

**Tenth sitting**

Friday, 10 June 2005, 10.00 a.m.

*Presidents: Mr. Finlay, Mr. Chiriboga***RATIFICATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTION AND A PROTOCOL BY BULGARIA**

The PRESIDENT (Mr. FINLAY)

It is my pleasure to open the tenth sitting of the International Labour Conference. I would now like to give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference for an announcement.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

I am pleased to announce the ratification on 9 June 2005, by the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, of the Labour Inspection (Seafarers) Convention, 1996 (No. 178), as well as the Protocol of 1996 to the Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 147).

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

The PRESIDENT (Mr. FINLAY)

We shall now resume our discussions of the Report of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Mr. SAKTOR (Worker, Slovakia)

The Slovak Republic is committed to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). These Conventions mean, for the Slovak Republic, a very particular obligation, not to allow or carry out any form of forced and compulsory labour. The Slovak Republic declares that it has fulfilled its obligations resulting from the aforementioned Conventions since the regulation of legislative standards prohibits any form of forced and compulsory labour. The real answer to the issue of application of the said Conventions can also be found in the current statements of the Slovak Government on the revised draft of the European Working Time Directive that is being discussed in the institutions of the European Union (EU). The Slovak Republic is one of the few European countries that supports measures which go against the ideas contained in the Preamble of the quoted ILO Conventions.

It is necessary to raise a question. If bypassing the Working Time Directive without having an adequately limited obligation and the possibility for the employee to work will his freedom in working life not be limited? Will the new Working Time Direc-

tive not be a step to avoid the principles of the ILO Conventions on the prohibition of forced labour?

The Government of the Slovak Republic is executing a liberal economic policy, the framework of which enables flexible forms of working time organization to be extended. From 2003, it has been creating such legislative conditions which enable more considerable working time deregulation, larger flexibility of industrial relations and so on.

These changes, of course, can be considered positive, but only if they do not become a tool for employers to use, and if they consider social expectations efficiently.

In the Slovak Republic the phenomenon of self-employment recently occurred. It is when the employer forces his employee to become self-employed otherwise he will lose his job.

One could raise objections that the General Conference of the International Labour Organization is not the right place for contemplating the EU legislature, but I am sure it is the right place where, on the tripartite principle, the basic documents are being discussed, those documents which determine the living and working conditions of our citizens. The responsibility for future development of living and working conditions for the present generation and also for those to come lies in the hands of social partners who came here from many ILO member States.

It is necessary to consider every time a decision is made, including the General Conference of the International Labour Organization, that is at the centre of all our efforts the human being with his needs and rights.

Mr. KILLEEN (Minister for Labour Affairs, Ireland)

It is a great honour to address this Conference for the first time, on behalf of the Government of Ireland. It is also a great honour for Ireland to be elected to the Governing Body, and I want to thank all for their support.

I particularly wish to congratulate the Director-General on his very concise, focused and user-friendly Report.

In his opening remarks, the Director-General quite rightly highlights that we are in a time of rapid change, which poses many organizational and policy challenges, not just for Governments, but also for the ILO itself.

Since 1999, when the Director-General put the Decent Work Agenda at the centre of the ILO's core activities, I think it is fair to say that there has been a broader acceptance and understanding

worldwide of the role of the ILO on the international stage. Our clear agreement to make decent work a global goal based on the ILO's four strategic objectives requires actions at the local, national, regional and global levels. As the Director-General highlights, ILO constituents should campaign to make decent work for all a guiding principle of national economic, social and environmental development strategies.

The ILO will need to lead the effort to reinvigorate tripartism across its member countries, if we are to ensure continuing progress.

Ireland has had a very successful record of social dialogue. Through five successive National Partnership Agreements, we have transformed our economy by consensus amongst all the various interests. This tripartite process has worked very well for us.

Discussions on the next round of social partnership in Ireland are due to commence in the autumn. I look forward to working closely with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, who are both represented here at the Conference.

I welcome the Director-General's commitments in his statement on the budget, to strategic planning; modernization; and improved efficiencies within the ILO, in order to maximize the Organization's response to the changing but increasing demands for its services. On the ILO programmes' side, I was also pleased to see broad agreement on the identification of priorities.

