisfaction of having taken important steps to improve the economic and social environment in Spain.

However, as is happening in other countries, a decline in the competitiveness of our economy means that we must act decisively to improve our productivity. Only then will we be able to sustain the pace of job creation which has enabled us to reduce our unemployment rate substantially.

In a more open and more competitive environment, there is no point in hiding behind protectionist measures that marginalize and deny access to new entrants. In this context, production relocation is a phenomenon that cannot be addressed through regulatory barriers alone. The improvement of productivity calls for efforts to find new balances between flexibility and security and a better match between skills and the demands of the market.

The ILO help ensure that these challenges that are met constructively, without invoking ideological arguments that are out of step with reality.

The ILO must concentrate its functions, in the spirit of the 1998 Declaration on the fundamental principles and rights that no state can afford to ignore, and whose application is a measure of a country's development. In this twenty-first century we cannot tolerate qualities such as forced labour and abusive child labour.

At the same time, however, this Organization must overcome the forces of inertia that hamper effective action to secure sound and stable economic development in various parts of the world. We must abandon the knee-jerk reaction of ineffective new regulation and focus our action on the key aspects conducive to progress and economic and social prosperity.

We support the idea of an ILO that is open to other United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions, as part of a strengthened multilateral system. Convergence between the organizations of the United Nations in the development of common objectives should serve to ensure that the ILO discards obsolete working methods that often lead to wastage of resources.

We are also very interested in the Director-General's reference to the need to promote entrepreneurship to increase employment, and especially youth employment. We agree with this objective as a means to promote economic and social development.

As a token of our commitment in this respect, recently we have carried out a joint effort, with the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Spain and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, to involve a group of Spanish enterprises in an ambitious project aimed at developing youth employment in Latin America.

Lastly, the Report refers to country programmes to enhance social dialogue and strengthen the social partners. I would like to conclude by expressing our readiness to cooperate with this Organization on the basis of our experience, backed by over two decades of social dialogue that has had a very real impact on our industrial relations climate and economic and social stability in Spain.

A responsible attitude on the part of the social partners is crucial for the development of an enabling environment for economic growth and social progress.

Original French: Mr. BARBU (Minister of Labour, Social Solidarity and the Family, Romania)

First of all, allow me to congratulate the Director-General for his introductory Report presented to the Conference – a Report which gives us an idea of the progress made in implementing the ILO's programmes in the context of the evolution, modernization and reaffirmation of the Organization's ideals and which identifies those areas requiring further work.

The Report underlines the need to make decent work a global objective based on the four strategic objectives of the ILO, through measures at the global and regional levels, but also at the local and national levels. I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Romanian Government to the Organization's goal of decent work. Work is an essential component of sustainable development. Working conditions, job security and behaviour-based health and safety influence and reflect wider social development.

In the light of this, the Romanian Government has a policy of supporting the development of human capital. The main challenge for us during the 2005-08 period is to consolidate our socio-economic system. This process will entail a virtual second wave of modernization for Romania. In this respect, consideration is being given to tax reforms and a progressive reduction in the share of taxes allocated to social security from 2006 onwards affecting both employers and employees. By 2008, that share will be 39.5 per cent compared to the current share of 49.5 per cent. A flexible labour market and the existence of freedom to negotiate terms of contracts between the two sides of industry are the declared goal of the Romanian Government.

The measures in the pipeline are designed to regulate relations between employers and employees so as to enhance economic efficiency of enterprises and labour productivity, while also protecting workers. At the moment a revision of the Labour Code is one of the priorities for Romania and is the focus of a debate between the social partners and their dialogue with the Government.

I would like to thank the ILO in Geneva and the Budapest Regional Office for having once again provided technical assistance in the revision of our Labour Code, which has been very useful in our own discussions. Technical assistance has been constantly provided by the ILO over the years, enabling Romania to radically rewrite its labour laws, and has been most useful in ensuring consistency in the debates on the laws and measures adopted.

Another priority for us is to increase the number of young people in work. The Government is seeking to help the younger generation by making considerable efforts to harmonize its programmes in favour of young people, through public policies with a social and educative impact for young people, so as to enable the young to adapt better to a society in constant upheaval and to achieve a better balance between the generations.

By providing extra incentives for employers, matching training to the requirements of the world of work, and encouraging young people in rural areas to be part of economic life, the Government is promoting greater autonomy for young people and helping them to find work. All these measures will be accompanied by active and selective social protection measures drawing on those who can contribute to prosperity: the market itself, the family, civil society, local authorities and the State.

Romania will be taking steps to increase the role of the market, the private sector and private funding to stimulate employment and innovation and to improve funding for social security, education and health. The goal of eradicating poverty and social marginalization, will be achieved through jobs and education, through active measures to reduce unemployment, and through social programmes.

I would like to underline, as a representative of the Romanian Government, the importance we attach to social dialogue and the social partners, and we count on their support to achieve our goals.

Mr. ROSSO (*Under-Secretary of State for Labour, Italy*)

I wish to reiterate the full support of the Italian Government to the ILO activities in the promotion of respect for fundamental rights.

I would also like to thank the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, for the Reports and the wealth of information and reflections he has provided us with

and, in particular, for the comprehensive Report on forced labour.

As regards this subject, Italy shares the proposal and the strategies for examination and indeed condemns any form of forced labour.

Italy supports in full the ILO programme for decent work that has a primary goal of promoting equal opportunities for men and women to obtain decent work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Social dialogue and the tripartite arrangement are democratic tools for coping with problems of a social nature and for attaining the participative consent required to allow the progress of a country's society and economy in a number of extremely critical situations, such as those connected with the challenges of regional integration, economic transition and globalization.

The Italian Government attaches the greatest relevance to the promulgation of their reflections on the Report dealing with the social dimension of globalization that, inter alia, attained the major goal of identifying the fundamental steps in sustainable social and economic growth, with a quantitative and qualitative improvement of employment and greater social cohesion.

The globalization phenomenon entails the governance of a plurality of factors resulting from interweaving of the social dimension with the economic, political and technological dimensions.

For these reasons, particularly with respect to labour policies, we appreciate those points in the Report that are convergent with the guidelines of the Lisbon (European Council) European Employment Strategy. That, as far as Italy is concerned, translate into points of contact with the basic principles of the law reforming the liberal market, such as: the realization of a transparent and dynamic labour market, which may succeed in extending employment opportunities and ensuring to all, equality of access to a stable and decent job, with special attention to the implementation of a strategy designed to counter the factors of structural weakness of the economy, youth unemployment, long-term unemployment and the scarcity of women and older citizens in the labour market; the struggle against social exclusion, having recourse to proactive policies, focusing and based on the actual social condition of the population and of the different social groups; an efficient system of employment services and the introduction of forms of flexibility that are the other fruits of social dialogue, so as to balance the need of enterprises to be competitive on international markets with the primary needs of protection and enhancement of employment; the pursuit of effective and modern labour policies, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas of developing countries, which are in favour of those categories of persons running a greater risk of social exclusion.

The Italian Government fully shares the goals of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations and the proposals of the ILO on the need to develop and implement strategies designed to offer the real possibility of finding a job that is dignified and productive for youth all over the world. Within this context, Italy is aware that it has one of the most complex labour markets in Europe.

This is why it has started on the road to change by implementing, inter alia, those reforms needed to enhance the connections between education, training and work as a cross-strategy, taking into ac-

count the issue of the school/work alternative as a cultural concept of vocational training that originates not only from contingent elements, but also from changes in productivity levels.

To start from the reciprocity of the processes of “thinking” and “doing” – seen as complementary rather than separate processes, one pertaining to school and the other to work – represents a real innovation for Italy. For all too long, culture and the world of work have been placed in opposition instead of being seen as different but equally fundamental processes.

To improve working conditions, another fundamental aspect is workers’ health and safety.

Italy believes in the implementation of the strategies that have been identified by the ILO to address this issue, with a view to pursuing physical, moral and social well-being at work, in synergy with the measures addressing employment and public health and the policies pursuing protection-related aims based on preventive measures. Therefore, policies must promote this aim and measure its achievement not only by the absence of accidents or occupational diseases, but also by a series of complementary measures designed to: cut down accidents and occupational diseases; prevent social risks (stress, harassment at work, depression, anxiety and addictions); take greater account of the effects of demographic changes in terms of risks, occupational accidents and diseases (for example, elderly workers and protection of youth at work); and pay greater attention to evolution in types of occupation and the organization of work.

Moreover, a culture of prevention needs to be strengthened, taking greater account of workers’ education and training (for example, awareness raising in school, teaching in occupational clusters and within the context of lifelong vocational training) and raising the awareness of employers about the value inherent in the realization of a safe work environment.

Italy unswervingly supports and participates in the effort being made by the United Nations, the ILO and all the international organizations to achieve development throughout the world of a market economy that respects the dignity of each working human being and that contributes in an ideal manner to the respect of the rules that ensure a harmonious and balanced development.

Mr. SINGH (*Worker, Fiji*)

As the Worker representative in our delegation, it is my honour and pleasant duty to bring greetings and salutations on behalf of the workers of the independent Republic of the Fiji Islands. The workers of Fiji are grateful that their interests and concerns can be aired at this august world forum.

The established organizations are affiliated to the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC), which has been the voice of the workers in Fiji for the past six decades. Our national umbrella organization recently observed a milestone of service with the theme “Celebrating six decades of struggles in protecting and enhancing the workers’ and trade union rights in Fiji”. The FTUC is committed to improve trade union organizing and capacity building so that the most vulnerable workers, such as those in semi-formal sectors of employment, and the most vulnerable forms of employment have voice and representation. It shall continue to enhance its capacity to interpret shifts and changes in economic policies

and the commercial environment and draw out and respond to their negative consequences upon workers, including human rights issues together with the promotion of good governance. The workers in public enterprises undergoing restructuring will be vigorously supported so that they are able to maintain voice and representation during and after the restructuring.

In the brief time available, I shall attempt to present a few major topics of importance to us. While the workers in Fiji remain alert to safeguarding their rights and privileges, in particular the benefits offered via the core ILO Conventions, as ratified by the State of Fiji, we have also pursued other means and methods to achieve our objectives. Recently, as past ILO sessions may have heard, we have been involved in a tripartite discussion to contribute and formulate the new Employment Relations Bill (ERB) in Fiji.

The industrial relations framework in Fiji laws was mostly devised in the colonial days, but is now increasingly affected by the core ILO Conventions. Fiji’s labour laws contain several pieces of legislation on industrial relations which have found not to be conducive by social partners.

Fiji has ratified 25 ILO Conventions, including the eight core Conventions that are close to the heart of the trade union movement. Therefore, approximately eight years ago the first revision of these laws was commenced, and it finally culminated in a draft Employment Relations Bill (ERB).

The Fiji Trades Union Congress hopes that the Government of the day will make it possible for the Employment Relations Bill to be passed by Parliament and to be brought into law so that industrial relations in Fiji are conducted on the basis of the new industrial relations legislation. The three social partners have discussed this Bill jointly for more than nine years, and a lot of work has been put into this Bill. Now it is the Government’s political will that should facilitate its passage through Parliament.

However, the latest update is that the Cabinet in its last two meetings was unable to make decisions on the Bill. The trade union movement is very wary of the current state of matters, with the Cabinet appearing to be indecisive on its position on the Bill. The FTUC wishes to put on record that, if the current Employment Relations Bill languishes in its present state, then the Congress will have no choice but to raise this matter internationally along with the current deficit in legislation with the Committee on Freedom of Association, particularly with regard to core Conventions, that is the right to strike, state interference in trade union administration, and restrictions placed on local and international solidarity. The subject of the right to strike has been discussed and argued globally for decades. The scenario in which trade unions now operate has changed in comparison to the environment which existed 60 years ago when the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other core Conventions of ILO were first promulgated, and upon which the trade union movement relies to a great extent.

As the followers of events in our corner of the Pacific would know, our nation has gone through a few constitutional crises in the past two decades. However, we have a national Constitution that has been described by constitutional experts as among the best in the world. Yet, the Government is lacking in its commitment to make the best use of its

provisions in order to advance the country further, either constitutionally, economically or socially.

The question of law and order has been a great cause for concern. This month, the Government has introduced a Reconciliation and Unity Bill in Parliament, but its underlying aim is to grant pardon to those who have been imprisoned by the judiciary and were involved in the removal of the democratically elected Government in May 2000. The Bill interferes with the powers of the judiciary and its enactment will create a dangerous precedent. It certainly would be a definite recipe for the continuation of future civil unrest in the country.

The Bill, in its present form, is in breach of the Fiji Constitution's Bill of Rights, good governance and the Cotonou Agreement. The negative impact of the Bill will also affect foreign direct investment in the country, thus worsening the economic downturn and exacerbating the relative and absolute poverty rampant in various sections of society.

The promotion of reconciliation and unity among the diverse communities in Fiji is a great idea, but interference with the judiciary and the breach of constitutional provisions are absolutely repulsive, to say the least.

Another long outstanding national issue has been the rationalization of the land tenure system; the recent lack of progress has greatly affected the sugar industry. Such matters affect the working population of the country. Another negative result of these major national or social problems is the continuing loss via migration of the skilled workforce to other developing countries in the region.

In conclusion, we look forward to the opportunity to discuss other matters, not included herein, as part of the agenda of the 93rd Session of the Conference, if the occasion presents itself.

I wish to thank the President and the ILO officials for their kind cooperation with our delegation to make our visit here pleasant and successful. I record our appreciation of the other delegates for their presentations and the occasion to meet with them in an atmosphere of camaraderie. May the rest of this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference be concluded efficiently and successfully.

Mr. TATEISI (*Employer, Japan*)

This year's Report by the Director-General raises the question of how the constituents see the future role and activities of the ILO amid the momentous changes in the world labour climate. In these circumstances I would like to voice my support for the repositioning of decent work as a global goal and a pillar of ILO projects and expenditures into the future. I see this as the right orientation.

I believe that the meaning of decent work varies quite a lot from country to country, as a reflection of factors such as culture, outlook on labour and stage of economic development. For example, in those countries still struggling with poverty, it may mean jobs with a guaranteed minimum wage for extrication from destitution. In developed countries, on the other hand, it may mean work that not only offers a secure income, but also opportunities to satisfy the desire for self-expression. As such, decent work is a relative concept, and will presumably continue to evolve as people strive for a more decent situation.

On the question of what decent work means in today's Japan, I would like to say a few words about problems related to employment of youth, which is

growing into a very major issue. Among the young, the unemployment rate, which is 9.5 per cent, is about twice as high as the average for all age groups. The problem is being made more serious by the sharp increase in the ranks of youth who have negligible ties with society. They include the so-called "freeters" – who go from one part-time job to another and never take regular full-time employment – and "NEETs" an acronym for "not in education, employment or training". Besides being a problem for the individual, who finds it hard to make the blueprint for his or her future, I see this situation as a major problem for the country; this is because the increase in unskilled labour is liable to reduce the competitive strength of its industry.

In addition to the lack of job openings for them, despair of finding work they really desire, and aversion to the idea of taking a drab but steady job are cited by the young themselves as reasons for remaining "freeters" and "NEETs." In other words, our youth have lost hope of finding fulfilling employment. Hope is said to spring forth only when there are prospects that one's efforts will be rewarded. In Japan's case, this suggests that, to resolve the employment problem among youth, we will have to create and provide jobs that will give them the hope of reward for their efforts. The Japanese Government, too, is taking action. The concerned ministries and agencies are making a concerted approach to a plan to assist youthful efforts to lead self-supporting lives. This plan poses the tasks of creating new jobs, improving the labour market, developing capabilities and cultivating career-oriented outlooks.

Another key point in consideration of decent work in Japan is to prepare an assortment of options. The economic climate is changing with the trends of globalization and the expansion of the service sector. Individual values and priorities are changing too. Companies have to diversify their styles of employment in step with this diversification among their employees and figure out how to link the dynamism of their varied pool of human resources to corporate activities. At the same time, they must prepare staffing schemes and environments enabling the various employees to each exercise their own particular talents. Attainment of the goal of decent work in this sense as well is becoming a high priority.

As I mentioned a little earlier, decent work is a relative concept. In pursuit of it as a goal, I understand that each country or territory is to determine specific priority issues and set about resolving them one at a time. Tripartism has an important role in this quest for decent work in each country, in the sense of getting the concerned parties involved in the setting of targets.

Tripartism functions best when the three parties are each autonomous and linked by ties of mutual trust. The establishment of equal partnership and mutual trust between labour and management is going to be especially important as a prerequisite. To help tripartism function fully in each country, the ILO must continue to actively provide technical assistance for capacity building of employers' labour and management organizations.

I expect a lot of the ILO's activities for the achievement of decent work, and Japan's employers are willing to make a positive contribution to it.

The Report of the Director-General this year entitled, *A global alliance against forced labour*, is focusing on a crucial, fundamental and principle right at work. I wish to express my Government's support for a global alliance against forced labour.

My Government's commitment to the respect of fundamental workers' rights has been demonstrated by the ratification of all the eight core labour standards. The Government also attaches great importance to their implementation; the fundamental principles of these Conventions are all embodied in our 1995 national Constitution.

As revealed in the Global Report, much of the contemporary forced labour occurs in the informal sector. Therefore, we must focus in that area, which is underserved, unorganized and inadequately supervised. This calls for capacity building.

We all have a duty to end forced labour, particularly the social partners. Therefore, building capacity of all the social partners to enable them to reach out to all workers, including those in the informal sector, is critical.

Allow me to comment on a few items on the agenda for this Conference. Youth employment is at the centre of my Government's policy action. Young persons make up 56 per cent of our national labour force. While our national unemployment rate is 3.2 per cent, youth unemployment is double that at 6.2 per cent. Young people bear the full brunt of unemployment and underemployment. To redress this imbalance we need to develop effective policies for enhancing youth employment with a focus on investment in education and training. The key elements include promoting vocational training and ensuring that the curricula meet labour market requirements.

For our young people to come out of poverty, they must be economically active. They must be mobilized, trained and deployed to work. Options must be available to them as individuals to enable them to face these social, economic challenges. Therefore, we must create employment opportunities and help them – women and men – to secure productive and remunerative work in conditions of freedom, security and human dignity.

Initiatives undertaken by my Government include universal primary education, the youth entrepreneur scheme and innovative credit schemes for small income-generating projects. We have an elected national youth council which focuses specifically on issues relevant to young persons, including employment. Five members of Parliament represent youth interests in the National Assembly.

While the problem of unemployment and poverty is global, it hits Africa harder because we have other problems such as HIV/AIDS and displaced persons as a result of civil strife. This means our continent particularly vulnerable to forced labour and trafficking. In recognition of our problem, a Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union was held in September last year and as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Summit, a Council of Ministers was held in April this year. There is a need to enhance the implementation of the recommendations adopted.

Reversing the problem of poverty and employment also requires greater economic collaboration and regional networking. One crucial aspect in mar-

ket access. Developing countries do not have a fair share of the global market and the ILO must address this issue with the input to the WTO. Processing our raw materials to produce export goods would add value and create more jobs in Africa.

I wish to express my delegation's support for the development of a new instrument establishing a normative framework in the area of occupational safety and health. We support the adoption of a new convention, supplemented by a recommendation, on work in the fishing sector. However, I wish to point out that most of the fishing on our rivers and lakes fall under the informal sector. It is done on a small scale, mainly by self-employed fishermen.

I would like to reassure you of the Ugandan Government's commitment to the global fight against forced labour, poverty and unemployment. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution made by the ILO and other donor communities towards my country's development efforts.

Finally, I trust that our deliberations will consolidate national and international action needed to confront the global problems facing our world of work today.

Original French: Mr. N'KOLO BALAMAGE (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

I would like to congratulate the Director-General for his excellent Report and for the activities carried out by the ILO during 2003-04.

I would like to join previous speakers to give my view on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to the questions on the agenda for this session. With regard to the consideration of the draft Programme and Budget for 2006-07, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the efforts made by the ILO to allocate significant funds to regional offices because, in my view, it is at this level that member countries have the greatest need of resources to carry out the various programmes initiated with ILO support.

With regard to the transmittal of reports on the application of international labour standards, my country explains its delay by the armed conflict which did not allow for free movement of persons throughout the country. Now that the war is over, my country undertakes to respect the provisions of articles 19 and 22 of the ILO Constitution.

With regard to working conditions in the fishing sector, and to occupational safety and health, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo supports the preparation of Conventions and Recommendations so that these issues might be clearly defined.

With regard to the protection of children and the future of young people, the Congolese Government has ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). This provision has been incorporated into the national labour law.

In the interests of better care of the 3,000 child soldiers that have been demobilized, the Government, with the support of the ILO and donors, has established a structure called the National Bureau for Demobilization and Reintegration (CONADER). Demobilized children now have the opportunity to follow vocational training which is provided by the National Institute for Vocational Training.

Moreover, steps are being taken for the RDC to join the Youth Employment Network (YEN) in or-

der to strengthen the capacities for promoting youth employment for young people.

It also should be said that, in order to promote social dialogue, the Government has concluded, at Mbudi, which is 30 kilometres from Kinshasa, an agreement with all the trade unions in the public and private sectors. Under the terms of that agreement, a social truce will be observed during the transition period.

To set the tone for the forthcoming political elections, the Ministry of Labour and Social Planning, in agreement with employers' and workers' delegates, has been organizing since last March trade union elections, which will come to an end in July.

In the same vein, with the technical and financial support of the ILO, a special session of the National Labour Council, designed to finalize the adoption of the rules and regulations of the new Labour Code will be held during the second half of July this year.

As a post-conflict country confronted with a severe unemployment problem, the RDC has begun work with the support of the ILO, on a framework programme for job and income creation. The purpose of this programme is to resolve the problems of unemployment and rampant poverty. This framework programme is based on the optimum use of local materials, using appropriate local production techniques, community participation and the implementation of labour-intensive techniques, rather than techniques that rely more on equipment. The programme will benefit the entire active population in rural and urban areas. The private sector will be strengthened in the framework of the rehabilitation of microcredit institutions and the promotion of micro, small and medium-sized businesses. Public services will also be targeted through the enhancement of the role of the State. The framework programme for job and income creation represents a translation into action of the Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in an Extraordinary Summit on 8 and 9 September 2004 in Ouagadougou.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to reiterate its thanks to the ILO for the technical support that it has given in the elaboration of the job and income creation programme and asks for its support for the organization of a round table of donors in order to gain more contributions towards the implementation of that programme's strategies.

To conclude, the Democratic Republic of the Congo notes with bitterness that in the twentieth century our planet was shaken by various tensions, unfair terms of trade, armed conflict and international terrorism, wiping out efforts towards the development, peace and social justice that mankind has a right to expect.

This is why, in this new millennium, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to call for international solidarity so that the rule of might among nations gives way to the rule of law and decent work.

Mr. PEET (*Minister of Labour and Immigration, Bahamas*)

The world of work as we know it is constantly changing. The Bahamas, like other member States, is confronted with the challenge of creating job opportunities for Bahamians, as well as those who live and reside in the Bahamas. We are cognizant of the

effects of globalization on developing countries and the dynamics of labour market trends and the ever evolving role played by our tripartite partners in our national development. These challenges have served to motivate the Government of the Bahamas.

The consolidated effort to move forward under the theme "Making decent work a global goal" is in keeping with the mandate of the Bahamian Government. We not only pledge our support and commitment to implement the conclusions of the Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences, which advanced employment and labour issues via social development and gender equality, but we also do so to the central truths of the Millennium Declaration from which the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work were derived.

Within this context, I am pleased to report to this august body that as a result of numerous investment opportunities in the Bahamas at this time a myriad of employment opportunities now exists for men, women and the youth of our nation. Investments like the US\$1.2 billion Baha Mar Cable Beach Touristic Redevelopment Project is expected to generate 4,500 full-time decent jobs in its construction stage and 9,000 decent jobs upon completion over a three-year period. The US\$250 million project by the Chub Cay Associates in the Berry Islands, Bahamas, has already hired 100 workers. The Kerzner International Phase III Project, which currently employs 200 Bahamians, is expected to increase to 1,800 this month and to 2,500 next year.

The Government of the Bahamas has processed and approved US\$4 billion worth of investments over the last three years under the Christie Administration. Hence the need for skilled artisans is ever increasing.

To this end, ongoing training and retraining of workers is of the highest priority for our Government and this is reflected in all Heads of Agreement signed by investors, which require funds to be set aside for training of Bahamians.

Accordingly, Kerzner International, a multibillion US dollar development, has sponsored an apprenticeship programme for Bahamian workers of Phase III of their project, and the Baha Mar Cable Beach Redevelopment Project has allocated US\$12 million for the ongoing training of Bahamians. In addition, the Government, through its Ministry of Education, the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, the College of the Bahamas, the Department of Labour and the Bahamas Hotel Association has formed a joint taskforce to establish a technical and vocational training programme to address the demand for skilled Bahamian workers and to recommend a comprehensive plan to prepare the Bahamian workforce further for additional job opportunities.

While unemployment figures are steadily increasing throughout the world, it affords me great pleasure to say, as Minister of Labour, that in the Bahamas unemployment is down and is one of the lowest in the region.

The Government of the Bahamas realizes the significant role that our social partners, as well as civil society, play in promoting and sustaining a safe, healthy and productive work environment in our democratic society. To this end, this consensus-based approach to industrial relations has resulted in the successful negotiation and the historic execution of 35 industrial agreements over the last three years. Such a concerted effort and genuine willingness speaks volumes about the stability of our economy.

It is our collective resolve to continue to promote decent work through the implementation and execution of improved working conditions and poverty-reducing strategies.

In keeping with the ILO criteria for the selection of the umbrella group to represent workers in the Bahamas, a determination was made by the Cabinet, which recognizes the National Congress of Trade Unions (NCTU) with a membership of 18,000 workers, as the official representative of workers in the Bahamas. Working together, in the true spirit of tripartism, I believe we can accomplish much more for workers.

We are thankful to our colleagues in the Caribbean, the CARICOM region, for affording the Bahamas the opportunity to represent our collective interests on the ILO Governing Body for the past three years. The experience has been most fulfilling and rewarding and has assisted in the advancement of the labour agenda in the region. We congratulate our colleagues for their recent election to the Governing Body and we pledge our continued support.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my Government's conscious resolve to continue to work with and assist the ILO in its quest to promote not only the dignity and equality of work for all constituents as a means of reducing poverty, but to contribute to and implement relevant policies and practices for the promotion of labour market initiatives and sustainable development throughout our national economies.

Original French: Mr. NDIAYE (Minister of Public Services, Labour, Employment and Professional Organizations, Senegal)

The issues which we have been asked to reflect upon this year are an integral part of the work we have been carrying out since 1999 and are centred on the concept of decent work.

Today, following the significant progress made in conceptualizing and adapting decent work, the time has come to move on to a new stage in the integration of this concept into the priorities of the international development agenda.

This is vital, given the connection we must establish between the Decent Work Agenda and the reference framework for development defined at an interregional, regional and national level, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Millennium Development Goals, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, etc.

The values of the ILO are universal, civilized values. They are a sure bastion against the evils and excesses of globalization, and they should, in that respect, always be our guide when implementing the concept of decent work.

It was precisely in this spirit that the Declaration of Ouagadougou was adopted in September 2004, following the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Reduction. This summit, which was in many ways unprecedented, was very successful. It raised a lot of hope, and will represent an important reference point, for the various development programmes and policies to be launched on the continent.

As a demonstration of the commitment of our country to fulfil the objectives contained in the Declaration, the President of the Republic of Senegal has, by decree, instituted a national intersectoral committee on employment and poverty, comprising representatives of the Government, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society.

The resolutions, recommendations and conclusions arising from the 2004 summit and the ILO's decent work agenda will be major sources of inspiration for the members of the committee.

In other words, the issues on which the Conference is focusing this year, (youth employment, occupational health and safety, and fishing and working time) are of real interest to countries such as mine.

Furthermore, in the context of the network for youth employment, I should like to reaffirm here Senegal's willingness to set up a pilot programme to promote youth employment, counting, as in the past, on the support of the ILO, which has never let us down.

In their never-ending search for greater justice, peace, freedom and progress, in an ever-changing world marked by the emergence of new development paradigms, the people, more than ever, must face their future and meet increasingly complex challenges. The credibility of the solutions provided depends to a large extent on the ability of the states and the social partners to adapt to rapidly changing situations.

In other words, the idea of strengthening the organizational and operational capacity of labour administration bodies, trade union organizations and employers' organizations is an important one. It must be implemented as soon as possible in order to lend momentum to our ambition to promote and better fulfil the four strategic objectives we have set ourselves.

Successful cooperation with the ILO has enabled Senegal to achieve important progress and to obtain convincing results regarding the promotion of social dialogue, the extension of the social protection system, the setting of priorities for employment policy, the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work and, in particular, rights related to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

I would like here to express all the gratitude of the Government of Senegal to the ILO, and I hope that the ILO will continue to support us in our policies and development programmes nationally, which are ever more articulated around the concept of productive and decent work.

Ms. BRIGHI (Worker, Italy)

The challenges before the ILO have been well underlined in the Director-General's Report and in the Programme and Budget proposals for the biennium 2006-07. It is acknowledged that the growth of political and social instabilities and inequalities, the absence of fair and democratic rules to guide the internationalization of production and the growth of free-trade zones with no labour rights, are a basis for increasing exploitation of workers and the violation of their fundamental rights.

In this regard, the ILO can play a leading role. Internal and external challenges amplify the need for the ILO to implement its strategies in the most effective ways. The world of work needs urgent answers and the ILO has the great responsibility of searching and finding adequate timely solutions, and governments should provide the adequate resources. That is why it is important that the ILO budget is approved, to carry out the huge work that is required to reverse such inequalities.

We note with regret that the call in the report of the World Commission to fill the coherence, democracy and consistency gaps remains unheard. We

still see no real steady commitment by the leaders of the world to the definition of democratic rules and programmes, with a social strong dimension, to guide the decision-making of governments and international institutions.

In this regard, the ILO can and must play a central role, despite the many opposition and resistance from many quarters. It must be recalled that the Declaration of Philadelphia indeed gives the ILO a wide mandate in this regard.

Productive employment promotion, decent jobs and respect for fundamental workers' rights meet with inconceivable difficulties when it comes to their inclusion in governments' as well as international institutions' agendas.

This is unfortunately true of the Millennium Development Goals, where such issues are not explicitly incorporated, and of the programmes of the international financial institutions, and of the agenda of the next WTO Ministerial Conference. Indeed, employment promotion and fundamental rights at work are key instruments against poverty.

While we recognize the ILO Director-General's efforts in this direction, we are greatly concerned by the long-lasting opposition of some governments that, in a renewed coalition, create obstacles and try to weaken the standard-setting role of the ILO and its supervisory mechanisms for merely short-sighted political interests.

On the contrary, we need to improve and strengthen both the standard setting, the supervisory mechanisms, and the activities on freedom of association and its related Committee. In this regard, we welcome the new direction taken by the Office. We are deeply concerned about the continuous violations of fundamental workers' rights in many parts of the world, particularly in Colombia, Burma, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Swaziland and Belarus. In this regard, we welcome the conclusions of the Committee on the Application of Standards concerning the case of Colombia.

Tripartism, not only not with a post-mortem approach, or through bureaucratic formalistic procedures, should be the guiding criteria from general strategic policies to the daily decisions and field programmes. Especially in the challenging international situation, both social partners need to be strengthened and not substituted by other organizations. Still in this house, some consider the involvement of social partners as some heritage of the past, to be easily substituted by other organizations.

For each of the new InFocus Initiatives, such as the informal economy, corporate social responsibility and export processing zones, constituents belonging to priority countries or sectors, should be fully included, trained and supported to build ILO tripartite focal points at regional and national levels, in programmes and technical cooperation activities.

The implementation of the ILO-EU agreement and, in the future, initiatives on the social dimension of trade should go in this direction and be decided with the full participation of ACTRAV and ACTEMP and the Workers' group. The role of the ILO Tripartite Declaration on Multinationals should be enhanced, together with the OECD guidelines and the framework agreements, as instruments that can contribute to promote framework agreements and fair competition.

In this regard, we welcome the support given by the EU Commissioner, Mr. Spidla, to the relationship between the ILO and EU in trade matters and

to the promotion of the social dimension of international organizations.

The ILO also should promote the definition of international guidelines and the inclusion of the social dimension in foreign direct investment.

In this regard, we recall the important conclusions adopted at the special sitting on Myanmar. Such conclusions should be implemented in a consistent and timely manner. On this particular point, I want to remind the Conference that the Nobel Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, whose 60th birthday is in a few weeks time, is still under house arrest after nine years. I urge Governments and Employers to extensively implement such conclusions as a means of eradicating forced labour. This is a challenge that the ILO has underlined with its Report, which clearly outlines, once again, the link between old and new forms of forced labour, based on the violation of fundamental rights, lack of democracy and the absence of democratic rules. The ILO has to promote programmes and alliances, based on capacity building and strengthened role for its constituents, employment creation and the ratification of the Conventions on the rights of migrant workers.

This challenge is closely linked to the priority of organizing in the informal economy, particularly for women. We therefore welcome the idea of a specific training programme on forced labour at the Turin Centre. The ILO Turin Centre is crucial in this regard. We appreciate the efforts to foster the process of integration between the Centre and the Office in Geneva, and ask Governments to further support the Centre's training activities.

Original Spanish: Mr. DORADO CANO (Government, Venezuela)

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the Report of the Director-General which highlights the deep crisis of the current economic model that has created dissatisfaction and failed to meet employment expectations, thus rapidly undermining the security and stability of democracies.

At the time of a world crisis in employment, the Director-General reminds us of the queries and questions regarding globalization, which shake the ethical foundations of an economy based on a false "free market", where men and women are relegated to a secondary position and the authorities appear to be either sceptical or left powerless in the face of rules imposed by foreign interests.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that we have entered a decisive phase and that the time has come for Governments and peoples to define the world in which they wish to live and are prepared to build. At this time, we must embark on the debate on globalization; the rules of fair trade; the responsibilities of international financial institutions and transnational corporations; doing away with values imposed by competition and productivity at any cost that give absolute priority to maximizing profit on whose untouchable alter human aspirations are sacrificed.

Today, questions arise about the true universal character of the models of consumption and ownership that mark globalization, or on the importance of wealth as an individual value, rather than a collective virtue.

The time has come to affirm that another world is not only possible, but that its existence has become vital. This is a universal demand, shared by unem-

ployed workers, micro, small and medium-sized enterprise employers who see their factories close down, and small holder farmers who are excluded from the market, which is being controlled from the centres of power with subsidies and unfair practices.

The solution to the problems affecting humanity, including the drama of unemployment and job quality, cannot be found in the infernal race of capitalism in its neo-liberal phase. The building of a new society means that we have to do away with dogmatism. A small world elite cannot victimize the whole of mankind. Therefore, we have a shared need to build a more human, just and inclusive society based on greater responsibility in the areas of work, social welfare and the environment.

In this debate, we need to refer to our history and our knowledge, as well as good practices from other peoples and their leaders, placing a special emphasis on the protagonism of majorities, in particular workers, not only as generators of wealth, but as its owners and administrators. To this effect, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela promotes enterprises that are based on social participation where industries that were closed down in the 1990s are managed jointly by employers and workers as co-owners and co-administrators. The State has undertaken to provide financial support and to modernize existing technologically and provide technical assistance. With this formula, together with a broad sector of the self-managed social economy in which 300,000 workers participate directly. We are moving towards a policy of social inclusion and endogenous development that enhances our productive capacity and creates an enabling environment for new production relations that are based on solidarity and justice. This vision carries a notion of trade based on complementarity and cooperation instead of unbridled competition.

The Government has recovered its role as the regulator of the economy and the driving force of social policies, both of which seek to ensure the protection of the interests and rights of the population, in particular with the poor and excluded. Therefore, general interest takes precedent over capital, private initiative and trade agreements. In this effort, we have to stand up to monopolies. We therefore seek to promote democratization and corporate responsibility in the private sector in the areas of finance, trade, communications, agriculture and industry.

With this commitment, the Bolivarian Government has overcome the dark days of neo-liberal conspiracy of the 1990s, as well the destabilization of democratic institutions engineered by a privileged and monopolistic employers' sector. After unemployment had reached a record 21 per cent following the oil embargo in December 2002 and January 2003, it fell below 11 per cent in December 2004 and we have created more than 1 million new jobs.

This reduction has been accompanied by sustained economic growth which had attained almost 18 per cent by the end of 2004 and 8 per cent for the first quarter of this year. In addition to those encouraging figures, we have brought literacy to 1,600,000 people, 600,000 students previously left excluded from education as a result of dramatic cuts in so-called public spending in the 1980s and 1990s, have been enrolled in secondary schools.

The example of Venezuela shows today that Governments can translate words into action. In this

forum, where the Governments, Workers and Employers of the world gather together, let us confirm our commitment to peace and democracy, as well as our open rejection of all forms of imperialism and foreign domination. Humanity today calls for a different world. The Venezuelan people and its Government are committed to the cause of the ILO to bring about more and better employment.

Original Spanish: Mr. TOMADA (Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Argentina)

I would like to thank the Director-General for his Introduction, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, and the Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*, in which he suggests that we reflect on our actions in the face of the transformations in the labour market which present challenges everyday. This underlines the importance of the items on the agenda of this session of the International Labour Conference, which are all interlinked with the most fundamental principles of human dignity and the values of my Government.

Unfortunately, we find ourselves once again discussing issues concerning the persistent application of public policies founded on the Malthusian Premise that, in order to guarantee global economic growth, it was inevitable that, for a certain amount of time, half the world's population would be excluded from decent and productive work. What was really occurring was a gigantic concentration and centralization of capital.

The Global Report reveals the extent and variety of instances of forced labour throughout the world. In our country, we have already focused on strengthening labour inspection as the primary means of preventing possible occurrences of this type of labour.

The Director-General's Introduction, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, shows that juvenile employment is the area where there is the greatest lack of decent work. A "pro-poor" strategy can only be successful if employment is seen as the best instrument to break the vicious circle of poverty rolling over from generation to generation. Consequently, juvenile employment should be promoted as part of an integrated policy for increasing employment.

Our Government is developing a State policy closely linking efforts in education and social policies to promote equal opportunities.

In preparation for the forthcoming Summit of the Americas to be held in our country in November 2005, Argentina, with the support of neighbouring countries, has managed to place one of the main issues of concern to the region and the ILO at the centre of the debate, namely "creating work to eradicate poverty and strengthen democratic governance". We have begun to build a consensus which could become a political commitment: establishing the central importance of quality employment in public policies. In this regard, the Ministers of Labour of the MERCOSUR countries signed a declaration in 2004 setting out a regional strategy to increase employment.

The focus of my Government recognizes the importance of incorporating the ethical dimension of labour into the economic arena from which it has been missing for the last decade, during which conditions of employment have to an extent been subjugated by economic considerations. We are now seeing these values being supplanted by an ap-

proach which views employment as the source of social cohesion, a key element in personal dignity and promoting citizenship.

Since the process of negotiating our external debt has progressed successfully, we are now moving gradually towards settling our social debt and creating a society for all. Honouring our social debt means fulfilling our democratic promise to our country, and this is a commitment shared by all the Governments in our region.

In the socio-economic sphere, the Government of President Kirchner marks a change because it is trying to put ethics back into redistribution and employment in order to promote economic growth, and, on the basis of a unified philosophy, active development policies have been put in place.

In terms of employment, our focus is on the need to turn the domestic market into a springboard for healthy exports, which will create a progressive pattern for income distribution, with a production strategy that will consolidate the place of small and medium-sized enterprises in the value-added chain. This requires involvement by the State in the organization of markets.

The change is clear. The State has a major role in redressing social inequalities, monitoring quality work, and acting as a bridge between those wishing to work and those wishing to employ them. Therefore, we shall take note of the concerns of the employers and the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) expressed in this forum, because we are firmly committed to increasing the scope and mechanisms of social dialogue. To this end, the recent meeting between the Council for Employment, Productivity and Salaries, the Tripartite Commission on Equal Opportunities and the Agricultural Labour Committee, along with the systematic thrust of collective bargaining, have been directed towards strengthening democratic institutions through recognition of and participation by employers' and workers' organizations without exception.