Ireland has great admiration for the work of the ILO, in particular its keen interest in labour matters in developing countries.

Delegations will recall that back in 2001, when the topic of forced labour was first discussed as part of the follow-up to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Ireland was to the fore in encouraging the ILO to pursue a number of actions in this area.

In particular, the Irish Government was very enthusiastic about entering into a partnership programme with the ILO. The whole basis of the Irish Government's partnership programme with the ILO is to create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income. The partnership programme focuses on the creation of quality jobs through women's entrepreneurship development; enhanced employability of the disabled; and employment-intensive investment in public infrastructure.

The success of our first programme, which ran from 2001 to 2004, was immediately followed up by a second phase, which became effective in November 2004 last. Funding of €5.7 million is being allocated to this partnership programme over the next three years.

As part of our partnership programme, we provide support to the ILO's Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour. Preliminary results of the Special Action Programme's training activities indicate that they have empowered the ILO constituents to play a more active role, especially in the prevention of human trafficking.

We welcome the recently published Global Report on forced labour, which serves to enhance the already increasing interest in forced labour by the media. Media interest is critical in raising global awareness of the problem and in encouraging thought processes on what needs to be done in the future.

The Irish Government will, over the next three years, continue to support the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour, and we urge other donors to do likewise.

Much is being achieved through ILO Programmes which make a real impact on peoples' lives; however, we should not become complacent. We need to continue this good work, while at the same time ensuring that we get the very best value for money.

As a member of the Governing Body, Ireland will be seeking to ensure that the ILO continues to play an important role and to make a real difference on the world stage.

In conclusion, the Director-General's Report identifies the areas where we need to focus and prioritize our efforts. I would like to endorse the Director-General's assertion that it is through dialogue, discussion and consensus in the ILO, that we can guide the development of solutions that will deliver dignity to workers and decency to work.

Mr. FONG (*Minister of Human Resources, Malaysia*)

The world has always asserted that rapid globalization and technological advancement could offer new hopes and opportunities for more productive work and better incomes to workers worldwide. In spite of this, we know for a fact that the world is, in effect, still facing critical employment deficits and gaps, as compared to the enormous global wealth being created. Certainly this situation requires all of us, members of the international community, to undertake a serious evaluation and necessary corrective actions to redress such imbalances. We should not allow this dreadful situation to slide into a global job crisis which the ILO Director-General, in his statement to this Conference, described as "a growing threat to international security, development and democracy".

Clearly, the fruits of globalization and industrialization have not been equitably shared by all. We are constantly reminded of the depressing fact that more than 1 billion of the world's potential workforce is currently unemployed. We are also reminded of an equally depressing estimate of 1.2 billion people who still have to subsist desperately on less than US\$1 per day. The problems of income insecurity, global poverty and underdevelopment remain. At the same time, we still have to grapple with the problems of unsafe and unhealthy conditions, as well as job insecurity, which are more widespread. We should therefore work together to ensure a fair process of globalization and technological change that can better promote and guarantee respect for justice and human values.

Our objective of achieving decent and productive work for all at this stage remains mostly on paper. We know that in every corner of the world, workers have to endure unhealthy and hazardous working condition which lead to job-related accidents and illnesses. It is indeed appalling that every year, the world loses more than 2 million of its productive workforce as a result of such misfortunes. These circumstances certainly call upon us to give serious attention and take concrete action, and for us to remain fully committed to translating the agenda of decent and productive work into everyday reality.

Malaysia always regards the ILO as an important and unique global forum for enhancing international dialogue and cooperation in the fields of employment and labour relations. Here, we wish to reaffirm our support for the ILO's four strategic objectives

with a view to promoting decent and productive work as a global goal, as we galvanize international action to reduce poverty and to achieve equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. We stand ready to play our part and contribute to the ongoing efforts of this Office to further consolidate actions towards achieving this goal. I take this opportunity to reaffirm Malaysia's support for the Director-General, as well as for every man and woman in the ILO, for their tireless efforts to ensure that this Office can effectively discharge its role in a balanced, impartial and comprehensive manner.