In conclusion, after years of market-driven societies, and after our continent has endured regional integration schemes based on purely market-orientated and financial interests, today in Latin America we see the introduction of a new legitimacy in Government and civil society, with full respect for human, social and labour rights.

In accepting the Director-General's invitation to reflect on these matters, I believe it is now time to re-establish the link between education and work that we should never have abandoned. It is time to rediscover the central importance of labour as the hub around which society moves. It is time for the State to take on once again its role in regulating injustice in the world of labour, but above all it is time to pool all our efforts, all our intelligence and, most importantly, all our convictions.

Original Spanish: Mr. HALKIN (Employer, Mexico)

Increasingly, it is being shown that progress made in key areas by democratic countries flows from the participation of the social partners, through tripartism and social dialogue. This is at the heart of what Mexican employers are doing in their efforts to create jobs. We welcome the Report on youth employment we have seen. We consider that the promotion of employment for this important group of society is crucial for many member States, including Mexico. Conclusion in this area should be realistic and accessible, and they should be coordinated

between the sectors of society, so that they can materialize into effective solutions. In order to promote youth employment in our country, the conclusions of the Committee should also be coordinated with the authorities in charge of education.

The serious problems confronting pension systems in the world makes us think that, with regard to an OSH instrument, we should opt for a declaration that would give us a set of guidelines and could be implemented in each country in accordance with its capacities and policy requirements, without leading to new laws and regulations, but still addressing the crucial issues of occupational health and safety.

The informal sector is a regrettable phenomenon, which represents a hotbed of social problems, creates subcultures and does not benefit the workforce in the long term. Employers are involved in efforts to integrate this labour population into the formal sector and into structured growth in the country. Informal work does not benefit the formal economy and does not provide social guarantees.

We need to revitalize our tripartism, in order to come up with consensual solutions for long-term development. Therefore, we are convinced that, in promoting tripartism, in thinking about it, and enhancing it with regard to social decision-making, we will be sowing for a fruitful harvest the field of tomorrow's labourers.

We all know Mexico suffers from a high level of emigration which harms the future of the population in its social and moral make-up. It is only with a new and determined action through long-term programmes that we will be able to convince our young people that when they study and obtain the appropriate academic and technical qualifications, they will be able to find what they need in the workplace. Otherwise we will be condemning our future labour force to exile, frustration and social discouragement, all of which are long-term enemies of development and represent a breeding ground for social problems.

We agree with the pillars defined in the ILO programme, given that the fundamental principles and rights at work are at the heart of the employers' activities. Men and women need employment opportunities. This is crucial, and must be guided by the head for social protection and underpinned by dialogue and tripartism.

In my country, the employers' organizations base their activities on these issues, and they are eager to create the greatest possible number of jobs, which must be decent, safe and adequately paid.

We hope that the Conference will succeed in finding solutions that will encourage the creation of small and medium-sized businesses, which are the cornerstone of employment, as well as strengthening existing business and thus promoting real economic progress.

The CONCAMIN, an organization which represents Mexican business, is aware of the importance of corporate social responsibility and advocates the involvement of business leaders in the legislative process and in the mechanisms of interpretation and application of standards. This should result in the strengthening of institutions and of the role of employers, whose actions are crucial for the creation of wealth, job creation and social stability.

The Lesotho delegation and myself bring you warm greetings from Lesotho, which is affectionately known as the mountain kingdom in the sky.

I would like to thank and congratulate the Director-General of the ILO and the Governing Body for the issues that they have placed on the agenda for discussion. There is no doubt that the Decent Work Agenda that is promoted by the ILO can not be viewed in isolation.

It stands to reason that if the quest for decent work is to be successful, issues that are intertwined with it should be addressed simultaneously. For this reason, the discussions on occupational safety and health, youth employment and the deliberations on hours of work in the Committee on the Application of Standards has been welcomed by my Government.

The Government of Lesotho has always felt that, inasmuch as we are a developing country with a high rate of unemployment, the jobs that are created for our people should still be decent jobs in which the observance of national laws and indeed international labour standards should be respected. We have always believed that development without a human face can not be sustainable in the long run.

You will agree with me that the labour inspectorate plays a critical role in the achievement of decent work. For this reason, we are determined to improve on our labour inspection system, and would like to thank the ILO for the technical assistance that it is providing in this regard.

As a first step towards improving our inspectorate, an inspection specialist from the ILO has already audited our system, and I have been reliably informed that by the end of this month labour inspectors are going to be trained on modern labour inspection techniques.

It would therefore be remiss of me not to acknowledge the financial support provided by the Government of the United States and technical assistance given by the ILO, under the project of Improving Labour Systems in Southern Africa (ILSSA) under whose auspices these activities are being carried out.

It is a known fact that the number of hours worked by workers at the workplace has implica-

tions on occupational safety and health. Unregulated hours of work adversely affect the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of the worker.

My Government is therefore in agreement with the fact that the present Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1) was adopted a long time ago and, over time, it has been unable to respond to the changes and challenges that have resulted from the current dynamics in the industrial world.

Our position is therefore that the time has come for standards on hours of work to be received to ensure that they are practical and relevant to today's world.

However, the need for countries to remain competitive in the global world should carefully be balanced if they need to protect workers' safety and health and their spiritual well-being.

Last but not least, allow me to make a brief comment on the need to create jobs for youth. The importance of this issue cannot be overemphasized. This has become critical when the youth of today are faced with so many challenges like the threat of drug abuse and having to head households in families which have lost parents to HIV/AIDS. Other than these factors, creating jobs for youth will also play a vital role in building and moulding responsible citizens and future leaders of our countries.

It is for this reason that my Government will do everything in its power to play a leading role and liaise with relevant stakeholders on this matter to ensure that we facilitate the creation of jobs for youth. I am aware that the ILO subregional Office for Southern Africa is organizing a conference on this issue in October this year in the Republic of South Africa and my Government will actively participate.

On this note, allow me to conclude my address by congratulating the Director-General for continuing to steer the ship amidst tight resource constraints. I would like to support him most heartily for proposing a budget increase as he has done, for we in the developing countries still need a lot of technical support in many spheres of labour administration. We wish to pledge our support to you in your awesome task. I wish you and your staff all the best in your future endeavours.

(The Conference adjourned at 1.15 p.m.)

Ninth sitting

Thursday, 9 June 2005, 3.05 p.m.

President: Ms. Anderson and Mr. Chiriboga

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

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

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

Original German: Mr. BARTENSTEIN (*Federal Minister of the Economy and Labour, Austria*)

I am pleased that since last year we have come one step closer towards establishing decent work as a global objective. The concept is beginning to become established in the multilateral arena. The European Union has officially integrated it as an objective into its policy; the Council of the European Union did this in its conclusions on the social dimension of globalization and the European Commission did so with its new Social Agenda.

There are three topics of this Conference that are of particular importance for Austria: youth; the protection of health and safety standards at work; and working hours.

First of all, I would like to say a few words about youth employment. The Austrian way, with its dual system of apprenticeship training, is very successful when held to international comparisons, and I hope that our experience will also be of benefit to other countries. Investment in training is an investment in the future, because well-trained workers are an essential factor for the economic success of a country. Initiatives such as the qualification and employment programme *Jobs for You(th)*, the creation of apprenticeship canvassers, the creation of a catchment network for young people looking for apprenticeships, the integrated apprenticeship training, or the opportunity, which is unique in the world, of taking the *Berufsreifeprüfung*, which is an apprenticeship followed by an examination that allows access to university study, all help to ensure that Austria enjoys a comparatively low youth unemployment rate.

The occupational safety of our young people is also close to our hearts. Most young people who enter working life are not very well informed, if at all, about the health and safety requirements or the role of the labour inspectorate. Through an initiative of the labour inspectorate called "team4kids", which was carried out in cooperation with schools, we were able in 2004 to raise the awareness not

only of many teachers, but also of more than 100,000 young people about occupational health and safety issues.

Safer and healthier jobs are a central element of decent work, and the core labour standards have until now left some gaps open: the guarantee for protection of life and health in the workplace. If the discussion about the promotion of occupational safety and health were to lead to a globally ratifiable instrument that closes this gap, then it would be a great success for the quality of life of all workers in the world.

Let me come now to the last topic, which is working hours. The changes in economic and working life, which are taking place at an increasing speed, require the ILO to adapt its standards to take account of changes in the working world. One priority here should be the modernization of the two outdated Conventions on working hours, the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), and the Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930 (No. 30), which in our view no longer meet the requirement of flexible working hours.

I would like to close with a few words about the discussions on the reform of the International Labour Conference. The Conference should be shortened only if the Office thinks this is feasible. Other Conference locations should only be envisaged if it can be ensured that this would not place an additional burden on the ILO budget and if this does not lead to a deterioration in the running of the Conference. The reform discussions must not under any circumstances lead to a situation in which the position of the Committee on the Application of Standards, as the conscience of the ILO, is impeded in its work.

Mr. BIYAMA (*Minister for Labour and Industrial Relations, Papua New Guinea*)

It gives me great pleasure to convey my Government's acknowledgement and support for the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General. Since becoming a member State of the International Labour Organization in 1976 Papua New Guinea has always supported the role of the ILO as the competent authority in asserting international labour standards.

Our attendance and participation at this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference reaffirms the country's continued commitments and

support for the role of the ILO and the causes it stands for.

Papua New Guinea is committed and pledges its support to the ILO in promoting decent work, ratifying of the core ILO fundamental human rights Conventions and the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and our country is working towards addressing labour issues in the country.

The development of the national white paper on poverty alleviation and decent work as well as the development of the national plan of action on decent work only reaffirms the Government's commitment in its pursuit to alleviate and eliminate all forms of human rights violation and abuse, of which forced and compulsory labour are key components.

Papua New Guinea is committed to supporting the Governing Body pursuit in advocating the promoting of human dignity, equality and freedom in the working place.

The challenge posed by the ILO to eliminate all forms of forced and compulsory labour is accepted with open arms by the Government through developments that are already underway and programmes that are in place. My country will deliver and fulfil its commitment to ensure that forced compulsory labour is eliminated completely.

Having ratified all forced labour related Conventions, namely the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and having the current legislation reviews in place creates an environment which is conducive to rectifying and reinforcing those Conventions in our national legislative frameworks.

Backed by the national Constitution which provides the basics for freedom in every aspect of life, and delivers and frees all its citizens from the evil of forced labour. My Government is committed to this global case by the ILO and indicates that it will do all it can to ensure that forced labour does not get the better of its citizens in the name of economic development.

Given the developments being undertaken, the Government of Papua New Guinea conveys to the ILO that it will remain committed to its endeavour to ensure that decent work is realized in the country, the ills of forced and compulsory labour are eliminated from the legal applications, social attributes and the daily activities of Papua New Guineans so that they remain free women and men, who will strive under freedom in pursuit of the goal of decent work.

With these remarks I wish every nation and all friends good luck in this session of the Conference.

Original Arabic: Mr. ABU-LIBDEH (Government, Palestine)

I should like to thank the Director-General for all the efforts that he makes at the ILO.

We have read with great attention the Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. We are very grateful to the Director-General, and recognize the efforts that were undertaken in order to produce this report. We draw your attention to the observations made by the Arab group participating in this session, and hope that they will be taken into consideration as basic statements which will allow us in the future to implement policies and define the ILO's positions with respect to these workers. We also hope they

will be a basis for future reports in this area. We support the call made by the Director-General in this Report for measures and decisions that will allow us to help these workers, who are living under the yoke of occupation and enduring arbitrary practices, and encourage appropriate administrative measures to ensure the success of this operation.

It is absolutely vital that the remarks and the positions of the Arab group be translated into all languages so that everyone may become familiar with their experiences.

It goes without saying that all the peoples of our world strive after prosperity and peace. The Palestinian people, living under occupation, certainly thirsts for such peace and security. But the Palestinians do not enjoy the necessary conditions to create a lasting peace. The problem is political instability and the presence of Israeli occupation in Palestinian and Arab lands. It is our hope to create an independent State on our national lands, its capital being Al-Quds. We have supported the Road Map, which was produced thanks to the work of the Quartet and supported by the international community, but we note that the other side is not making the necessary efforts to make the Road Map a reality. We note that construction of the Separation Barrier continues, despite all the international resolutions on this subject. These practices are devastating for the social and economic life of our people. We note also that the creation and expansion of settlements and the confiscation of land is continuing. As regards the new climate of dialogue which exists between ourselves and the Israelis, and which was mentioned in the Director-General's Report, it is jeopardized by the daily actions of the Israeli Government against our people.

The blockade, the encirclement and assassinations have created a crisis in the economy and in the labour market in particular. Unemployment has reached very high levels: of the 900,000 individuals who make up the active population, 300,000 are unemployed.

We agree with the Director-General, who has said that future prospects are very difficult to determine. He has said jobs in Israel are vital to the Palestinian economy in combating unemployment. Opening up the labour market to Palestinians is an Israeli responsibility – a political responsibility and a moral one, which arises from the occupation of Palestinian land and all the measures that have impeded the development and stability of our economy.

Despite its lack of resources and despite the great pressure upon it, the Palestinian Authority continues to try to broaden the social basis for peace in the region, through efforts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor and create jobs. One example is the programme that has begun to provide temporary work for the unemployed. Another is the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection which the ILO's Governing Body has helped to create. We hope this will be a pillar on which the Palestinian Authority will be able to base itself in moving forward. We are taking administrative and legal measure to ensure that the Fund can work effectively.

Despite the many sacrifices of the Palestinian people, and despite the reticence of the international community in asserting its will with regard to the Israeli Government, our people are determined to continue to fight for the recognition of their right to create an independent State, the capital of which would be Al-Quds, and to guarantee the return of

refugees and the release of prisoners from Israeli prisons. A just peace is our goal.

I hope that all the people over the world will be able to enjoy this peace and security.

Mr. KLINPRATOOM (*Minister of Labour, Thailand*)

It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Kingdom of Thailand at this important gathering.

My delegation supports the views of the Director-General on the ways to move ahead. The ILO's four strategic objectives are instrumental to the challenges of poverty reduction and will ensure that globalization can contribute to the improvement of human welfare in both rich and poor countries. The Thai Government is committed to ensuring that the Thai workforce, whether they be in the formal or informal economic sector, is engaged in meaningful employment in accordance with the principles of the ILO.

Thailand has made efforts to promote meaningful employment. This means recognition of rights and basic entitlements of the workers and encouragement of social dialogue, which are the necessary foundations within the broader development agenda for guaranteeing decent working conditions. Through the various programmes under the support of the ILO and other international organizations, Thailand is expanding the level of education as well as employment opportunities for women and youth. Resources are focused on creating entrepreneurship and promoting micro and small enterprises to equip those entering the labour market with appropriate knowledge and skills as a means of guaranteeing access to decent jobs, or starting and developing a business. These efforts are pursued within the broader framework of the national poverty reduction strategies.

Trafficking and labour migration are among the issues of great concern. Women and children in particular are the main victims of human trafficking for prostitution, forced domestic labour, bonded labour and other forms of hazardous, dangerous and exploitative work. Through the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between Thailand and its neighbouring countries, we are in the process of legalizing migrant workers from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Under Thai law, they will be entitled to fair treatment and will be provided legal protection equivalent to that enjoyed by the Thai labour force.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation against Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion, the Thai Government and the Governments of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, China, Viet Nam and Myanmar are cooperating to prevent the trafficking of those vulnerable groups. The flow of migrant workers will be regulated, which will lead to a reduction in risks from human trafficking.

Regarding the problem of forced labour, the Government is now in the process of amending any laws that are obsolete, or are no longer relevant to the current circumstances, to ensure consistency with the ILO Conventions.

On the issue of social protection, Thailand launched the Unemployment Insurance Scheme on 1 August last year. The aim of the Scheme is to provide social protection for workers, as well as safe and healthy environments in the workplaces.

The efforts being implemented cannot bring about desirable outcomes without the close cooperation of all stakeholders. We must raise awareness in society and encourage broader participation, so that we can achieve common understanding on the dimensions and the magnitude of the problems. Much work remains to be done, but I am sure that with clear direction and commitment the obstacles can be surmounted and the goals reached.

I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Thailand, to express our heartfelt appreciation to the ILO for its commitment and continued support.

Mr. AMAN (*Government, Bangladesh*)

I thank the Director-General for his comprehensive Report. We appreciate his commitment to tackling the challenges before us.

Sound industrial relations are a precondition for economic and industrial growth and job creation. The Government of Bangladesh is deeply committed to the protection of the labour rights in our country and we deeply value our association with the ILO.

Under the enlightened leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh is taking steps to enhance the quality of life of workers, we want to ensure social justice in the workplace. The national Labour Law Commission, after reviewing all labour laws, has submitted a draft comprehensive Labour Code. We have set up a tripartite review committee to examine the proposal. I look forward to receiving the final report. Other recent activities include the enactment of a law for the welfare of the workers in the private transport sectors, which came into effect on 1 May 2005. Currently, we are formulating a Workers' Welfare Foundation Act.

We have undertaken a programme for creating employment opportunities for voluntarily retired or redundant workers. In the current fiscal year 300 million taka has been allocated to vocational training for 15,000 persons and to microcredit for self-employment.

Given the large-scale unemployment and high level of poverty, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is of special significance to us. I am happy to note that the ILO is cooperating with our authorities in implementing this programme.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour. Our successes in many sectors are well known. Direct intervention programmes, such as "Food for Education", and special financial incentives to encourage increased enrolment of girl students, have been immensely helpful. We appreciate the ILO's involvement in this area.

Resource constraints limit our efforts to improve the well-being of workers and to provide them a social safety net. With economic development, we hope to overcome these difficulties and offer a decent life to all.

Mr. SOMANY (*Employer, India*)

We fully support the views expressed in the Director-General's Report that instead of putting forward new proposals, we should look behind and consolidate the ideas, approaches and resolutions of the past.

The Declaration and the paper on decent work have laid the foundations for the labour policy of the future. The goals of full employment, social se-

curity and gender equality have found sanctity in other multilateral institutions as well. The decent work deficit has shown us the pathetic conditions in which thousands are toiling. The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, has revealed the marginalization of certain countries and communities by the process of globalization.

I think all these reports have provided us with comprehensive information, both factually and ideologically. The other United Nations agencies share the ILO's objectives. The United Nations Millennium Declaration also recognizes youth and female employment as a priority area. There is, therefore, no reason why these development goals cannot be pursued effectively and implemented in a resolute manner. The theme of the current session should be "from ideas to actions" in tribute to the long-standing reputation of this Organization.

The Decent Work Agenda, which underlines ILO strategic objectives, enshrines core values of the world of work. The four pillars epitomize the existence of this Organization, but if we were to assess the status of each of these core objectives country by country, a big gap would emerge. This, I feel, poses a big challenge to the ILO to think globally and act locally.

Employment generation is a key element of all problems and needs exclusive focus. Global unemployment is all expected to reach the 200 million mark. Youth unemployment is particularly alarming; South Asia accounts for more than 13 per cent and globally, some 66 million young persons are unemployed. It has had a series of negative repercussions on society, such as disrespect for the rule of law, insecurity and social tensions. I compliment the ILO for having made the subject a topic of discussion in this Conference. I am sure the conclusion of the Committee will be implemented in a time-bound manner. The ILO should cooperate with other multilateral agencies, such as the IMF and the World Bank, to sponsor programmes for entrepreneurship development, self-employment and human resource development, particularly in developing and underdeveloped countries, which are most vulnerable to youth unemployment.

The emphasis the Director-General placed on youth employment in his Report could not be more timely.

Enterprise development is crucial to addressing problems of unemployment. Although it requires multi-institutional support, skills and entrepreneurship development are critical components. In an era, where the manufacturing sector has ceased to create jobs, promoting self-employment through the development of micro-enterprises would provide a cushion.

ILO training courses on how to start and improve a small business or engage in other kinds of income-generating activities may prove very useful in this context. These programmes need to be revived and implemented in countries where unemployment is particularly high.

Social security is a prime concern and a core objective of the Decent Work Agenda. Less than 10 per cent of the population in the poorest countries have adequate social security protection. ILO initiatives in this area would be highly desirable.

The time is ripe to reconsider the issue of social security in a globalized context, namely a global social security fund that would benefit the world's

poorest. Some mechanism could surely be established to make this a reality in the near future.

The informal sector, which employs more than 90 per cent of the total workforce in my country and in other developing and underdeveloped countries, needs greater attention. The conditions of the employer and the employee in the informal sectors are almost the same. They lack skills, resources, market access and are subject to poor working conditions. The decent work slogan is relevant to this sector at this stage. The way in which ILO policies and programmes can target the informal sector and improve working conditions, quality of jobs and productivity is very important. The ILO should spare a thought for the welfare of informal sector workers and supplement national efforts in this direction.

I would like to compliment the ILO for this monumental work on social dimension of globalization – the Report released last year, which has revealed the hidden aspects of the ongoing globalization. Yet, the most important part is follow-up action taken by the ILO.

You are aware that this year the Asia-Pacific coastal regions were hit by the tsunami waves, which unleashed a tragedy of immeasurable magnitude. In India, 2.7 million people were affected by the devastating calamity. We are grateful to the countries and employers' organizations who expressed their solidarity with us. The current challenge lies in devising adequate reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. We look forward to the ILO to support income-generating programmes in the Tsunami-affected areas to minimize the suffering of the victims.

Original Spanish: Mr. LJUBETIC GODOY (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Chile)

The Director-General has called upon us to begin a necessary process of reflection. This invitation seems appropriate to me, given today's context and the circumstances in the world of work, and the roles that this Organization must play. Any process of reflection is an invitation to go back to our roots, to the factors that gave rise to the emergence and special nature of the ILO, and to think about how best to address today's challenges.

The Director-General has described very well the problems which characterize the critical socio-economic juncture affecting most of the world today, which may be summed up as follows: the global economy has moved forward only on the basis of monetary and market considerations, disregarding values and the social dimension, particularly those related to work and the dignity of work, as well as its importance for social cohesion and well-being. Never before has humanity witnessed so much economic activity, on the basis of the rapid development of knowledge and communications technologies. Never have we had so many possibilities for exchange and interaction, with all the opportunities and high expectations this entails. But, as has already been said, never before has it been so frustrating to see the results, especially in regard to creating decent work as the main means to achieve equality, cohesion and social justice.

Never before have we seen so much creation of wealth, and never before has it been distributed so unfairly. This path does not lead us to a better world, nor does it bring us closer to the world that our founding members dreamed of when they had the courage and foresight to create an organization

such as the ILO, an ILO which is made up of people such as ourselves, responsible for choosing the path that each and all of our countries must follow. This is why this process of reflection must conclude with a resounding affirmation that the essential role, the tripartite nature and the international standard-setting framework of the ILO are more relevant today than ever before, and its active presence is more crucial than ever.

This Organization, which represents our peoples and their hopes, must serve as an instrument and a venue through which the dynamism of economies and their growth will go hand in hand with our objectives of greater equality decent work in each and all of our societies.

One of the main ways to ensure this is for the ILO, as the expression of the will of the different countries that make it up, to strengthen and deepen its role, both as a provider of technical assistance and as guarantee of a universal normative framework, of accompanying the process of economic and trade integration in which our countries are increasingly involved. There is no doubt that these integration processes cannot only be aimed at securing better markets for goods and services and smoother financial flows. They must also take into account the well-being of our peoples.

Progressive globalization of our economies must go therefore hand in hand with the globalization of standards and conditions conducive to the creation of decent jobs, and not just any jobs. This means that the policy and technical discussions that shape these integration processes, especially between countries at different levels of development, must not be based only on comparative advantage for countries on each side – usually those that have superior technology and higher productivity, on the one hand, and those with lower labour costs, on the other. They must aim to reach concerted decisions to ensure that the effects of these processes bring about an effective improvement in the standard of living for the people in each of the countries moving towards integration.

We are convinced that without this effort toward globalization of decent work standards, each of our countries is going to find it extremely difficult to progress on its own, since looking at things from a purely economic and financial viewpoint leads to a quest for lower costs, and hence worse working conditions, moving away from our objective of more decent work for all.

Chile, a small and modest country, with an economy which is fully open to the world, and hence affected the problems we are discussing today, has made substantial efforts in this direction. Some of our most important agreements for integration have in fact aimed to take these problems into account. For example, they included chapters on labour, incorporating as a regulatory framework the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; or they have included an obligation to engage in social dialogue as a mechanism for handling the labour issues raised by our agreements. All of this, in the context of strengthening our democracy, has enabled us to deal successfully with tasks such as labour reforms reinforcing workers' collective rights, setting up an unemployment insurance system as the key element of our policies against unemployment, reducing working time for the first time in 75 years, and reforming the labour court

system to provide prompt and expeditious justice for everyone involved in the world of work.

This same conviction that globalization and economic development must go hand in hand with a real improvement in social well-being means that we have positive expectations with regard to the issues discussed at this Conference.

The issue of youth unemployment, on which this Conference is focusing part of its discussion, is relevant both today and for the future, and we must address it decisively. The absence of job opportunities for young people and the discrimination they face on grounds of lack of experience must be tackled in a long-term perspective which takes account of the fact that when a large part of a country's youth is outside the productive workforce, this is a waste of valuable human capital, talent and innovative resources that a country needs to create new opportunities for progress.

In our country we have met this challenge through policies to prevent young people from dropping out of school and to promote continuous training, as well as increasing coordination between education and work, and introducing concepts and policies focusing on lifelong training schemes and skills certification.

Another issue, protection of workers against work-related diseases and injuries, has become a central concern of productive economies. The death of some 2 million people at work every year faces us with the challenge of combating occupational diseases and injuries. And because we want safe and healthy workplaces, we, as a member State of the ILO, join the Organization's initiative to implement a promotional framework for occupational safety and health.

As regards work in the fishing sector, this is a priority issue for a country like ours, for which the sea is a major economic resource. Our conviction is clear: an activity that is of prime importance for our economy and culture deserves to strengthen its labour standards. We have emphasized the fundamental rights of fishers with the aim of ensuring that they enjoy decent working conditions on board fishing vessels. Accordingly, the adoption of a Convention on work in the fishing sector within these parameters appears to be a crucial task for this Conference.

Mr. BAYARSAIKHAN (*Minister for Social Welfare and Labour, Mongolia*)

The Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which has been submitted by the Director-General to this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, provides a clear picture of progress towards the implementation of the elimination of forced and compulsory labour.

The new Constitution of Mongolia, which was adopted in 1992, guarantees the rights of the people to choose their job freely and proclaims that forced labour cannot be imposed on anyone. It has thus created favourable legal conditions for eliminating forced labour.

The Government of Mongolia has taken appropriate measures to resolve these challenging labour issues. In February 2005, the Mongolian Parliament ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and we are now striving to

revise national laws and regulations to comply with those Conventions.

The ILO Subregional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific organized a seminar on forced labour in Mongolia within the framework of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up in order to ensure the proper application of these Conventions. This provided countries in the subregion with a great opportunity for obtaining a deeper understanding of forced labour and it has encouraged national initiatives and an exchange of experiences and information. We believe that ILO technical assistance will play a vital role in the implementation of the above Conventions in Mongolia.

The Government of Mongolia fully supports the strategy for the introduction of occupational safety and health (OSH) management systems, which fits into the social dialogue mechanism for developing a new instrument establishing a promotional framework in the area of OSH, together with the creation of the preventive culture at the workplace, as proposed by the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference.

Our Government focuses its attention on occupational safety and health through a comprehensive policy and action aimed at preventing industrial injuries and accidents and providing a safe working environment.

The Government of Mongolia has implemented a National Programme on Occupational Safety and Health and is improving working conditions in two phases. The main outcomes of this programme are the development of OSH legislation, the establishment of an OSH management and monitoring system and greater attention to OSH issues by entities and organizations.

The Government of Mongolia has recently adopted a new national programme on improving occupational safety and health in the working environment in response to demands that it heighten public awareness of OSH, intensify state efforts in that respect and define a new method of implementing the occupational safety and health strategy and ILO Recommendations.

The programme aims: to establish an OSH prevention culture; to decrease industrial accidents and occupational diseases; to provide a suitable workplace environment; to improve the enforcement of OSH legislation; to enhance social dialogue; and to develop an occupational safety and health information network.

These activities are to be implemented with the active participation of the Government, its agencies, workers' and employers' organizations and other NGOs.

The Government of Mongolia fully supports the idea of the Conference holding a general discussion on promoting youth employment based on an integrated approach. The challenge of decreasing the youth unemployment rate is becoming crucial. Mongolia has been working to improve its legal environment so that it reflects the specific needs of this group.

It is necessary to promote a basic knowledge of youth employment and to formulate and implement a national action programme for youth employment. The Government of Mongolia intends to carry out a project entitled "To promote decent and productive employment for youth" between 2005 and 2007. The aim of this project is to expand knowledge and

promote decent and productive work for youth, to share practices among interested parties and to identify ways of developing and implementing a national action programme for the promotion of youth employment.

I wish this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference every success.

Original Russian: Mr. YURKIN (Worker, Ukraine)

The Director General's Introduction to the International Labour Conference, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, touches on a broad range of ideas and issues related to ILO activities in implementing its strategic goals.

The dynamic nature of social change in our contemporary world has reached such a level that we have to refer to the idea of "future shock". The future is gaining upon us too quickly, and we are unable to accustom ourselves to it. It is the ILO's task to help people come to terms with such change.

A clear demonstration of this striving for transition is Ukraine, whose Orange Revolution has led to major changes in society. In this connection, indisputable achievements of the new authorities are its large-scale social programmes and clearly defined goal of achieving European social standards.

The Government has decisively demonstrated its readiness to ensure that each Ukrainian citizen feels that his or her life is becoming richer. This is why the Ukrainian trade unions supported the programme of the new Government, "Closer to the People" many provisions of which are fully in keeping with the demands and aspirations of trade unions.

In the framework of the Government's programme, there has been an increase in social spending in Ukraine already this year. There has also been an increase in the minimum wage, in the minimum pension, in average pensions, financial assistance for caring for children, including children under guardianship and children with disabilities, and in one-off payments given upon the birth of a child. Indeed, this is a leap forward in social policy which, up to now, no other preceding Government has managed to make.

The Government has finally listened to trade unions and turned its attention to state property, which is gradually becoming a very important source of positions of decent work and of funds for the state budget. Proceeds this year from the activities of state monopolies are expected to be over 6 billion hryunas. This is nearly six times greater than last year.

Ukrainian trade unions promote the application of measures to overcome poverty among the population – most importantly among the workers. This is possible only by ensuring a decent level of wages and their indexation to consumer price increases, which will improve the solvency of the population.

The average monthly wage in Ukraine at the start of this year, had grown by 30 per cent with respect to the same time last year. This amount is more than 52 per cent higher than the minimum living wage established for the economically active population. The growth in average wages is 15 per cent higher than that of consumer prices.

Nevertheless, 28 per cent of the Ukrainian population is still below the poverty level. This affects, first and foremost, agricultural workers and those working in public services.

The creation of conditions for decent work and, together with this, a decrease in poverty is impossible without a solution to such painful problems as the settlement of wage arrears, which is equal to 1 billion hryonas, or almost one-sixth of the monthly wages of all workers in Ukraine. We must also bring the level of the minimum wage into line with the minimum living wage. Today, the minimum wage in Ukraine is less than 70 per cent of the minimum living wage.

We must also hope for improvement in the labour market. The unemployment rate, according to the ILO's calculations, is 8.6 per cent of the economically active population, while the level of those officially registered as unemployed is 3.5 per cent. Today, for every job available in Ukraine there are five registered unemployed persons in competition. What is more, between 2 and 7 million Ukrainians are forced to work abroad according to various estimates.

The General Agreement concluded between trade unions, employers and the Government provides for an increase in employment to take in no less than 500,000 additional workers and a lowering of the unemployment level as a whole, as well as the setting of periodical professional retraining at no less than every five years.

Viewing labour legislation as an important component in creating decent work, Ukrainian trade unions support the adoption of a new Labour Code which would ensure decent work for all those who intend to work conscientiously. However, despite the inclusion in the draft Labour Code of the principles of freedom of association, collective bargaining and gender equality, attempts are being made to decrease the scope of rights enjoyed by workers and trade unions under the existing Labour Code, and this is based on the absence of some such rights in member States of the European Union, forgetting that in European Union countries these deficiencies are amply compensated for by existing social protection systems.

Making decent work a guiding principle for all national strategies for the economic and social development of Ukraine will help to promote the adoption of a targeted cooperation programme between the ILO and Ukraine. This proposal has been made to the International Labour Office. The creation of such a programme will help to promote close cooperation between all social partners in Ukraine. It is my hope that the discussion of the present session will help, in the words of the Director-General of the ILO, "to deliver dignity to workers and decency to work".

Mr. ZELHOEFER (*Worker, United States*)

I am going to start with a few questions.

The ILO should be in the centre of the multilateral system to change globalization. Why not? We should put the goal of achieving decent work for all as an essential component in reshaping globalization to benefit workers and their families in every country. Why not? This is a unique organization as it is based on tripartism.

International labour standards are the other foundation. At the very core of those standards is freedom of association – the rights of workers to freely form their own trade union organizations and collectively bargain to defend and advance their conditions and society at large. Unfortunately, freedom of association is under attack in different ways in all

too many countries, including in the United States. Freedom of association and collective bargaining need to be fully respected and implemented in every country where they are not now. Why not?

The Director-General in his speech used the term "a global jobs crisis". The ILO has a major responsibility to help resolve this crisis in the broadest of terms. In order to do this, the ILO must be adequately resourced. The ILO's work is relevant to every Member in every region. That recognition was clearly demonstrated in the recent vote on the budget. The vote was not a bureaucratic exercise; it was a strong affirmation of the importance of this Organization to every Member. The Director-General is to be commended for recommending a budget that represents a commitment to carry out the necessary responsibilities of the ILO, and those governments, the huge majority who voted for it, deserve clear recognition.

The challenges facing the ILO are indeed numerous. One of the most serious is the case of Burma using forced labour. The ILO and its constituents must make full use of the measures contained in the resolution adopted in 2000 in order for the regime to end once and for all its use of this particularly brutal form of forced labour.

The situation in Colombia remains extremely dangerous for trade union leaders and even members. No more than five convictions have been reported among hundreds of trade unionists killed in recent years. It was satisfying to hear yesterday that the Government invited the chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association and the Worker and Employer spokespersons of the Committee on the Application of Standards to visit Colombia. We must continue to do more to ensure that the Government ends this violence and that the workers can rebuild their movement.

It was more than unfortunate that the Government of Belarus was elected to a regular member position in the Governing Body earlier this week. While respecting the autonomy of the groups, reconciling respect for a member of the Governing Body with a Government that is facing a commission of inquiry for destroying the independent trade union movement is beyond comprehension.

In concluding, it is important to underscore the relevance of decent work and its acceptance by an ever wider group of constituents and more. For example, the recent Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico, confirmed a commitment to the principles of decent work and promoting the implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and believing that respect for workers' rights is essential to reducing poverty and achieving sustainable economic and social development.

A final observation: the ILO is about the value of human dignity at work and in society. With that I close with a quote from Robert Francis Kennedy. He said, "Others see things as they are, and ask why? I dream of things that have not yet been and ask, why not?"

Mr. FARRUGIA (*Employer, Malta*)

On behalf of the Maltese Employers' delegation for the Conference, I congratulate the Director-General for the insightful Reports that were presented.

Malta has just completed its first year as a member of the European Union and this development in

our history has had dramatic implications on our economic and social environment, as is evident in the rapid restructuring that the individual companies and the economy in general is undergoing in order to reap the benefits of membership of the European Union.

Both the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Lisbon Agenda in the European Union have set ambitious goals for countries that focus on job creation and employment targets for a span of years. It is evident that the performance of many countries has failed to live up to the objectives of both the Millennium Declaration and the Lisbon Agenda. Many of the targets established for 2015 in the case of the Millennium Agenda, and for 2010, in the case of the Lisbon Strategy, will not be reached, given current economic trends. There is, in fact, a sense of disillusionment and frustration by citizens as has been expressed in the recent referenda in France and the Netherlands regarding the European Union Constitution. The lesson here is that long-term objectives have to be more than a wish list, and global or transnational goals should not lose sight of national engagement.

Moreover, it is believed that these exercises have placed too much emphasis on accommodating the requirements of the increasing supply of labour without taking into account the demand side of the labour market. Employers contend that economic growth and employment can only be increased through encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship. This is also relevant to governments and unions who have to create the right environment to encourage investment and, through such investment, improve productive and decent work opportunities.

In Malta, employers have been urging Government to introduce measures to improve competitiveness. It is indeed unfortunate that after lengthy tripartite discussions to reach a social pact that would have included such measures, the unions backed out of the agreement after the employers had approved a package of constructive recommendations submitted by Government. The main failure of this test for social dialogue in Malta is attributed to an affliction in which, although the issues are understood, there is insufficient will to act upon them. Employers have constantly underscored the fact that competitiveness is a prerequisite for the creation of decent jobs and to prevent poverty and social exclusion.

There are various challenges facing the Maltese labour environment. On a strategic level, these have been addressed through the National Action Plan on Employment that Government has formulated with the involvement of relevant parties. This document complements the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda, but many of the targets have been cautiously adjusted to be more realistic and tuned to Malta's particular circumstances. The employment targets set have important implications on related areas. Amongst these is pension reform, which is high on the national agenda at the moment. The extent of reform required will depend strongly on achieving employment targets that will increase the ratio of working to retired persons. Therefore the matter of providing productive employment for our youth is part of this strategy, complemented by efforts to increase the value of the human resource through investment in education, to channel younger cohorts into areas of educational development that will match industry's requirements. Youth employment

strategies have to run parallel with initiatives that target other segments of the labour market, as part of a holistic strategy which also includes increasing the exit age from the labour force, stronger female participation, and immigration policies, amongst others.

The global economic and social environment is a moving picture and proactive strategies are necessary to compete in such a dynamic global scenario. The overall guiding principle of decent work set by the ILO which, in many respects, is also reflected in the European social model, need to integrate social policy and employment issues within a wider debate that allows for economic considerations to be apportioned due weight in the equation. It must also be acknowledged that one-size-fits-all solutions can have a negative backlash on many economies and may yield results that are contrary to the objectives set. One such instance for Malta is working time. All social partners agree that it should be up to the employee to determine the average number of weekly hours worked and it would be counterproductive for employees and the Maltese economy in general to impose working time arrangements through rigid regulation.

Therefore, defining actions as mentioned in the Director-General's document to make decent work a global goal is commendable – up to the point that there is sufficient leeway for social partners to design customized national policies for their particular circumstances. In this respect, the ILO can involve itself more with national authorities and also act as a communication link through which national experiences are shared. This is even more important given the fact that new ways of working are constantly being developed to respond to a dynamic work environment. These new systems are an evolution of traditional ones that allow for more flexibility in employment and are frequently of mutual benefit to all social partners. For example, flexible work time arrangements in Malta are part of the solution to encourage a higher participation of females in employment.

Maltese employers share the view that the ILO has a major role to play in devising new means of responding to emerging forms of employment, even though this may imply that the traditional methods of response will have to be updated to better evaluate such developments. Decent work country programmes from different countries can be evaluated and serve as a basis of learning for other countries.

Maltese employers endorse the ILO's Global Employment Agenda as being a powerful means through which the right environment for employment creation could be developed. We recommend that the ILO should focus its limited resources on its core mandate, which concerns the world of work, and avoid the temptation to venture into areas that lie outside this mission. This can also serve to reform the structure and content of the Conference and other ILO meetings to make such events more relevant and user-friendly.

In conclusion, Maltese employers will uphold their tradition to actively participate in social dialogue and to fully promote the principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Many organizations in Malta have also subscribed to the Global Compact as a manifestation of their support for the principles of corporate social responsibility. One of the strongest challenges that face many countries is to match eco-

conomic progress with social development and, as believers in the market economy, Maltese employers will continue to promote entrepreneurship for the advancement of all society.

Original Russian: Mr. SHMAKOV (Worker, Russian Federation)

I would like first of all to remark on the innovative approach taken by the Director-General this year, which gives the Conference more freedom to debate the issues, without being confined to thematic frameworks.

The Director-General has touched on a number of important problems, the solution of which will indicate the extent to which the Organization is able to meet the challenges of today's world.