If we are to achieve social progress and better standards of living for our societies, we should continue to give high priority to meeting the basic aspirations of our workforce. Bearing this in mind, the Government of Malaysia is taking the necessary legal and administrative measures at the national level to provide for better opportunities and a decent environment for employers and workers alike. We continue to give particular emphasis to upgrading the skills of our workforce by providing adequate opportunities for formal and informal vocational training, bearing in mind the demands of the labour market. We continue to maintain an adequate level of social protection and to promote increased flexibility and security in the workplace. At the same time, the Government has given priority to specific measures aimed at addressing change and promoting adaptability in the labour market, as well as investment in human resources.

Malaysia will continue to work with the ILO and members of the international community to strengthen the global partnership in promoting the Decent Work Agenda. We must hasten our actions in a sustained and focused manner if it is to bring about the intended outcomes. In this regard, we believe that the ILO is well placed to play a coordinating role through its promotional activities to ensure the implementation of the agenda, by adopting constructive approaches to assist member States to achieve the global goal, taking into account their needs, priorities and national circumstances. Needless to say, we should simultaneously work seriously for a more conducive international environment that will enable all societies, particularly those in the developing and less developed countries, to have a fair share of the global growth and development.

The ILO and international community must continue to give special attention and take the necessary actions to alleviate the deplorable situation of workers in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel. We should not turn a convenient blind eye to their ongoing suffering under foreign occupation. Despite the new climate of dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which offers a glimmer of hope for the future, the situation of these workers and their families continues to be extremely hard. As the Director-General highlights in his Report, human security, rights at work, incomes, access to employment, freedom of movement and social protection of the Palestinians are under constant threat.

Further, the construction of the illegal wall, coupled with the ad hoc regulatory procedures by Israel, which allow extended periods of closure, have adversely affected employment and local economic activities of the Palestinians. As the occupying power, the Israeli authorities are responsible for the well-being of the Palestinians, and should therefore

desist from such discriminatory and intolerant practices. At the same time, the parties concerned, including those directly engaged in the peace process, should continue to work towards a final settlement with the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Malaysia, as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), urges the ILO to enhance its efforts to contribute to building peace and security in the region by monitoring and assessing aspects of economic and social development within its areas of competence. We strongly support the ILO's role in helping, through its programmes and capacity-building projects, to improve the lives of working men and women and their families in the region. We believe any intensification and expansion of support programmes to all its partners in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories would go a long way towards developing work opportunities, as well as reducing poverty and unemployment in the region.

Also in its capacity as Chair of NAM, Malaysia wishes to underline the importance of ongoing efforts by the ILO to improve the working methods and procedures of the Committee on the Application of Standards. The process must continue to focus on enhancing the transparency, the objectivity, and, most importantly, the credibility of the Committee in fulfilling its mandate. In this regard, NAM supports the statement submitted by Cuba on behalf of 21 countries, which provides specific inputs aimed at improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee. We hope that all members of the Committee and others involved in its work will address this important question in a constructive and productive manner for the benefit of all.

Mr. IDRIS (*Minister for Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesia*)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the countries and individuals, and in particular the delegates of this Conference, for the help offered and provided when Indonesia was struck by the devastating earthquake and on 26 December 2004.

Indonesia has been a Member of the ILO for over 50 years. Over the past decade, we have made considerable progress on labour issues. Since 1998, we have ratified all the ILO core Conventions. A dramatic developmental change has taken place in Indonesia with regard to the development of human rights at work, freedom of association, and equal treatment and opportunities in our democratic civil society. The process of labour reform is under way.

I welcome the Director-General's introductory Report, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, which focuses on ensuring better living and working conditions under the Decent Work Agenda, as well as contributing to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, especially for people in developing countries.

Unfortunately, there is still evidence of social exclusion and marginalization in most of the developing countries, as many still do not have easy access to employment opportunities as a result of the adverse impact of globalization.

The ILO therefore has an important role to play in addressing those challenges, including poverty eradication. In this regard, the ILO should work with other relevant international bodies in order to address the issue more effectively. Indonesia for its

part supports the need for policy coherence initiatives, policy development dialogue and a globalization policy forum and considers them crucial to our efforts to fill the gap and promote social cohesion.