As a delegate from the Russian Federation, I fully support the efforts made by the Director-General to address the problem of the budget. The outcome of discussions at the last session of the Governing Body gives reason to hope that the idea of zero growth adhered to up to now will be adjusted, despite the active opposition of certain governments.

The Russian workers are very interested in ensuring that essential activities of the ILO, such as standards-related activities and supervision of the application of standards, receive sufficient funding. It would be unacceptable for such essential activities of the Organization to be suspended owing to resource constraints. These activities are vital to the implementation of certain objectives of the Organization, such as decent work, poverty alleviation, the elimination of child labour, rights of women and young persons, and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

We are concerned to see that donor contributions make up an increasing share of funding. We are not opposed in principle to extra-budgetary financing of technical cooperation, but we would not like the ILO to become a technical cooperation agency. We believe that the ILO's remit is much broader and much more is expected of it, as pointed out by other speakers; therefore we need to abandon the idea of a zero growth budget.

We are also concerned about certain tendencies to weaken the fundamental principles of the ILO that make it the unique Organization it is – this is the case of tripartism as the basis for social dialogue. Unfortunately, this tendency gives a bad example at the national level and can lead to dangerous experiments, as happened in the Russian Federation recently. We do not have a Ministry of Labour, which makes it difficult to hold consultations. These pseudo-reforms have shown that my country's Government is insufficiently concerned with labour relations. Moreover, we do have a commission on labour relations, but certain hasty and ill-conceived decisions have been made without consultation at the national level and without participation of the social partners. I could mention, for example, the conversion of certain social benefits into financial benefits, which had very negative consequences for the population. Of course, this mistake should be recognized; in my country taxpayers have paid twice for ill-conceived measures by the Government.

This year the Russian trade unions celebrated 100 years of activity, and called for strengthening social dialogue at every level as means of ensuring decent work and alleviating poverty in our country. This is why it is essential that the ILO be able to meet the challenges of the new millennium and that all member States assume their responsibilities.

Mr. NAKAJIMA (Worker, Japan)

The Director-General's Report this year represents a major change, reflecting the Director-General's determination to adjust the Organization's role to this changing world.

I would like to focus on the following three points.

The first is the fundamental role of the ILO to set standards appropriate to our times and to promote sustained implementation, including the drastic reform and review of standards.

Increasing globalization has deepened the interdependence of countries, making it impossible to determine independently the fundamental factors of securing employment, as well as maintaining and improving working conditions.

Such a state of affairs highlights more than ever the need to and the importance of setting and implementing international labour standards. Unfortunately, in recent years, some speakers at the International Labour Conference have expressed disregard for the role of standard setting.

Far too often we hear simplistic arguments regarding standard setting or technical assistance. However, technical assistance should be regarded as a part of this fundamental role, in order to build the social understanding which enables implementation. The absence of rules to ensure fairness or the inadequate application of such rules has created intolerable disparities everywhere and at every level, thus deepening social instability.

My second point is related to the budget, the basis for all activities.

The title of the programme and budget submitted to this International Labour Conference is "Making decent work a global goal". Nobody would oppose the concept in itself, with its aim of securing decent and productive employment. In order to achieve these goals, highly competent human resources are needed for the ILO to fulfil its role. Effective financial management is, of course, essential and excessive expenditure should never be permitted. Given the nature and activities of the ILO, its personnel costs should not be managed on the same basis as in industries or other institutions.

This being the case, the position adopted by certain representatives of governments making larger contributions to the ILO budget was inappropriate. They expressed a desire to see budget cuts, whilst disregarding the role of the ILO. Such a stance can only be described as being contrary to fair globalization and the sustainable development of decent work throughout the world.

Consider how small the ILO budget is compared to the military expenditure of super powers which amounts to billions of dollars a day. On top of that, ILO activities contribute to the creation of a peaceful society. The ILO's moral value should be matched in budgetary terms, and surely this would be more cost effective than military expenditure.

The third point is the importance of tripartism. This should be respected at all stages, from planning to evaluation. Tripartite mechanisms need to function more effectively if we are to adapt to these changing times. In the Director-General's Report, the importance of tripartism and its practical effectiveness are emphasized. Structural reform within the Office should be given due consideration so that workers' and employers' views on day-to-day mat-

ters can be directly conveyed to the Director-General through ACTRAV and ACTEMP.

Before concluding, I would like to share our experience.

As to implementation, the biggest issue for us is the restriction on fundamental trade union rights for public sector employees, on which subject the Committee on Freedom of Association has twice provided recommendations for reform, including drastic reform to legislation.

Negotiations between unions and the Government have been held, but, unfortunately, no real progress has been made.

The Government of Japan has a permanent seat on the Governing Body and it is the second largest contributor. It is naturally required to behave accordingly. At the very least, it is obliged to ratify and implement all of the core Conventions.

I shall conclude my speech by declaring our trade unions' determination to continue with efforts to achieve our goals through negotiation with the Government.

Original Spanish: Mr. MARTÍNEZ MOLINA (Worker, Chile)

Decent work is aspired to by millions of men and women in the world, who are struggling indefatigably to work their way out of poverty and social exclusion. Globalization and the implementation of a fixed model for economic development make it increasingly difficult to achieve this goal.

We can hear a cry and a warning from the streets because democracies have not been able to achieve decent working and living conditions. Economic globalization has increased the inequality between countries and within them.

The speed at which the world of work has changed, and will no doubt continue to change, obliges us to put the social dimension of globalization at centre stage. The constant threat of job scarcity should not weaken the need for decent work, because this is a vital element for the development of countries and is a tool for poverty reduction.

In Chile we have seen that economic growth on its own cannot solve the problem of social inequality, because policies for employment of high quality with better pay and social protection are needed.

While the ILO is trying to promote decent work, processes such as outsourcing of production and services where contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, recruiters and other third-party working relationships, are all working against this goal.

The way the world of work is organized today, where businesses are being split up, or are hiring third parties to deal with labour relations, gives rise to black market and precarious work, without social protection, with low wages and with unfair treatment, where those most affected are women and young people.

The working conditions for women show that they are only getting short-term and low-quality work. Their integration into the labour market has developed without taking gender issues into account. We must tackle the issue of child care and stop discrimination, both in wages and in treatment.

Young people are the most vulnerable group when it comes to trying to find jobs. The gateway into the world of work is your first job, which is a very important moment in the life of a young person, as it may be a determining factor for their professional future. The lack of experience as an excuse not to hire young people should not lead to

discrimination in their wages or in their rights. This is why we do not agree that young people should be offered work with a lower minimum wage than other people. Nor can we share the view that just because someone is young, the quality of work that they are offered does not matter. Today, many young people who are 18 or 19 years old already have responsibilities. They may have to provide for a family, either because their parents are unemployed, or because they already have become parents themselves.

We must promote vocational training programmes, invest in high-quality technical education, set up scholarship systems and encourage entrepreneurship. This way, we will not only be enabling our young people to get a decent job, but also to keep it.

Economic development is not an end in itself. Its objective must be to improve the standard of living of working men and women and it must be founded upon the values of freedom, justice and human dignity.

Original Spanish: Mr. TREJOS BALLESTERO (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Costa Rica)

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up contains one of the most pertinent objectives of our nations today – decent work. In an attempt to work our way out of poverty, Costa Rica has made the promotion of youth employment a policy priority. The issue illustrates the importance of introducing a social dimension into the global economy. Nevertheless, we are concerned over current statistics revealing that millions of people are unemployed, underemployed and made redundant throughout the world. Unfortunately, many of them are young people. We must remember that behind each and every one of these individuals reflected in the statistics there is a family that can often barely afford to buy food, let alone educate their children and that experiences tensions and conflicts resulting from these situations.

Social policy-making starts with appropriate economic policies, which should promote economic growth as a means to generate well-paying jobs. My Government's commitment to overcoming poverty, avoiding a deterioration of the employment situation and increasing productivity is central to this effort.

In this context, our Government promotes a public policy for young people through important strategies that create the necessary conditions for young people to have a decent life both in economic and social terms. One way to achieve this is by creating new opportunities in formal education. This naturally implies interlinking education, training, vocational training and skills development. The main objective is to provide young people with access to the labour market while protecting their dignity. The identity of a people is defined by their education. This is vital for building strong and secure families, provided that they can benefit from stable employment.

Youth employment thus becomes a fundamental prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Goals, especially those related to poverty reduction, education and gender equality.

The programmes developed by the National Apprenticeship Institute in Costa Rica entitled, *University for work* and *Bridging the divide*, provided young people with access to skill development pro-

grammes and vocational training through scholarships for young people at risk of social or economic exclusion.

I therefore share the sentiment the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Mr. Juan Somavia, expresses in his annual Report when he says that, "promoting entrepreneurship and enterprise creation is key to increasing employment generally and youth development in particular. From primary school onwards, we need to promote a culture of creativity in all fields of life".

This is a mission which the Government of Costa Rica would like to take up. The State is an invention of the people and, consequently, it should respond to their needs and their ambitions. One of those is work. It is a key concern, for it gives meaning and dignity to life and is put it at the service of humanity. Therefore, I would urge all countries attending this Conference to come together in commitment to developing fairer societies, advocating a different kind of globalization, with decent work for everyone and social justice.

Costa Rica, for its part, will continue working on the promotion and formulation of standards and recommendations in order to adapt our legislation and procedures to our commitments as a member State of this Organization.

We are deeply grateful and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Director-General, the International Labour Office in Geneva and the ILO Regional Office with headquarters in Costa Rica for their support and their cooperation in assisting our Government in its efforts to improve the implementation of the principles of the eight core Conventions Costa Rica has signed and ratified.

Mr. HAYAT (*Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Manpower, Pakistan*)

I thank the Director-General for a detailed introductory Report, which proposes guidelines for the future work of the Conference.

It is a time to ponder whether we have fulfilled the commitments we have undertaken to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implement the decisions taken in Copenhagen, Beijing, Monterrey, Johannesburg and Doha, and to take stock of what we have achieved in the past few years.

For some, these are the best times spurred by growth, investment and globalization, but for the majority these are the worst times, with over 1 billion people surviving on less than US\$1 a day, nearly 3 billion on less than US\$2 a day, 11 million children dying every year of preventable disease, 114 million children lacking access to basic education, and 190 million people facing unemployment. Despite such massive difficulties, the world has never been closer to eradicating hunger and poverty within our lifetime than it is today, with its financial resources, technical means and workable blueprints for national and international actions. What is lacking is the political will, both at the national and international levels. We believe that the ILO, with its unique tripartite structure, can play a leading role at the multilateral level to eradicate poverty. This can be achieved through decent work and gainful employment. It is a matter of pride for us that the last Governing Body adopted the Global Employment Agenda under the chairmanship of Pakistan.

It has been through sheer perseverance, sincerity and above all focused politics that we have man-

aged to achieve a turnaround in Pakistan's economy. The current economic stability is one result of wide-ranging measures aimed at limiting the role of the public sector, expanding private sector participation, strengthening regulatory responsibilities of the Government and allowing market forces to define broad contours of pricing and production.

During the past several years our economy has grown steadily at nearly 6 per cent, despite severe economic shocks. Pakistan has achieved a growth rate of 8.4 per cent during the financial year 2004-05. Pakistan is determined to translate its macro-economic strengths into a sustained effort to raise the living standards of its people by increasing development expenditure.

Development budgets at both the federal and provincial levels have been considerably increased, with a focus on poverty alleviation and social sector development. The poverty reduction strategy paper and the medium-term development framework developed by the Government with considerable technical input from the ILO, have put the social sector at the centre of development planning. In a meeting of the National Security Council chaired by President Pervez Musharraf on 8 June 2005, it was announced that under the medium-term development framework 2005-10, some 7 million jobs would be created in the country to reduce unemployment from the present 7.5 per cent to 4 per cent. Such measures will also bring down poverty by 30 per cent. Pakistan is committed to investment in the socio-economic sector that will lead to an increase in the income of our people, which will in turn contribute towards sustainability of a favourable investment climate. Further investment should lead to the creation of more gainful employment in the country.

The Director-General's Report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories once again makes grim reading. Despite some successes in the peace process, the situation of the Palestinians in general, and Palestinian workers in particular, continues to remain harsh. This has been aggravated by the construction of the so-called security barrier which has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice. Numerous closures, checkpoints, roadblocks, fences and other aspects of occupation gravely restrict the movement of persons and goods in and around territories, resulting in great hardship.

Poverty continues to grow in the region and we fully agree with the assessment of Mr. Saeb Erakat, Palestinian Minister of Negotiations, that the best way of fighting terror is to revive hope. With a youth unemployment rate of 40 per cent and approximately half the population living below the national poverty line, there is hardly any hope in the region. We need to revive hope and peace.

Mr. ZARB (*Worker, Malta*)

I want to congratulate the Director-General for his clear elaboration of the struggle against forced labour. This year's Report deals with forced labour and links it to human trafficking. An environment in which these two distasteful practices are tolerated is one which does not abide by the principle of social justice.

On the other hand, an environment which combats effective forced labour entails both collective bargaining and social welfare.

Free collective bargaining gives workers the right to negotiate their conditions of work without any

interference by the State. In such a system labour cannot be forced as the system considers both sides – employers and workers – to be equal actors. Therefore, legislation against any form of forced labour is a step in the right direction and it can be reinforced through the introduction of free collective bargaining.

Social justice supports free collective bargaining. However, it also provides the impetus for the establishment of social security systems. Social security systems provide a whole spectrum of services, ranging from education to pensions. Where such systems are in place, the push factor for human trafficking is greatly diminished, while at the same time human dignity is promoted. Social partners – government, employers and trade unions – are duty bound to see that such systems are not only installed but function smoothly. Moreover, it is our duty to promote such systems in countries where forced labour and human trafficking exist. One might assume that countries where such situations seem not to exist are taking very limited action. This is not the case, as the action plan proposed by the Director-General indicates. Thus, trade unions must extend their actions to the informal sector of the economy.

Regrettably, many governments and employers are exploiting the current global economic circumstances in order to undermine the conditions of work, even in the formal sector.

The General Workers' Union (GWU) was instrumental in introducing free collective bargaining to Malta. Yet, we are gravely concerned that our system is once again being threatened.

Last February, the Maltese Government introduced new amendments to reduce the workers' vacation leave. This legislation goes against the spirit of free collective bargaining and, therefore, the collective agreements themselves.

Recently, our Government was put to the test when the unions came together to discuss the option of an abrogative referendum to give back the workers what is theirs and what, above all, has already been agreed to in collective agreements. However, the discussions were severely undermined when the Government threatened to further alter working conditions if the unions persisted in calling for a referendum.

We are very worried that such an attitude will lead to the gradual dismantling of the collective bargaining system that we have managed to build up and sustain over the last 50 years.

Unfortunately, the Government's attitude is setting an example to employers not only to trim down the working conditions of the employees, but also to make it harder for the unions to extend their actions into the informal sector.

We strongly believe that the slow dismantling of our systems gives rise to forced labour and human trafficking and encourages, through example, those States where such unpleasant practices are openly endorsed.

Original Arabic: Mr. DJILANI (Employer, Tunisia)

I have the pleasure to extend my deepest thanks to Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, for the valuable ideas and proposals set forth in his Report regarding the social and economic issues of concern today.

All countries are exerting huge efforts to address the issue of employment, a major component of so-

cial and political stability. Developing countries in particular are facing huge difficulties in meeting this challenge as a result of the competition generated by the expansion of globalization, the collapse of economic borders and the reduction of protectionist measures. In Tunisia, there is an awareness of the importance of employment and the extent to which it reflects on society. The authorities have given special attention to the issue, an issue which was on the top priority of the electoral platform and programme of His Excellency President Zein El-Abidine Ben Ali, who adopted a number of initiatives to promote employment and encourage entrepreneurship, focusing on the recruitment of graduates, who represent half of all new jobseekers. This number is likely to increase in the future owing to the educational and human resource development policies of Tunisia. The State has also embarked, in cooperation with the social partners, on new initiatives to promote and improve training and retraining within enterprises as a prerequisite for meeting the employment challenge. We are all called on to pursue our efforts in that direction as this will create an enabling environment that will attract foreign investments and reinforce the competitiveness of our enterprises on both the local and foreign markets.

Meeting the employment challenge is indeed a collective responsibility which requires of us a spirit of consensus and commitment to abide by the principles of social peace and to avoid action that damages the competitiveness of our enterprises, in a difficult and changeable environment.

The new developments on the economic international arena have imposed on our enterprises the search for new horizons and a move towards new occupations that reflect the development of society. We think greater emphasis is needed on the value-added industrial activities or "knowledge society" activities, which are crucial for boosting enterprise and creating employment, especially for graduates. We also have to give due attention to the services sector, which are essential for meeting the challenges, especially regarding the use new technologies. I would like to call on you to participate in the second stage of the World Summit on the Information Society to be hosted by Tunisia next November, so that we can all contribute to reducing the "digital divide" between the North and the South and creating international solidarity that will open the way to a fairer globalization offering equality of opportunity for global human development.

Many developing countries are facing difficult conditions as a result of the end of the Multifibre Agreement in the textile field; the pursuit of economic openness policies, and the accession of new member States to the WTO. I think this situation requires us to review some aspects related to global fair competition, to oppose resolutely policies of dumping and parallel trade and to work on respecting the social rights of employees. This would make all countries equal in terms of opportunities, so that only cost-effectiveness, competence and quality would differentiate countries from one another, in accordance with internationally agreed standards and principles.

Allow me at the end to reiterate our solidarity and our support to the just Palestinian cause, to the right of the Palestinian people to build their own independent State within recognized borders, and to live in peace like other peoples in the region.

And I cannot but express my deepest thanks, and my heartfelt appreciation to the ILO for all its efforts to give us this opportunity to express our concerns and to have a dialogue with the other social partners on the most important economic and social issues that are in the international arena today.

Mr. MARICA (*Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, Suriname*)

The Government of the Republic of Suriname, on the threshold of renewed administrative responsibilities, is taking the time to reflect on where the broadly accepted national socio-economic policies have brought its people. While labour policy has come to the fore as an essential part of national socio-economic policy, much still remains to be achieved; this is a shared responsibility and commitment of all the social partners in achieving national goals and success. Surinamese society strives for collective and individual well-being by means of work. Further integration and centralization, and a coherent approach to labour and national policies, need to be developed. In this respect, the ILO, through its Regional Offices, should promote the strengthening of sound labour administration. This would be instrumental in establishing good practices and achieving the goals of the Decent Work Agenda. In this regard, the Government of Suriname strongly welcomes the decent work country programmes. We share the expectation that they will strengthen the capacity of tripartite involvement, and will be part of the policy-making process at several levels.

In Suriname, recent years were characterized by macroeconomic and political stability, social peace, the strengthening of democratic structures, and a policy aimed at attracting investors and facilitating the operation of enterprises. This has led to the creation of numerous new decent jobs and job opportunities in the formal sector. The Government of Suriname supports the ILO's view that having a fair chance of finding and keeping a decent job is critical for successful action on poverty reduction. In this regard, the ILO should seek alternative possibilities and promote the philosophy put forward in the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

I can proudly report that in Suriname we achieved consensus on labour issues at various levels of the established structures for consultation, cooperation and participation. To strengthen the tripartite voice, the three social partners once again renewed their strong commitment to tripartite guidance of the Labour Minister by their active participation in the Labour Advisory Board. High priorities for measures to be taken by the Ministry of Labour were determined on an equal footing. Promoting entrepreneurship in order to increase employment, especially youth employment, has been a key component of national labour policy and a specific aim of some active tripartite cooperation bodies within the labour administration for a number of years.

In the first half of this year, the social partners started discussions regarding the principle of minimum wages and obtained a certain degree of consensus on that, particularly on their respective roles in the process. They are seriously committed to enhancing the preparatory work and social dialogue with a view to introducing such a system. Obviously, there are some lessons to be learned by Suriname in this matter. Therefore, I strongly endorse

the suggestion made by the Director-General to create better conditions to support exchange of experience among developing countries on those issues on which there is common interest.

Equal employment and income opportunities for women and men are an essential part of the four pillars of decent work. At present, Suriname, in tackling youth unemployment, enables young persons to take full advantage of job opportunities as its economy expands in areas such as tourism, construction and mining. After years of discussion and good practices established by the civil service and social partners, the issue of paid maternity leave and related provisions are considered a high priority for tripartite dialogue in the short term. Commitment and cooperation on the part of the Ministry of Social Affairs are required on this. I therefore welcome acknowledgement of the need to strengthen the Ministry of Social Affairs as part of the four interlinked sets of action by the ILO.

Because Suriname is a developing country, the impact of modern global changes is experienced in a rather different way. The report for the 95th Session of the Conference, entitled *The employment relationship* confirms the special attention the Government needs to give to new patterns of work and employment relationships. It compelled the Government to identify and initiate measures to deal with new threats facing workers. In this respect, enactment of legislation to protect workers and maintain an acceptable quality of existing and new jobs is a high priority of our Labour Ministry.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of international cooperation and the mobilization of sufficient resources for technical cooperation in order to secure assistance for developing countries to overcome the undeniable shocks of globalization. That is why we commend the suggestion of the African Finance Ministers that the present context, characterized by a strong correlation between poverty and lack of decent work, requires that employment be placed at the heart of national development priorities.

Mr. LEE (*Worker, Republic of Korea*)

I am greatly honoured to have this opportunity to make speech at this session of the Conference on behalf of 15 million Korean workers.

As the ILO report on globalization pointed out, workers all around the world have been facing job insecurity and their livelihood is threatened by the serious challenge of globalization based on neoliberalism.

The Republic of Korea is no exception; workers have been suffering from instability of employment and mass lay-offs due to continued restructuring. Almost half of them have already been relegated to non-traditional forms of employment. Given this situation, the Korean Government has been trying to enact a law to protect such workers. Its effort is not, however, supported by workers, because the draft law lacks protective measures and includes provisions likely to increase the number of atypical workers.

The problems faced by such workers are more serious in the Republic of Korea, where there is no social security net and where there is extreme discrimination against workers in temporary as opposed to permanent jobs and most of the workers in temporary jobs are in that situation involuntarily.

As a result, the employment situation is getting more and more precarious and far removed from the decent work described by Mr. Somavia. That is why the FKTU and KCTU are pushing ahead with protective legislation aimed at preventing possible abuse of and discrimination against atypical workers.

I greatly hope that this opportunity will be taken to introduce measures as soon as possible to guarantee job security for atypical workers, who are some of the most underprivileged today, through worldwide tripartite consultations conducted in a more reasonable and mature manner.

As you are well aware, the Korean Government has ratified only 20 ILO Conventions since it joined the Organization in 1991. Some core Conventions on the freedom of association have not yet been ratified by the Republic of Korea. That is one of the reasons why the Committee on Freedom of Association has been monitoring Korean workers' rights for years. In this connection, the Korean Government recently announced a "roadmap" to improve industrial relations, as part of an effort to revise labour laws and industrial relations systems to bring them into line with international labour standards.

Although we commend such an effort on the part of the Korean Government, we have to point out that the roadmap is not fully acceptable, because some aspects of it, such as permission to use temporary workers, the introduction and strengthening of employers' rights to take countermeasures and the statutory ban on the payment of wages to full-time union officials, are not in accordance with international labour standards.

I therefore sincerely hope that the Korean Government will reform labour laws and industrial relations systems in conformity with international labour standards and will promptly ratify ILO Conventions, including those on freedom of association.

We have received a Report on forced labour at this session of the International Labour Conference. This is one of the main issues of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted at the 86th Session of the International Labour Conference in 1998.

In this regard I have to express deep regret that the case of the "comfort women" used by Japanese soldiers during the Second World War was again excluded from the list of individual cases examined by the Committee on the Application of Standards.

As you may know, the case of "comfort women" has been discussed continuously for nearly ten years since it was first filed with the ILO in 1995.

The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has in several reports made it clear that the case involves not only a violation of the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), but also a serious crime which brutally infringed human rights. It has repeatedly recommended that the Japanese Government should take appropriate measures to meet the demands of the victims.

Moreover, the Workers' group of the Committee in the Application of Standards is submitting a special proposal to this session of the Conference calling for the representatives of the Japanese Government and Employers to hold a meeting with all concerned parties, including the tripartite representatives of Japan and related trade unions, to find a solution to this matter. However, the Japanese Government has not yet responded to this proposal.

Against this backdrop, I strongly urge the Japanese Government and Employers to immediately accept this proposal and to take appropriate measures, including official apologies and compensation to the victims. At the same time, I also ask the ILO to devote more attention and efforts to an early resolution of this case.

(Mr. Chiriboga takes the Chair.)

Mr. AKSAM (*Worker, Indonesia*)

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Director-General for his extensive work in promoting the Decent Work Agenda. This occasion also provides me with the opportunity to reiterate, on behalf of the Indonesian workers and on my own behalf, our profound gratitude and deepest appreciation to all who have given sympathy, valuable support and assistance during the aftermath of the tsunami disaster in Indonesia, particularly in the Aceh Province.

With deepest sadness, I want to inform the Conference that approximately 3,300 trade unionists are believed to have died or are missing out of the 69,000 registered trade unionists of all sectors, including teachers' associations in the province of Aceh. This tragic loss has made a significant impact on trade union activities in the province, not to mention the hardship facing their family members. In this regard, my delegation and all Indonesian trade unions would like to extend our gratitude to the ILO, ICFTU, GUFs, WCL and other trade union organizations for their continuing support and assistance by establishing their representative offices in the Aceh Province.

The earthquake and tsunami hit Indonesia at a time when the Government was still continuing the process of economic recovery. Currently, economic growth in Indonesia is not sufficient to create more jobs to address the high unemployment problem, mostly among young people. Facing and addressing the challenges of youth employment in the country, the Government of Indonesia has already established an Indonesian Youth Employment Network and developed an Indonesian Youth Employment Action Plan. With these efforts, we are committed to promoting and raising awareness of youth employment in society, so that we may mobilize partners and other stakeholders to draw up programmes of action.

We welcome the Government's efforts to boost economic growth by introducing several laws and regulations in order to attract foreign investment. Furthermore, the Government has finalized its labour law programmes with the enactment of three major laws, on the trade unions, on manpower and on labour dispute settlement. Nevertheless, we are rather disappointed with the recognition of flexible employment as mentioned in the Manpower Act because it adversely affects workers' status. On that particular issue, the worker's status could be easily switched from that of a regular worker to one of a subcontractor or they could be given a temporary employment contract. It will create unsustainable employment relations, low wages and low social protection.

We believe that the new labour laws and their implementation are inadequate and unable to generate investor confidence, create employment or protect the fundamental rights and the interests of the workers effectively. We are of the view that the

Government should do more to correct this kind of situation in order to establish and maintain a sustainable, sound, harmonious and fair labour relationship, which we believe will promote an enabling environment for investment, increase productivity in the global market, create more job opportunities and respect workers' rights as well as social justice.

We welcome that the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration has now seriously committed to improving the labour administration in the country to ensure the proper and effective implementation of all labour policies and regulations by developing a new paradigm for industrial relations.

Based on the above rationale, and as an integral part of the present Government's commitment, the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, together with the ILO, organized a national tripartite summit on industrial relations priorities in January 2005. The summit agreed to adopt eight important recommendations which served as guidelines for the Government and its social partners. With those guidelines, the tripartite constituents reached a consensus on the main priorities of each constituent on the various issues and problems that they faced. The participants also agreed to continue working towards establishing and maintaining sound and stable industrial relations in Indonesia. Accordingly, the workers hope that the Government will implement a recommendation to develop clear and realistic policies and programmes of action as part of their commitments. We firmly believe that this will benefit all parties.

Finally, we want to encourage real social dialogue and not just another campaign for formalities and political moves. We rely on the ILO, which has an important role in encouraging and assisting trade union movements and other social partners to develop better industrial relations in Indonesia, especially in respect of workers' rights and social justice, as I mentioned earlier.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT (Mr. CHIRIBOGA)

Thank you very much, Mr. Aksam. On behalf of the Conference, I would like to say to you and the people of Indonesia that we are with you, with your workers, your Government and your employers. We express our sincere condolences for the tragedy that hit your country.

Original Spanish: Ms. ESCOTO ABREU (Employer, Dominican Republic)

The Employers' delegation of the Dominican Republic welcomes the stimulating reflections of the Director-General. We agree that what is at stake today is the value and dignity of work in our society. We fully support the four strategic objectives of the ILO whose role is more important than ever in today's globalized world. Our main aim should be to promote public policies in our societies, providing decent and high-quality work for a growing workforce, especially to young people. We must try to improve gender equality and face up to the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

A multilateral approach is vital, for we will only achieve the Millennium Development Goals if our countries are given the wherewithal to deal with the challenges we face.

For employers in the Dominican Republic, achieving these laudable objectives entails greater fairness and justice in the world. It means that we must take a realistic view of the problem of foreign

debt that affects the countries of the South. It requires greater coordination at an international level with the Bretton Woods institutions and it means financial agencies taking on greater responsibility at an international, regional, national and local level.

Thus, at a national level, increased budgetary resources must be allocated to education, health and productive transformation with equity.

Furthermore, we need a stable legal and investment environment so that savings and investment flows create a virtuous cycle that renders labour markets dynamic. Consequently, democracy and development will, in the words of Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics and one of the main ideologists of the human development paradigm, act as a process "expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy".

Owing to the collapse of three banks, the Dominican Republic once again finds itself within the framework of an IMF agreement that is currently being applied against the backdrop of a fragile domestic labour market. The various adjustments and sacrifices required mean that we have to create a consensus and a high degree of tolerance, dialogue and political consultation.

From an official standpoint, the objective of macroeconomic stability has been achieved. Fiscal and social reforms are under way and a programme called "First we must eat" should enable us to assist the most vulnerable amongst us.

The employers' sector, aware of its role in society, is speeding up private sector social responsibility programmes and we have a wide range of civil society organizations carrying out different activities in their respective fields in order to respond to the population's needs, to create productive work and to mitigate the effects of the stabilization programme.

The concept of protection networks aimed at lessening the impact of this structural adjustment programme is an essential element in preserving the social fabric of the nation.

New economic forces are pushing us towards a greater integration of the informal economy into the national development effort, with micro, small and medium-sized enterprises playing an active role in creating employment and in providing technological innovation. Meanwhile, our larger companies are undergoing productive transformation to enable them to find new niche markets and respond to new market parameters.

This process of change is aided by the information industry and the surge in new commercial activities in light of the free trade agreements coming into play in this part of the Western hemisphere.

In accordance with the eight core ILO Conventions that have been ratified and are in force in our country, employers' organizations have taken it upon themselves to improve best practice in this area.

We are currently focusing our efforts on concluding a wide-ranging social pact that will prepare the way for a national plan for the next 20 years.

Against this backdrop, the Economic, Social and Institutional Council has an active role to play. We would appreciate the cooperation of the ILO, as the oldest agency in the United Nations system with a mandate covering social dialogue, in giving a structure to this role.

If the aim of this house is to pursue lasting peace, the well-being of humankind, harmony and unity in

diversity; if we are to successfully face up to the challenges of an increasingly complex world, afflicted by doubt, insecurity and the shadow of war which contribute nothing to human development, then we believe that the time has come to rethink the way in which the ILO acts and the structure of the United Nations system.

Only by introducing a new culture of international cooperation will we be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and make progress with regard to human development.

Finally, I would ask all the actors in my country, as a symbolic act, to join hands and thus seal a pact to work as a team for a better nation, the Dominican Republic.

Original French: Mr. AKOUETE (representative, Democratic Organization of African Workers' Trade Union)

First of all, on behalf of the ODSA I would like to thank the Director-General for this Report which is concise and targeted on the real concerns of African workers in general, and the organizations affiliated to the ODSA in particular.

Major challenges are addressed in this Report and in the framework of this discussion. Allow me first of all, to dwell on one fundamental question, namely the ILO Programme and Budget for 2006-07.

Although it may be true that we have to consolidate progress in order to move forward, such an enterprise can only be undertaken with adequate means and with the help of all constituents. Failing that, achievements will be undermined and our international organization, the ILO, will enter into unprecedented regression.

Strengthening the ILO no doubt will contribute to strengthening social justice and, consequently, strengthen the peace that our African continent so desperately needs.

In today's world, marked by globalization and liberalism, decent and productive work must be the focal point of ILO activities if we want African workers to emerge from the increasing poverty that afflicts them.

This is why we place great hope in the follow-up of the meeting between social partners, in particular at the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Ouagadougou in September 2004. This initiative holds great hope for us in the light of the stated political will, but operational and institutional capacities must be adapted accordingly.

The same applies to youth employment. Africa has a huge youth potential and these young people must participate in development.

The solution of entrepreneurship or the creation of enterprises proposed by the Director-General is very interesting and commendable. However, this proposal presupposes access to credit or to a financial system which grants the poor and young people access to finance, which is neither easy nor obvious in African countries. We therefore must support the follow-up to the Declaration of the social partners adopted in Ouagadougou.

This seems a good moment to tackle the question of forced labour that the Director-General raises in his Report. Young people are the principal victims of forced labour in the world today, firstly because of their youth and physical strength and also because the majority of migration applicants are young persons. This year's Global Report shows

that no country is spared this age-old scourge, which continues to exist.

We must make efforts to generate attitudinal changes in those who perpetuate this practice, but we must also eliminate overly rigid migration policies, which force migration applicants who seek a way out of poverty into the hands of slave traders or down the dangerous path of illegality. Social dialogue and technical cooperation have a major role to play in this. At this point we cannot fail to address normative activities and the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Standards and normative frameworks must be strengthened. This is one of the reasons why we have already expressed our strong support for a budget increase. ODSA believes that standards must by no means depend on extra-budgetary resources. The situation of Palestinians in general, and that of Palestinian workers in particular, is intolerable and deteriorates every year. The question is raised virtually each year and we think it is time to enter into firm commitments in the interests of all Palestinian workers.

This forum also gives me the opportunity to mention the situations of war, political instability and demographic deficit which are common currency in Africa.

Finally, we wish the Director-General courage in the efforts that he will continue to make for the improvement of working conditions throughout the world and in Africa in particular.

Mr. STEYNE (Worker, United Kingdom)

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) and its 69 affiliated unions organize and campaign for equality and fairness at work for all in Britain – whether British citizens or migrants, women or men, young or old, black or white, disabled or not, gay or straight. And we are committed internationalists, working within the global unions for decent work, for a social dimension to globalization, for a social Europe, for universal application of fundamental rights at work and to relegate poverty to history.

Our resources are not unlimited. We have set priorities for solidarity support for free trade unions, in particular in Colombia, Zimbabwe, Palestine and Iraq. Because tripartism, social dialogue and full respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining – free from violence and intimidation – are cornerstones of equitable development, as too are peace, democracy, freedom of expression, of movement and non-discrimination. So, on the one hand, we urge governments to support the ILO special funds for Colombia and for Palestine. On the other, we are astonished and dismayed at the election of the Belarus Government to the Governing Body.

A strengthened ILO in a strengthened United Nations is essential for the rule of international law. Last year, in our debate on the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards, I appealed to all member States to treat cases objectively on the evidence and not to cloud them with political or economic interests.

After several years in which the Committee on the Application of Standards failed to reflect adequately the vendetta against Colombia's trade unions, we have at last agreed on the need for a tripartite mission to assess the veracity of evidence supplied to the ILO and the implementation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), in law and practice. As

true friends of Colombia, we hope the mission will bear fruit for the country and its trade unionists.

The ILO, with its unique tripartite structure and underpinned by international labour standards, is a key instrument of global solidarity. Thus, we urge all Members, including the G8, to support policy coherence in the common family, and urgently to establish an equitable system of international trade and finance to promote sustainable development, decent work and quality public services in all countries.

Our internationalism and commitment to partnership means the TUC fully supports the parity of all ILO constituents. My Government, in the March Governing Body budget debate, was one of those which implied that, because it was a major contributor, its voice should bear greater weight than those of other, less wealthy States.

We do not share that view. ILO contributions, based on United Nations assessments, rightly reflect national wealth. TUC urges the British Government to join the consensus and to vote for the adoption of the budget.

We applaud, however, the United Kingdom's extra-budgetary donations to the ILO, but we note that the four Governing Body Members which opposed the Director-General's proposals for a minimal 1.1 per cent increase are among precisely the biggest extra-budgetary donors. We fully endorse the Director-General's plea that all donors should support all four ILO strategic objectives, including standards and social dialogue, and the programme and strategy determined democratically in the tripartite Governing Body, and we believe there should be direct lines from ACTRAV and ACT/EMP to the Director-General.

We are pleased that zero budget growth will not continue into the next biennium, but the increase remains insufficient to meet the inexorable growth in the demands of constituents. Work on export processing zones and the informal economy is a priority, not least because it is in these largely feminized sectors that women are disproportionately denied their fundamental rights at work, and both sectors require universal coverage of labour inspection. So, we regret that the vital cross-departmental work we agreed on those subjects and on corporate social responsibility is without specific budget allocations.

Let me conclude by stressing that the social behaviour of international business is measured against the standards of the community in which it operates, and that means ILO standards. So, corporate social responsibility is positive only if it promotes those standards. The British trade union movement is deeply engaged with major enterprises; and, indeed, with NGOs which support the unique representative role of trade unions, in promoting those standards and mature industrial relations in global supply chains. The ILO has lagged behind the global corporate social responsibility movement, yet it has a fundamental role to play in bringing coherence. It has the intellectual property rights to international labour standards, yet other non-tripartite or private bodies are attempting to usurp that role. All ILO constituents should recognize our common interest in ensuring that, in the field of corporate social responsibility, tripartism, social dialogue and the coherence of our agreed ILO standards prevail.

Original French: Mr. LARCHER (Minister for Employment, Labour and Young Persons Entering Professional Life, France)

For several years, the International Labour Organization has made the promotion of decent work worldwide the focus of its activities. This objective, which France entirely supports, is particularly important in the run-up to the Millennium+5 Summit and in the light of the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. In this respect, it would seem useful if a forthcoming session of the International Labour Conference were to place this issue on its agenda.

We do indeed share the conviction expressed in the Report of the Director-General that the centrality of productive employment for poverty eradication needs to be given greater emphasis than was contained in the Millennium Goals. I and many other ministers did make this point last February in New York during the debates of the Commission for Social Development.

In France, that was the thrust of the general policy statement issued yesterday by the new Prime Minister, Mr. de Villepin, which received the support of most Members of Parliament, and in which he made employment and the need for it central to all policies. Obviously, fighting poverty means first and foremost finding a job for everyone in each of our countries. Harmonious social development will be impossible without growth bringing plenty of jobs, high-quality jobs.

In the less-developed countries, basic needs for health, education, food and clean water cannot be met satisfactorily if there is a dearth of jobs and insufficiently solvent demand.

It will not be possible to eradicate forced labour, this modern form of slavery, unless, as is advocated in the Global Report entitled *A global alliance against forced labour*, jobs are created which make it possible to choose one's occupation freely. This will not be possible without the implementation of economic, social and cultural integration programmes. Nor will it be possible to promote the employment of women in decision-taking posts without greater equality in employment and more jobs for women.

The attainment of most of the Millennium Development Goals therefore depends on the creation of productive employment which, in turn, is intimately linked with the promotion of decent work. In this context, youth employment is a central challenge, which has been examined and discussed by the Conference in the general debate, which was based on an integrated approach.

The meeting of G8 ministers in London last March, in which I participated, emphasized the importance of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) and the value of a comprehensive approach like that typified by the European Youth Pact.

Similarly, stress was placed on the introduction of national programmes for the employment and training of young people designed to achieve intergenerational harmony and, this is vital, which include skills which can be upgraded throughout a person's working life.

I am convinced that the plan of action which we must devise must give pride of place to exchanges of experience and good practices not only between North and South, but also between emerging countries and developing countries. In this respect, the ILO can offer real additional operational experience

in the development of North-South exchanges. This action plan should also give high priority to sandwich courses.

The Conference has also been instructed to develop a flexible instrument to promote occupational health and safety. You have drafted a Convention setting out guidelines and committing States and both sides of industry to promote a prevention culture and industrial health and to work out national health and industrial safety strategies. This is a subject of fundamental importance, where the notion of a community in the workplace is meaningful.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm France's support for the activities which ILO is carrying out with admittedly limited resources but which we now hope, in the wake of the Governing Body's initiative, will be increased moderately in the next biennium, thus breaking with 15 years of zero growth.