The Government of Indonesia is taking very serious steps in its agenda for youth employment plans. Indonesia was one of the first countries to volunteer to be a "lead" country in the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network. Earlier this year, Indonesia submitted its Youth Employment Action Plan 2004-07 to the United Nations as a consequence of our commitment in ensuring decent and productive working conditions for young people.

For this reason, my Government fully supports the ILO's youth employment programme in Indonesia. We have been working closely with local governments in order to build a solid foundation that will speed up our efforts to address youth employment. We began this programme by conducting various awareness-raising campaigns in the form of seminars to reach policy recommendations.

Furthermore, the Government plans to continue improving the measures relating to social security services through the enactment of Act No. 40 of 2004 concerning the National Social Security System which will change the social security practices in the country.

In the meantime, I think strengthening social dialogue in our industrial communities is of critical importance to my Government. This year, the Government of Indonesia has promulgated a government regulation on tripartite relations with the aim of developing better cooperation, consultation and communication among the tripartite constituents. Furthermore, the Indonesian National Tripartite Summit was held at the beginning of this year, resulting among other things in eight recommendations on how to improve the quality of relationships among the parties in industrial relations actors.

Although we applaud and support the role played by the ILO in improving the situation and condition of workers in the occupied Arab territories, we are still deeply concerned by the Separation Barriers built by the Israeli Government, which has adverse impacts on the employment and local economic activities of Palestinians. We strongly encourage the ILO to continue assisting the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to obtain decent work conditions.

In closing, may I say, that the President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency, Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, sends his best regards to all delegates of the 93rd Session of the Conference, in particular to the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia. The President regrets being unable to accept the Director-General's invitation to attend this Conference in person.

Ms. THEODORSEN (*Worker, Norway*)

As a representative of the workers of Norway I congratulate the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General on their Reports. I appreciate the follow-up to the report of the World Commission and especially the work done on regional and national levels, where events held on the tripartite level have focused on the promotion of decent work as the ILO's distinctive contribution to a fairer globalization.

I would also draw attention to the success of the European Regional Meeting in Budapest. I especially appreciated the format of the meeting which

enabled the participants to be active and innovative and where the focus was on the new transition States. This was important from a democratic viewpoint and provided all participants with valuable information.

LO-Norway is pleased that the Director-General and the ILO has once again this year expressed great concern for workers in the occupied Arab territories through the special Report. It is extremely important that the ILO continues to give this issue a high profile. This year's Report has emphasized how the building of the separation wall, mainly on Palestinian territory, has worsened the situation of the workers. Together with the other measures taken by the Israelis, the erection of the wall has made it almost impossible for workers in Palestine to reach their workplaces – that is if they have one – or to get work done on their farms. Our Congress, held in May, passed a resolution stating that the pressure on Israel to respect United Nations decisions and withdraw its military forces from all occupied Arab territories or areas to the borders of 4 June 1967 must continue and that the building of the wall must halt and dismantling begin. The ILO has a crucial role to play in the conflict. The assessment of the Director-General, as well as objective statistics are valuable contributions and show that employment cannot increase and poverty can never be eradicated unless there is peace in the region.

We also urge the ILO to focus more on the Arab world, for instance through technical cooperation programmes, than has been the case up until now. In many states, ILO Conventions are not ratified, tripartism is non-existent, trade union and human rights are grossly violated, migrant workers are treated as second-class citizens and women's rights are neither embodied in the law nor respected in practice. Many Western countries, Norway included, are heavily involved in business with some of these countries. The ILO has an important role to play in requesting the Arab countries in question, as well as their trading partners, to respect human and trade union rights in the region and to make sure that ILO core Conventions are ratified and implemented and also in demanding decent working conditions for the workers, whichever nationality they are.

Concerning the question of gender, we applaud the Director-General's emphasis on the need to have better representation of women in the ILO. It is indeed very disappointing that this year's representation of women delegates to the Conference has actually decreased. He has our full support in urging that at least 40 per cent of the Conference delegates should be women, as well as pressing for better overall representation of women in the Governing Body, as well as in the ILO as a whole. In Norway, gender issues are an integral part of our strategies, whether it be in Norway as a whole, or in the trade union movement, when we discuss parental leave arrangements, pension rights, working hours or representation on company boards.