In this new context, the ILO absolutely must be efficient, transparent and coordinate its activities on the ground. We therefore hope that national decent work programmes will be a complete success and will permit a tripartite approach in each country, thus making it possible to achieve a better linkage between economic and social aspects and decompartmentalize ILO activities on the ground, thereby improving their efficiency to the benefit of all.

Mr. ABDELLA (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ethiopia*)

We deeply appreciate the Director-General's Introduction to the International Labour Conference: *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, which critically analyses the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda. The four basic principles and the strategies that will enable us to bring about social justice are embedded in the ideas of social justice, equity and peace. Ethiopia's poverty reduction strategies and programmes have much to do with the four strategies noted by the Director-General.

Ethiopia has always observed and respected international labour standards. We are party to the fundamental Conventions. The rights of the people in general, and of workers in particular, are protected in both law and practice, as enshrined in international labour standards. The provisions of the labour standards are applied as the source of fundamental social rights and are a means of enforcing sanctions on those who violate them. We believe that the promotion of these principles and the monitoring of their application should be further strengthened.

Ethiopia's key sector development policies and strategies have employment implications. The policy gives emphasis to a labour-intensive strategy because labour-intensive production could accelerate sustainable growth and capital intensive production in the Ethiopian situation. This could be more easily attained in the agricultural sector than in other sectors, since there are ample or untapped natural resources that can be utilized to accelerate production on the one hand and a huge labour force on the other.

Nevertheless, a labour-intensive agricultural development strategy should not imply that the labour force employed would remain unskilled. Our policy seeks the introduction of labour-intensive strategies and helps to employ modern agricultural inputs and practices, while the mechanism to be used is the adoption of new agricultural techniques and an effective labour force.

Ethiopia considers the employment of youth and women to be a priority. This major policy shift is manifested in education policy, which gives more emphasis than it did before to technical and vocational training. This could pave the way to more employment opportunities for these groups of society than would arise as a result of an academic education. More importantly, it could promote self-employment and job creation for women and young people.

Ethiopia continues to implement the principles of social dialogue and tripartite consultation. These principles are being used to resolve conflicts, in the drafting and implementation of development policies and in carrying out sound reforms. They have become a tradition, not only in the workplace, but also in the process of policy development, planning and implementation. In the workplace, the social partners pass resolutions on the basis of consultation. These principles have become a day-to-day reality in the employer-employee relationship. The Labour Proclamation and other pertinent rules and regulations are being implemented on the basis of tripartite negotiations.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be a serious problem in Ethiopia and the ILO has provided a viable strategic mechanism aimed at preventing and eventual eradication of this worldwide scourge in the labour sector whose harmful effects are much more felt in countries with a high rate of poverty. Based on the national policy of the HIV/AIDS prevention and the control programme and as part of the overall effort, a plan is already developed to institute a funding scheme in the workplace. The fund would enable victims to be treated properly and will be used as a means to organize more awareness-creation programmes in order to make everybody a more active participant in the protection campaign, and in this connection, a resolution has been adopted to collect 2 per cent of the total annual budget of each organization.

Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation to the ILO and to the Director-General for their efforts towards the promotion of fundamental rights at work throughout the world, by enhancing a culture and organization of dialogue between the social partners. This would promote the further development of the social dimension of globalization with a view to augmenting social justice and creating a peaceful environment in the workplace.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL MANAA (*Employer, Qatar*)

The ILO has continued to bring the countries of the world closer through this Conference. It is an organization which strives to create equal relations between the social partners, governments, employers and workers. Since its inception, the Organization has worked tirelessly to promote this dialogue and has thus helped to better define relations between the social partners and to create a propitious environment for a free economy which, in turn, fosters the development of a fair and equitable society. The human being is at the centre of the work and the principles of this Organization.

The dialogue which the International Labour Organization promotes is vital and helps us solve a number of problems in our societies. However, the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories is such that our discussions today appear entirely unrelated to the reality lived by those people on the ground. It is a reality where vir-

tue and beauty fade into the background and values dwindle. The death of many women and children in the past five years, the detention of a great number of prisoners in Israeli gaols, and not least rising unemployment levels among Palestinians, illustrate the gravity of the situation. We must step back and ask ourselves what we have done to help these victims.

The equality between the social partners to which we aspire is not a mere slogan, we must give it substance and translate our idealistic principles into reality. So long as one child goes hungry in this world, then we will not have complied fully with our goals and principles.

Mr. KIM (*Employer, Republic of Korea*)

This year's Report of the Director-General urged us to have a time for reflection to be used as a beachhead to move forward. It is a very timely suggestion because the time has come for us to step back to move one step ahead.

The efforts of the ILO enabled the issue of decent work to be debated in the multilateral system as an important task for social development.

Nevertheless, we cannot be satisfied with the quantitative growth of the discussion regarding employment, poverty and democratic governance, the themes to be discussed in the Millennium +5 report. In order to achieve qualitative growth, we need to look back on ourselves to find what problems we faced in the discussions; if, by any chance, we neglected the issue of employment of workers outside of the labour market because we were too immersed in the decent work of those already inside; or if we heightened the wall blocking access to the labour market in the name of the Decent Work Agenda.

At this important time for reflection, I would like to present to this Conference the following food for thought.

First, we have to note the diversity and relativity of decent work. The criteria for decent work will be different between developed and developing countries, manufacturing and services, large and small companies, and the unemployed and employed. Thus, what has to be considered foremost to achieve decent work is to create employment for the unemployed, the most marginalized group in the labour market.

Second, to create more jobs, a favourable environment for investment must be provided. Improving non-physical infrastructure, such as stable labour relations, is as essential as upgrading the physical one for the investment environment. ILO programmes to support industrial cooperation of countries need to be expanded for this purpose.

Third, to resolve the youth unemployment issue, the ILO needs to increase the allocation of budget and manpower. The Republic of Korea, with nearly 8 per cent youth unemployment as of the end of 2004 is no exception to this problem. As pointed out in the Director-General's Report, harnessing entrepreneurship and increasing domestic and foreign investment are an urgent task to address this problem.

Furthermore, the ILO has to urge the interest and efforts of member States to tackle the problem of imbalances between supply and demand of the workforce. Therefore, one of the important tasks of the ILO must be assistance to education programmes so that links between industry and schools

will help graduates adapt themselves to the changing industrial structure.

This year's Report asked Members to suggest how to change the form and style of the Conference in the future. Various suggestions may come forward for the Conference to be more dynamic. However, I would like to emphasize that all of these suggestions must be adjusted in view of cost and performance.

It is expected that events organized by Workers' and Employers' groups may offer desirable forums for active exchanges of views on matters of interest. However, I cannot ignore the concerns that they may lower efficiencies and distract the attention of Members from the Conference itself. In the same note, and to realize the true meaning of tripartism, it would be desirable to give a cautious approach to the participation of NGOs.

The expanding weight of regional conferences needs to be reviewed with interest, though these issues must also be considered in terms of efficiency and practicability. The Office has to put more effort into attaining substantial results from regional conferences. The Korea Employers' Federation will do its utmost to have a fruitful outcome through the ILO Asian Regional Meeting to be held in The Republic of Korea this October.

At this time for change, having the time for reflection is more opportune than ever. However, the change must be made to develop not for the sake of it. If we take this gathering to go over what we have done through ILO activities and take advantage of the results of the contemplation for the future, we will surely move one step further to proceed two steps forward.

Ms. LUCERO (*representative, Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions*)

I speak on behalf of the entire membership and leadership of the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions (BATU), to express our sincere appreciation at having been accorded this significant opportunity to meet and work with you once again.

BATU, the regional body in Asia of the World Confederation of Labour, has for more than four decades been a consistent participant in this august Conference, and an unwavering supporter and advocate of ILO programmes and activities, having been accorded a consultative status with the ILO. BATU is an active trade union and social movement in Asia that promotes mutual understanding among free, democratic trade unionists who are sincerely working for economic development and social progress for all, particularly working people.

A number of interventions have already focused on youth employment and we support that, but let me place more emphasis now on occupational safety and health.

I stand before you to add a small voice to the call of the ILO Director-General that decent work must be safe work. We are still a long way from achieving this goal, but I know we have taken cautious but positive steps since the adoption of the resolution concerning future action of the International Labour Organization in the field of working conditions and environment in 1975, which became the precursor to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155).

We take note of and congratulate all those who have contributed to the promulgation of national policies, programme and systems in preventing,

with the ultimate goal of reducing, if not eliminating, occupational hazards and illnesses befalling workers who are the backbone of our societies' progress. These workers take pride and prosperity in their work but accident, disease and death caused in the line of their duties wipe out their hopes and dignity.

Let me point out some significant findings, particularly among the developing countries of Asia, and express our concerns.

First, work-related accidents and illnesses are more prevalent in rapidly industrializing economies than developed and industrialized countries. Most Asian countries are in such a precarious situation that the desire for rapid industrialization and economic development might sacrifice concerns for safety and health of workers at the altar of cost-consciousness, productivity and profitability. It is encouraging to learn that efforts and interventions are made towards respect for the life and health of working people; that this social responsibility is taken into consideration and given precedence at all levels of any enterprise and national developmental plans and strategies.

The second point is that changes in work patterns give rise to subcontracting, home working, self-employment, migration and mobility of workers, particularly women workers. Changes in work patterns, on the other hand, increase the number of workers not only in small and medium-sized enterprises, but more so in the informal sector. Working in precariously bad conditions and unholy hours, these workers are most notably not covered by any social security. Casualties and suffering among these workers may not be included at all in recent statistics and studies. We hope that particular attention will be given to this swelling number of workers, particularly in depressed regions in Asia.

With perseverance and high hopes, the working women and men of BATU will extend their cooperation and share their visions with everyone and all organizations to work together to make work safe for all.

Original French: Mr. DE LA HAYE (representative, World Confederation of Teachers)

The World Confederation of Teachers (WCT) has read with great attention the Report of the Director-General and would like to congratulate him and, together with him, the whole of the ILO on the actions undertaken for decent work. For the WCT work, decent work, of course, is a value which contributes to the development of the individual, and of society.

Last year the International Labour Conference adopted the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195). This action does of course have a socio-economic impact, but it is also a strong signal of the importance of the human factor in the development of a form of globalization which will be beneficial to all.

Referring to the conclusions of the ILO Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Youth Employment in October 2004, the WCT would like to stress two conditions required to achieve the ILO's objectives in the field of decent work in general, and of youth in particular.

The first is that it is necessary to develop, both at national and international levels, economic policies which create and do not destroy jobs. If work is truly recognized as a value of human and social de-

velopment, we have the shared responsibility to ensure that decent jobs are created which ensure full employment.

Report VI – *Youth: Pathways to decent work* – specifies rightly that the low demand for labour penalizes young people much more than the rest of the working population. They are more vulnerable to the vagaries of the economic cycle and, consequently, are more exposed to exclusion.

The second condition for decent work is to guarantee good quality lifelong education for all. In our knowledge-based society in which the production of the intangible increasingly takes prevalence over the creation of the tangible, only good quality education can give access to decent work. Only lifelong education for all will enable men and women to participate fully and actively in the swift cultural and socio-economic changes of our society. Only lifelong education of good quality for all will enable men and women to act as responsible citizens.

This vision of the importance of education, which is shared by a large majority, does however give rise to certain collective responsibilities.

The first of these responsibilities is to invest in educational systems which are capable of guaranteeing good quality lifelong education for all.

Today, basic education for all cannot be confined to primary education, but must include secondary education.

The WCT cannot repeat often enough that teachers are at the heart of the educational process. They are the driving force of education. This essential role of teachers in our knowledge-based society must be recognized, not only through fine-sounding declarations, which do not actually change anything, but by improving the employment and working conditions of teachers. In our society of rapid technological development, teachers must have adequate teaching material and infrastructures, which enable them to fulfil their function. By means of socially appropriate salaries, their work must be recognized as being essential to our society.

Unfortunately, this year once again we have to observe that in certain countries trade union organizations representing educational staff do not enjoy the application of standards on freedom of association. This situation results in the absence of any social dialogue that might enable the working and employment conditions of teachers to be improved. It goes without saying that the lack of social dialogue in education is not conducive to the education of people in dialogue, tolerance and respect for other people. How can one ask teachers to educate young people to live together, when their fundamental, universally-recognized rights remain a dead letter?

In his Report, the Director-General stresses education for entrepreneurship. Far be it from us to criticize this position, but we would like to point out that entrepreneurship cannot be regarded as a universal panacea to procure decent employment for young people. On the contrary, the development of entrepreneurship will remain a minority solution. In our view, the emphasis should be placed on the development of relations between schools and business thus making training courses more relevant ensuring a smoother transition from school to the workplace and strengthening the concept of socially responsible businesses.

We share the vision of the Director-General that progress has been achieved in many countries as far

as the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals are concerned, but much remains to be done.

Being aware of its responsibility, the World Confederation of Teachers, and Education International, which together represent more than 60 per cent of teachers worldwide, have initiated negotiations which should result, at the beginning of next year, in unified actions and structures, so that next year at the next session of the International Labour Conference, teachers will speak with a single voice, a voice that will be more representative and even stronger, so that teachers can work in decent conditions of employment and so that young people can study in decent conditions.

Original Spanish: Mr. BONMATÍ (Worker, Spain)

I would like to congratulate the Director-General for his Global Report on forced labour, which is emblematic of the dehumanization of the world of work.

In his concise introduction to the Conference, the Director-General encourages us to reflect actively on the world of work and the ILO. The series of Global Reports under the follow-up to the ILO declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work paints a bleak picture of the social landscape at a time of enormous growth in wealth. Even if it were only in a watchdog capacity, this Organization would continue to be relevant today. But the ILO's mandate is to change the state of affairs to make social justice a reality.

Apart from the appalling form of exploitation that is forced labour, there is an ever-increasing number of workers who live outside the scope of labour laws. We should not resign ourselves to this or to any other kind of exploitation, of work without rights, or allow them to be considered as inevitable. Neither should we accept the idea that to increase competitiveness, workers should be made poorer and our social gains be destroyed. The ratification of fundamental labour standards and their application should continue to be a main priority. But it is also important that this Organization strengthen its standards-related work and extend the boundaries of labour law to give protection to the increasing number of workers who, in a wide variety of situations – subcontracting, sham self-employment, etc. – are still economically dependent on others.

The second area of empowerment of the ILO should be the strengthening of the supervisory machinery, for international labour standards. The impunity with which elementary human rights are being violated in many parts of the world should give us pause for thought. Labour standards are also fundamental human rights and it is unacceptable that international trade agreements continue to ignore the social and labour conditions in which goods are produced.

It is 30 years since we have started on the path to democracy in Spain. The Spanish workers have not forgotten the huge amount of support provided by the ILO to the free trade unions. This Organization has left a lasting impression on our main labour laws, because they were the result of social dialogue, among other reasons.

At this point, I would like to refer to the recent process of regularization of immigrant workers in Spain, which has strengthened decent work, providing the rights advocated by this Organization. It has been a responsible exercise in tripartite dialogue

between the Government, the trade unions and the employers, intended to bring about 700,000 immigrant workers out of social marginalization. This was a just measure, because it was linked to an employment contract and to an undertaking on social security payments and was carried out under conditions of equality of rights and obligations.

There cannot be a just social system without standards and without institutions with which to identify. There are millions of workers throughout the world who consider the ILO as the only point of reference to govern the process of globalization in a socially just manner. For generations, we have lived in the conviction that we have seen continuous social progress. Today, this aspiration could well be consigned to the realms of Utopia. In much of the world, neither the present generation of young people nor we ourselves can be sure of the fact that rights and conditions in the world of labour will continue to improve, since we cannot even be confident that what we have so far achieved will continue to be.

We will probably have to make changes and reforms in order to adapt to new situations, but we must all be clear that the only possible social model is one based on respect for international labour standards and the promotion of social values, which today have been so unjustly replaced by strict economic values. Globalization without a social dimension cannot lead to a good future.

As the Director-General said, decent work for young people, that is, the next generation of the workforce, would guarantee stability and security in many countries. The future of this great Organization also depends on the expansion of basic labour rights and fundamental labour values.

Original French: Mr. CALIXTE (Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Haiti)

To be back at the Palais des Nations for the annual session of the International Labour Conference is for me, and probably for many other participants, both a pleasure and a privilege.

Indeed, the vast amount of work carried out by our predecessors on social justice deserves to be developed and adapted to the present context of globalization.

I have the honour of informing the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, that the Haitian delegation is extremely satisfied with the relevance of his latest Report, which reflects the constant concern of the International Labour Organization not to betray the ideals it has always promoted in a constantly changing world.

The world of work is evolving at a breathtaking pace and all peoples of the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century are calling quite justly for a better distribution of the world's wealth. This is a just struggle because the right to life depends on the right to decent work and fair pay.

However, all these noble thoughts might come to nothing or will not be fostered in most developing countries where new technologies are not even available before better ones are already being developed.

So, is it not necessary to find a *modus operandi* with a view to reducing the dangerous gap separating countries of the North from those of the South? Despite this observation, the Government of the Republic of Haiti is dedicated to following the recommendations of the Organization to focus on the

following subjects which for several years have been at the heart of ILO discussions, namely the promotion of decent work, equality between men and women, the elimination of forced labour, decent jobs for young people, and corporate social responsibility.

I would also like to stress that the observations and recommendations of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations about the irregularities, or the failure to present the reports requested from the Government are being given full attention by our authorities. Our Government is aware of the need to adopt measures to prove its good faith and resolve the problem.

In the context of a programme to promote the international labour standards, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour of the Republic of Haiti is going to take all appropriate measures to submit all the instruments adopted by the Conference to the competent national authority. The Ministry will then ensure that all the Conventions submitted are ratified by the 48th legislature, which will emerge from the forthcoming elections.

The Government, faced with serious inherited socio-economic problems caused by the poor management of successive authorities, intends to show its political will to overcome the restraints and to enable the Haitian population to have a better future.

Indeed the ILO, with a view to steering the train of globalization towards a fairer, more human and more liberal world, must have the cooperation of each member State to be able play its decisive role.

Ms. MUGANZA (*Government, Rwanda*)

Allow me to thank the International Labour Organization and its Director-General for the clarity of the Report that has been presented to us. I have noted with great interest that the ILO programmes and activities planned for the year 2003-04 were in conformity with the strategic objectives of the ILO.

The Government of Rwanda supports the ILO's activities throughout the world and especially in Africa, where its activities have centred on the following: employment promotion as a means of poverty eradication; promotion of equal opportunities among men and women for decent jobs; promotion of social dialogue; and the fight against HIV/AIDS, especially in the workplace.

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda claimed over 1 million lives; workers and employers were killed. Consequently, we are dealing with its after-effects, such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, trauma and the reconciliation process.

In implementing a national vision for poverty reduction and promotion of social justice and the recommendations from the Ouagadougou Summit, Rwanda has prepared a national employment policy. Hence, I take this opportunity to thank the ILO for its support through the Regional Office in preparing this policy. During the forthcoming revision of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme, we will take into account employment policy issues, including the promotion of decent work for sustainable development.

We are looking at employment promotion in an integrated manner. Thanks again to the ILO for the recent gender and employment project which is being implemented in tripartite partnership with other social partners in Rwanda. The project aims to promote equal opportunities among men and women in

the field of employment and labour. Achieving parity in this category is on the national agenda, following our gender parity achievements in the Parliament, in the Government, where 33 per cent are women, and in the judiciary, where over 40 per cent are women.

The Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: *A global alliance against forced labour*, gives me an opportunity to underline that Rwanda has incorporated appropriate measures in its constitutional and legislative disposition to eliminate all forms of forced labour. We are aware of the dehumanising effects of forced labour and we are committed to fighting injustice and impunity. We have institutions and laws in place to monitor and prevent any form of forced labour in our country.

Promotion of social dialogue is a strategy to promote social justice and decent work. The Government of Rwanda, in its recent civil service reform, aimed at creating an efficient and effective civil service, has set up more focused structures that deal with labour administration and labour inspection throughout the country. The National Labour Council is now in place and it will be a useful forum for the social partners to contribute to all issues concerning labour and employment promotion in our country.