We share the Director-General's urge to make decent work for all an overall guiding principle. Decent work was actually the theme of our Congress in May. The delegates, the workers, requested decent work, not just for workers in Norway and for those coming from the new European Union countries to seek employment, but also considered that it should be a guiding principle in all our solidarity activities.

The campaign for decent work must emphasize social dialogue and tripartism. The ILO's unique structure, giving trade unionists and employers equal standing with governments in decision-making, is essential in creating cooperation between the social partners conducive to the achievement of that goal. The promotion of standards – implementing the existing ones, of course, as well as creating new ones – must also be an integral part of this policy.

Some Employer representatives have said in their statements here this year, that the ILO should concentrate more on technical cooperation and less on standard-setting work. In my view, and in Norway's view, there should be no separation of these two aspects. The standard-setting mandate of the ILO is its soul and must guide the ILO's technical cooperation programmes, campaigns for fair globalization and, of course, our very crucial efforts for decent work.

Original Portuguese: Mr. MONTEIRO (Minister of Labour and Solidarity, Cape Verde)

I should like to congratulate the Director-General on the clarity with which he presented his Report and on the excellent work he has carried out for the ILO.

The issues on the Conference agenda, especially occupational safety and health, work in the fishing sector and the promotion of youth employment, are of particular importance to the young, small island nation that is Cape Verde.

All these concepts are contained in the main documents that guide development policy in Cape Verde, such as the Government programme, Main Plan Policies, the National Development Plan and the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

With independence, the socio-economic structure of Cape Verde underwent dramatic changes, for example, the appearance of the public sector and the growth of private investment.

These alterations necessitated the introduction of a new framework of values and principles favouring growth and competitiveness within a stable environment whilst taking into account the legitimate rights and interests of the workers and their full participation in the various sectors of national life.

In order to respond to the increasing demands of the labour sector, from the very first years of independence, Cape Verde has made it a priority to elaborate legal instruments which reflect, as faithfully as possible, the changes which increasingly affect enterprises and society as a whole.

Thus, since the days of independence my country has been a full Member of the ILO, having already ratified the main Conventions approved within this important international forum, particularly the Conventions concerning labour inspection in industry and commerce, forced labour discrimination (employment and occupation) and occupational safety and health, amongst others.

Various provisions have been approved separately at an internal level and 1987 saw the launch of the General Legal Regime for Labour Relations, an important regulatory instrument for the labour sector.

Faced with the need to respond to the successive demands inherent to the process of developing the country, a draft Labour Code was elaborated. This document integrated all labour legislation and was agreed on by all the social partners. It has been an important factor in the development of the country,

as it advocates a balance between economic competitiveness and decent work.

The dynamic integration of Cape Verde into the global economy, the support and development of the private sector and the encouragement and promotion of external investment are all determining factors in the socio-economic development of the country, bringing with them new requirements with regard to people's access to their first job, training and the technological and vocational preparation of the workforce.

In order to deal with the situation, my Government chose to include in its programme flexible employment and vocational training measures, which act as important and decisive mechanisms for the development of active policies for employment and the integration of unemployed youth into active life.

It should be pointed out that significant progress has been made in all fields, for example with the publication of the White Paper on Vocational Training and the approval of the decree-law establishing the General Legal Regime for Vocational Training.

There has also been heavy investment in infrastructure to support vocational training and guidance activities, through the construction, fitting out and renovation of structures, all of which goes to show that the employment and training services networks are being considerably strengthened.

It is widely accepted that vocational training, duly implemented, can contribute decisively to increasing employment, through provision of training for the workforce, creation of posts, self-employment and encouraging micro-enterprises.

With only a short time to go before the 30th anniversary of national independence, we are convinced that Cape Verdean society as a whole is proud of the progress our country has made in all fields.

Cape Verde is now a medium-developed country, a decisive step forward in the development progress. I should like, here, to reaffirm our solemn undertaking to do everything in our power to ensure that the country continues to make significant progress in finding responses to the main challenges that arise from the development process.

Original Arabic: Mr. SOUFAN (Government, Lebanon)

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Minister of Labour and Agriculture, Trad Hamade, at this august Conference which always was and will remain a bastion for the preservation of the value and dignity of labour in our contemporary societies.

I am pleased to convey the high regard of Lebanon to the ILO's role and in instituting social justice and the need to guarantee decent work for all, as well as individual dignity and family stability in societies that are democratic, free, independent and peaceful.

We appreciate the fact that the Director-General of the ILO in his Report this year has chosen to highlight the prospects for the Organization's future activities. We are convinced that the Organization is in the process of preparing itself, both from the organizational and material point of view, to face the challenges and changes required by new economic developments, to contribute more effectively to sustainable national development of its member States, to support national policies in this area, and to continue to support the three main stakeholders in production. All this in our view requires a boost to the

Organization's activities in various specialized areas, as well as practical support for national efforts to draw up and implement sustainable development strategies which will contribute to creating and improving decent work opportunities and promoting productive full-time employment for workers.

In his Report, the Director-General highlighted a number of key areas, one of his main concerns being decent work. We believe that decent work must be based on a number of elements: it must be secure, free of any form of constraint or stress, there must be adequate safety and health protection, and workers and their families must have a decent life, and be free of want, poverty and arbitrary dismissal.

There is no doubt that the elements of decent work are embodied in the ILO's work, in particular in its InFocus programmes and the international labour standards. However, we also believe that it is important to disseminate knowledge and draw the benefit from these programmes on a larger scale, to assist all States that wish to use them.

We also wonder whether these programmes have actually attained their objectives, and whether there has been an assessment of their results for the beneficiary states. We wonder if the Organization pays the same attention to all these programmes; or whether, in the light of its budget constraints, it is becoming necessary to set priorities among these objectives or tackle them within an integrated framework for the benefit of all.

The agenda of this session of the Conference also includes an item on the promotion of youth employment. In this context, we need to recognize that disregarding young people and their aspirations and excluding them from the process of development is a strategic error which will impede the success of any development plan. We know that the way to tackle the problems of young people is through education, vocational guidance, training and apprenticeships, to make full use of their abilities in employment or self-employment. No one can be unaware of the many opportunities open to young people as a result of new forms of work, which also implies the need to provide appropriate training. The ILO's efforts to finalize guidelines or a code of practice for programmes intended to promote youth employment come at the right time.

Lebanon is encouraging improvement to the work of the International Labour Conference, through mechanisms allowing greater interactivity in discussions and developing new methods for drafting modern international labour standards that will allow rapid response to the consequences of rapid changes in the world of work caused by globalization and economic development. It is not enough to re-examine existing methods or apply them in an integrated approach.

There is no doubt that the subjects highlighted by the Director-General in his Report are encouraging signs in the process of guaranteeing the fundamental principles and rights at work. But this does not guarantee, for states still under occupation, tangible results commensurate with their efforts to achieve sustainable development and safeguard the well-being, security and stability of their peoples.

Israeli occupation still affects the people of Lebanon in certain areas of Southern Lebanon, as well as the Palestinian people in its future State and the people of Syrian-occupied Golan. In these areas, the rights of people are disregarded, infrastructures are destroyed, houses demolished and agricultural land

plundered. This is a flagrant violation of international resolutions, as well as international and Arab labour standards. And this is quite apart from the Separation Wall, which is reminiscent of the Berlin Wall and deprives a number of Palestinian villages of their land.

The ILO is therefore urged, given its role in promoting the fundamental principles and rights at work, to support the rights of people subject to foreign domination, by helping these States and their peoples to deal with the adverse economic and social effects of this iniquitous occupation, enabling them to engage effectively with the various aspects of the ILO's activities and promote the fundamental principles and rights at work with due regard to national sovereignty and dignity.

Mr. TALIADOROS (*Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Cyprus*)

We welcome the new way that the Director-General chose to address this year's Conference. In his well-written contribution, he reviews the progress made in the last years and raises some important questions concerning the way ahead that call for active reflection.