Last but not least, youth employment promotion is an important point on the national agenda. We treasure being one of the Youth Employment Network lead countries. This is a pledge the President of the Republic of Rwanda, His Excellency, Paul Kagame, has made and Rwandans' trust that this noble cause is achievable. We call on the support of rich nations and institutions to support youth employment programmes. I congratulate the United Kingdom for being the first developed country to join the lead countries, and call upon all the other developed countries and partners to join this alliance.

In conclusion, I have a strong conviction that in the spirit of fair globalization, the voices of the poor, the voices of young people and the voices of women can be heard. They can be empowered, social justice can be achieved and the world can be in peace, otherwise why should we be here today?

Ms. MENKERIOS (*Minister of Labour and Human Welfare, Eritrea*)

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, for his comprehensive and articulated presentation within the framework of making decent work a global goal which covers: consolidated progress to move forward; the Decent Work Agenda in a multi-lateral system; decent work country programmes; and youth pathways to decent work.

As we continue to live in a time of rapid change in the world of work, the above strategies hold many new organizational and policy challenges for governments and workers' and employers' organizations, but it is not unrealistic in time to achieve those strategies.

The Government of the State of Eritrea, realizing the importance of the Decent Work Agenda, has put it into practice within our existing capacity, based on the four pillars of decent work, which include: fundamental principles and rights at work; employment and income opportunity for all; social protection; and social dialogue and tripartism. For the full

implementation of the Decent Work Agenda, strong technical support that will eventually lead to making decent work a global goal is essential, and calls for the attention of the ILO and other partners.

The priority of the Government on social protection and human welfare is ensuring full security for all, which includes the complete eradication of hunger, poverty and dependence on food hand-outs. In undertaking all these development tasks, labour is a decisive element that requires the necessary training to increase productivity and to ensure comprehensive economic emancipation in all sectors.

Tripartite consultations and social dialogue are our guiding principles for the sound labour relations that currently exist among the social partners in Eritrea. The fight against unemployment is one of the priorities of the development programme that ensures social protection. The Government has embarked on a series of surveys that would help to gather adequate labour market information which would serve as benchmark information to design realistic labour policies or revise existing ones.

The Government of the State of Eritrea, with its limited resources, is determined to increase the productive capacity of its people through increased access to quality education, training and health services, recognizing that quality education and good health will not only enable the population to participate in the economy to their fullest potential, but also enrich their social, cultural and political life. Thus, a steadfast commitment to develop our human resources is the hallmark of our development planning.

To minimize occupational accidents, diseases and HIV/AIDS at the workplace, the IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) programme was launched to create deep-rooted awareness that includes both social partners. To safeguard safety and health at the workplace, efforts are being made by the Government to train inspectors and familiarize them with occupational safety and health equipment. Furthermore, a national safety and health regulation, designed and approved by the Ministry of Justice, is in the process of promulgation. Similarly, to improve the overall condition of work and to protect the rights of seafarers, including the fishing sector, a new law is ready to be proclaimed. To make provision for the maintenance of workers in old age or disability, and survivors benefits, the national pension scheme was put into practice in January 2004.

Let me take this opportunity to request the ILO to render its technical support to conduct the intended service and appropriate implementation of the Decent Work Agenda in Eritrea's proper channels.

In conclusion, as peace is pertinent to development and to implement the Decent Work Agenda, I would like to bring to the attention of this august meeting that it is the duty and responsibility of the international community in general, and the Security Council in particular, to enforce the implementation of the Boundary Commission's ruling in order to ensure peace and create a conducive environment of decent work for Eritreans in general, and to those in makeshift camps in particular.

Original Arabic: Mr. JRAD (representative, Union of Workers of the Arab Maghreb)

I would also like to thank Mr. Somavia, the Director-General, for the constant efforts he has deployed with a view to implementing fundamental principles

and labour rights, in the context of which we find the report on the elimination of forced labour, as well as the other reports.

Although the international community has made progress in establishing a link between development and respect for workers' rights, this has not been reflected on the ground. Most countries follow development policies that give priority to promoting economic growth, which has increased, poverty has led to the marginalization of many women and young persons, and has given rise to new employment relations that give way to the worst forms of exploitation.

The activities of this Organization aimed at fostering balanced development are extremely important. The ILO must step up efforts in this area, especially in the Arab and Maghreb regions, where steps have been taken to liberalize the economy, while undertaking far-reaching social reforms. It is therefore necessary to increase the number of technical assistance programmes for the social partners in Arab countries in cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization and the ILO, to promote the employment of young persons, who are the majority population in the region.

Whilst peace is a fundamental condition with regard to the achievement of the ILO's aims concerning equitable development, it must be remembered that the Arab region is witnessing an extraordinary phenomenon in the form of the occupation, which has negative repercussions for workers' rights.

Development in Palestine is being held back by the occupation and the imposition of the embargo, as well as by the construction of the separation wall which is paralyzing economic development.

This situation is set to become even more complicated, given that the Israeli side is obstructing all efforts at making peace, this despite the fact that the Palestinian Authority has responded positively to all such initiatives aimed at resolving the issue. The occupation must therefore be ended, an independent Palestinian state established and the threats made against Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic should be withdrawn. This would allow for the implementation of development and modernization programmes in the Arab region, in a climate where such efforts might flourish.

Iraq is another abnormal case. The occupation of the country has led to a human catastrophe and must be swiftly ended in order to check the spiralling violence and to allow the Iraqi people to rebuild their institutions in a climate of freedom.

We are aware that our Organization plays an important part in the fight against extremism, in the search for a balanced world based on peace and solidarity between peoples.

Original French: Mr. Ranjivason (Minister of Public Services, Labour and Social Legislation, Madagascar)

The Report presented by the Director-General very much reflects the reality as experienced in all member States, and allows the constituents of the Organization present here to appreciate fully the efforts made by the international community to promote the inclusion of decent work in economic and social policies at local, national and international level.

Last year I referred to a Madagascan proverb, saying that "little raindrops make mighty rivers", and in the year that has passed I can say that much water

has flowed under the bridge with regard to the achievements of my country.

Indeed, our Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper has just been improved and strengthened through the use of two very important new benchmarks.

On the one hand, the Millennium Development Goals have been publicized and taken up by our 22 regions through workshops organized in tandem with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the reform of the civil service and the improvement of public services. This project has allowed us to strengthen the capacity of leaders in the regions and actors involved in development of management and leadership.

On the other, His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, has just published his vision for what is called *Madagascar naturally*. This document takes stock of what has been achieved and provides a vision which, beginning from this year, will form the general policy of the State, which will inspire and serve as a framework for enterprises. This vision of the President is something that goes beyond a mere strategy for poverty reduction in the country.

We are aware of the fact that decent work is one of the means to reduce poverty, which is why a national inter-ministerial committee to follow up on the Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation has been set up to frame, monitor and evaluate national efforts in this respect. It is to this end that the framework document of the National Employment Policy will shortly become law. The draft has been approved by the Council of Ministers and has just had its final reading before Parliament.

Job creation, of course, is an extremely important issue in my country. It is true that we are experiencing a very tight labour market, and the volatility of the labour market is a problem particularly in the free zones, especially since the dismantling of the Multifibre Agreement.

With regard to the free zones, a study jointly supported by the ILO, the UNDP and the Catholic Relief Service, entitled *Improving productivity by promoting decent work*, has now been endorsed. This scheme seeks to promote development of the sector in Madagascar, to improve labour legislation, labour relations, employability, the training system for workers and social protection for enhanced productivity and to improve social justice.

A Madagascan Research Institute for Employment and Lifelong and Entrepreneurial Learning (OMEF) has been set up to deal with questions of employment and vocation training. It is in its first year, but it has already begun three studies on the sector of the economy that creates jobs in three regions of the country. Throughout the country, its establishment has benefited from the expertise of the UNDP and the ILO. We have also set up an information system, an intranet and an extranet within the Ministry, which will help the OMEF to run databases on employment and training.

We have also been running trials of a rural development model, which will dovetail with foreign direct investments and which will also be disseminated. This will take place in coordination with the Programme for the Integrating of Young People into the Economy, in cooperation with the UNDP. We believe that these actions will help young people and women find employment. The creation of a special fund for promoting insertion and reinsertion

of workers into the formal economy, as part of a public/private partnership, has now been approved by the Government, and that measure will run in parallel to the others mentioned above.

In order to ensure that the rules of the labour market promote competitiveness and job creation, the new Labour Code – the fruit of a long, participatory tripartite process – was promulgated in the *Official Journal* of the Republic in February 2005. The new Code seeks to provide a clearly identifiable, stable set of rules, which will be effectively enforced, and which will increase the climate of confidence and commitment over time for workers and employers and for the principal players in labour relations, and will be a safeguard for fundamental human rights in the workplace.

With regard to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, Madagascar is very attentive to the proposals from the International Labour Office, and the Madagascan Government is continuing its work, with the support of the ILO, to implement the various programmes of cooperation which have been agreed upon.

With regard to eliminating forced or compulsory labour, the document on the situation with regard to forced labour and strategies for eliminating it was endorsed in September 2004 by a national tripartite workshop. The projects recommended in that document are being implemented and will lead to our ratification of the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), which is the only Convention we have not yet ratified.

With regard to combating child labour, particularly in its worst forms, the document on the National Action Plan to this end was approved in June 2004 by a national tripartite workshop and the structures laid down in the document have been put into place already – particularly the National Committee on Child Labour, which is a steering committee for this campaign. The time-bound programme is financed by the United States Department of Labor, as was announced at last year's session of the Conference, and run by IPEC/ILO Madagascar, and is progressing well. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that on 12 June, the International Day Against Child Labour will be marked at national level with special activities.

With regard to strengthening social dialogue, the new Labour Code provides a solid framework for the promotion of social dialogue and tripartite cooperation at national level. The strategic planning workshop for trade union development organized jointly with the ILO in September 2004 has, by determining representativity criteria, helped to strengthen social dialogue. Support structures have been set up, for example the National Labour Council and the Tripartite Regional Labour Councils. We are keen to ensure the continuity of the Programme to Promote Social Dialogue in Francophone Africa (PRODIAF) in order to strengthen these schemes.

Finally, with regard to social security, the programme for its extension will now be expanded to cover self-employed people in rural areas and workers in the informal economy. This is part of the Government's plan to eradicate poverty. The current social security system is also being strengthened by the support project for existing financial structures, in particular the National Social Security Fund and the Inter-enterprise Medical Services (SMIE) with the support of the ILO.

Madagascar, again supported by the ILO, has a national programme to combat HIV/AIDS in the workplace, and within this framework an official tripartite Declaration has just been signed by the various parties involved, which will be a benchmark for all activities in this area. I should also mention that a project on combating drug abuse at the workplace has already been implemented involving all the social partners, while studies to update the table of occupational diseases have been launched by a multidisciplinary committee.

All these activities will contribute to reducing poverty through decent work and have been implemented thanks to the support of the international community and, particularly, the technical assistance of the ILO. In this respect, Madagascar would like to express its gratitude to international cooperation and to the Director-General and all his central and regional team for this cooperation and hopes very much that it will continue in supporting the eradication of poverty and bad governance.

Original Arabic: Ms. MINT BILAL OULD YAMAR (Minister of Public Services and Employment, Mauritania)

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, for the Reports that he has presented to this session.

The problem of workers is an important issue that has been given particular attention by our President of the Republic. Under his leadership the country had a sound policy that provided the basis for sustainable development taking into account all the political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

This policy resulted in an ambitious development plan based on the strategy to combat poverty at the same time as the launch of a large-scale campaign to disseminate knowledge to improve the position of our citizens in all fields.

To this end the progress made during a short period aimed to enhance the citizens' quality of life and to improve the labour conditions of workers. We have three objectives: employment; a literacy programme; and the fight against poverty as the major thrust of government policy. In employment we have created an agency for youth employment and we are giving this agency all possible material and human resources to help our young people gain access to the labour market. We have also started numerous projects in areas such as building, fisheries and prospecting to reduce a large proportion of unemployment.

The situation of women is an essential aspect of the progress of society, and their integration into active life is also an important and consistent tenet of our policy. Women make up half of our population and enjoy all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution: the right to vote; the right to stand for election and hold the highest positions in the country; and the same rights as men.

With regard to literacy, in parallel to the activities of the department responsible for this issue, we have implemented a massive campaign covering both the public and private sectors with the aim of increasing the knowledge of workers and increasing their productivity. With a view to improving the quality of life and work conditions of our workers, the President of the Republic has toiled, through collective negotiations, to increase the minimum wage to 21,000 ouguiya, which equates to an increase of 365 per cent as compared to the previous wage level. This significant step forward comes

within the context of the concerted efforts made since the beginning of this year to significantly increase wages in the state sector.

The improvement of labour legislation has been given pride of place in the Government's activities and we have recently promulgated a new labour law, after having ratified a number of relevant international labour Conventions.

With regard to freedom of association, many trade unions have been created and are able to carry out their activities freely in the context of democratic regulations.

The training of human resources is a key element of government policy, and absolute priority is being given to the promotion and expansion of vocational training structures.

At a time when we are trying to find peace, a terrorist group has threatened our unity. This flagrant act of aggression makes us more determined than ever to pursue the path of tolerance and democracy. The road ahead of us is long and difficult, but we are determined to be victorious, with God's help. We will use all our resources and energy to improve the working conditions of our workers at the national level.

The Director-General, in his Report on the occupied territories, stresses the worsening situation of Arab workers. We hope that everyone will make the necessary efforts to end this situation.

Mr. NICOLESCU (Employer, Romania)

I wish first of all to express on behalf of the Romanian Employers' delegation, our full appreciation for the agenda and work of this current session of the International Labour Conference. For us, participation in this Conference is very useful, in particular for information, networking and also from a pragmatic perspective.

We would like to inform the participants in the Conference about two major activities undertaken by the Romanian employers' movement during the period May 2004 to May 2005.

First, we have worked very hard to improve the Labour Code in Romania in order to eliminate its asymmetry. After many months of negotiations with trade unions, we agreed to introduce more than 30 amendments, which will result in a more balanced Labour Code that will enhance enterprise management and performance and generate employment. In our opinion, this process is an example of good practice of social dialogue, involving many employers' organizations and trade unions.

Secondly, we have tried to promote business and integrate a social dimension, taking into consideration the transition to the new knowledge-based economy. The knowledge revolution, which is fast developing, offers many opportunities to individuals and enterprises and, at the same time, raises many challenges. Our main task is to take into consideration this development and to promote initiatives that facilitate the transition to the knowledge-based economy.

The Bucharest Declaration entitled *Preparing SMES The Knowledge-Based Economy*, adopted by the 2005 World SMEs Convention, organized in Bucharest in May 2005 by the National Council of Small and Medium-Sized Private Enterprises in Romania, together with WASME and WAPME, is very useful in this respect.

Romanian employers' activities in the past year have been facilitated by the economic upturn re-

flected in an 8.2 per cent GNP increase in 2004, the highest in Europe.

In the next period, the main focus of the employers' movement in Romania will be the creation of a sustainable enabling environment for enterprises. Despite certain progress, 44 per cent of Romanian entrepreneurs have recently stated that the economic environment is an obstacle to business. For this reason, we consider it is necessary that the political forces, employers and trade unions undertake joint actions in order to improve the economic environment. In our view, it is essential to have a more predictable and more entrepreneurial environment, which – as Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General, told us in the plenary session – can offer better and more opportunities for enterprises and workers.

We would welcome a stronger involvement of ILO specialists in our country through training and assistance programmes and projects useful for both workers and enterprises.

We, the Employer representatives, are very keen to cooperate with ILO departments and specialists, which could contribute to better economic and social performance in Romania and enhance the implementation of ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

Original Arabic: Mr. KHAMMAS (Employer, United Arab Emirates)

The United Arab Emirates Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry wishes to participate fully in the work of the ILO. It is also keen to follow up the ILO's different activities, in accordance with the Emirates' fixed policy of collaborating with the international community and the various international bodies and agencies and with its faith in the noble objectives of the ILO and the importance of its activities aimed at promoting and supporting efforts undertaken by the social partners.

The agenda of this International Labour Conference contains many important topics: young people, occupational safety and health and other equally important issues.

We wish, above all, to discuss the problem of youth employment. Unemployment and underemployment amongst the young is a major concern. It is a multifaceted issue which affects the development of our country and which requires a united effort at a national, regional and international level.

Here, I should like to emphasize that full employment is a clear objective if the Emirates' policy in the field of economic and social development. The State has established an independent body responsible for the development and employment of human resources and supervised by an executive committee made up of representatives of the Government, employers and civil society organizations. The executive committee works in a transparent fashion in order to face the challenges linked to employment and to put an end to all forms of youth unemployment.

I should like to point out here the unique character of the labour market in the Emirates. It is an extremely varied market that offers opportunities to all categories of foreign workers, who come from across the globe. They enjoy good working conditions, quality jobs and a climate in which stable employment relations are guaranteed.

Foreign workers in our country can freely dispose of their wages. There is no income tax for civil servants. Workers can transfer their savings to their

home countries or to any other country. This has enabled us to attract workers from around the world, and our country is a model of international cooperation in the field of labour.

ILO technical cooperation is a useful contribution to supporting the efforts made by member States in different labour policy areas. We therefore call upon the Organization to focus its attention on the technical cooperation programme with the Arab States to ensure adequate funding of these programmes through the Organization's regular budget and in the framework of programmes supported by foreign donors. We hope that special assistance will be provided for projects undertaken by employers and their various organizations in the Arab States.

We are also calling upon the Organization to use the Arab language and all its activities, including conferences, meetings, seminars and research, and in all the related documents.

We have taken note of the Appendix to the Director-General's Report on the situation of Arab workers of the occupied Arab territories. We thank the Director-General for his Report. However, we feel that the situation of Arab workers and employers in that part of the world are deteriorating day after day. The expansion of settlements continues; and the confiscation of land and water and the demolition of homes and factories are part of the normal practice of the Israeli occupying forces. Let us add to this the establishment of the racial discrimination wall and the non-observance of the Charter of the United Nations and the ILO Constitution. We call for more effective measures to be taken with a view to creating a tripartite standing committee within the International Labour Conference that will be responsible for studying the Report of the Director-General and for monitoring the situation of workers in Palestine and the other occupied territories. The work of this committee should continue as long as the occupation persists.

Original Arabic: Mr. ALRAGHEB (Employer, Jordan)

Ever since it joined the ILO 50 years ago, Jordan has continually cooperated with the Organization by adopting its resolutions and ratifying its Conventions, something that has helped to promote labour standards not just in Jordan but throughout the world.

Jordan is now cooperating with the ILO with a view to implementing programmes to promote social dialogue, ban child labour, and to revise its national legislation to make it compatible with international standards.

Jordan, with the support of the ILO, has set up the Committee of Social Dialogue that is composed of employers, trade unions and government representatives. The Council of Ministers has approved the creation of a Consultative Council for Social and Economic Dialogue to study laws and regulations before they are forwarded to the legislature.

Last year, Jordan ratified the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185), and had already ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It had also given effect to the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), which regulates the social dialogue that we exercise democratically and freely with the other social partners.

Jordan continues to modernize its labour legislation in order to preserve the rights of workers with-

out diminishing its competitiveness or its capacity to attract foreign and national investments.

Jordan applies the ILO standards to its legislation. A tripartite committee composed of the different social partners has the task of modernizing the Labour Code.

Jordan, despite its privileged position as a gateway to the Arab markets, and its commitments through various international economic Conventions, is suffering because of the situation outside its borders. On its West, there is Palestine, which is being held hostage. It is wounded and appeals to your conscience, by asking you to implement the international agreements and laws that you have ratified, to implement them on its soil. You must not have double standards. The land of the Palestinian Arab people is being laid waste, their trees uprooted, their houses destroyed, their natural re-

sources stolen. Factories are being closed for weeks at a time; people cannot earn a living, they do not receive their salary, and therefore cannot feed their families. Where are those principles of decent work that we are advocating? The workers or employers whose factories have been closed and for whom all markets for their products have been closed are unable to withstand such losses. This is why we are all calling for help to put right the injustice they are suffering.

To the East of Jordan, Iraq has been torn apart. People have had to flee in search of safety. Institutions have had to close; employers and workers have stopped working. This is why we are calling on the ILO to stand by both the employers and the workers in Iraq, and give them every assistance to mitigate their suffering.

(The Conference adjourned at 7.15 p.m.)

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