Indeed, the ILO and its constituents need to reflect and find ways to maximize their contribution towards improving prosperity and offering opportunities and justice to all. For there is still a lot of potential, both at the international and national levels that needs to be tapped. We cannot stand still when changes in the world of work, in our economies and in our societies, swirl around us and the globalization process is still evolving.

The ILO and its constituents have every reason, however, to be positive about the outcome of these collective reflections. The Decent Work Agenda and its four pillars – fundamental principles and rights at work, employment and income opportunities for women and men, social protection and social dialogue and tripartism – go in the same direction as the EU social agenda, and already represent a substantial downpayment towards the vision that binds the ILO constituents together and the goals to be pursued.

The overarching objective of the Government of Cyprus is to improve the welfare and living and working conditions of its people in a sustainable way for present and future generations, and to do this in partnership with the social partners and other interested stakeholders.

Thanks to our successful tradition of social dialogue, we have been able to develop National Action Plans embodying coherent policies and actions for the promotion of employment and social inclusion, and we have now embarked on a dialogue regarding the reforms that need to be made to our national pension scheme with a view to maintaining its adequacy and viability.

In this connection, I wish to express, in this forum, the appreciation of my Government for the valuable actuarial assistance given to us by the ILO's competent services, which prepared alternative reform proposals for our national social insurance scheme.

The Government of Cyprus fully supports the ILO's effort to make decent work a guiding principle in national and international policy formulation. It fully supports the intention of the Director-General to have the decent work objective play a greater role in the national and international efforts

to achieve the Millennium Goals. Without decent jobs, the efforts to lift half of the world's poor out of poverty by 2015 will not succeed.

Globalization affects all countries and all people. The ILO is ideally placed to ensure that the potential benefits of globalization for the welfare of the people are fully exploited. Globalization has to serve people, and not the other way around. The ILO can certainly help to ensure that the benefits of globalization are fairly shared within countries and between countries. Globalization inevitably links the fate and welfare of populations in different countries. The ILO could, and should, assume a mediating role to reconcile the interests of industrialized and developing countries. Its role in the multinational systems has never been more important. With its standard-setting capacity the ILO has a unique governance instrument to bring some structure to the process of globalization to ensure that working conditions, occupational safety and health and the social security of people are not sacrificed on the altar of global profits.

The Government of Cyprus could support the effort to bundle ILO technical advisory services in countries in the framework of decent work country programmes. This would strengthen policy coherence within the ILO advisory services and between social partners in recipient countries and could strengthen the voice of the ILO in the concert of international agencies operating in recipient countries.

As regards the last issue raised by the Director-General – that is, the form and style of the Conference – we feel that the sessions of the Conference should be shorter and that smaller groups could prepare discussions on reports and suggest standards before it starts. The proposal to hold it in different countries, however, seems expensive, as it would lead to even more travel costs. It would also embody a loss of the very useful contacts between Members and units at headquarters.

In conclusion, I would like to express my conviction that the ILO governments and the social partners will reinforce their commitment to defining the main challenges facing them and to meeting them with renewed drive and vigour. We, in Cyprus, are more than ready and willing to do our share.

Original French: Mr. JURCA (Worker, Romania)

I am honoured to convey the congratulations of the Romanian workers to the Director-General for his very concise introduction presented to the Conference.

The ILO's programme to create a strong link between its tripartite structure and the problems of each worker, of each person, is a sound basis for future action for all the Members of this Organization. We are well aware that the overall objective of the ILO, decent work, involves strengthening and revitalizing national tripartism along with strong concerted action by the social partners. At the same time, coordination between local, national, regional and global actions is particularly important for the achievement of the four strategic objectives of the ILO.

In this context, and in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, the creation of jobs for women and young people and a decrease in poverty are problems of great importance for us all. Equally, it must be stressed that all the components of the ILO's agenda for decent work can make a major contribu-

tion to the achievement of the objectives defined in the Millennium Declaration.

It is extremely important to consolidate the synergies that exist between the process of job creation, the reduction of poverty, and social cohesion, in the context of the introduction of a strong gender component in all the member countries of the Organization by promoting the ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

The problem of the elimination of forced labour, which is addressed by the Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*, this year, drawn up under the ILO's follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, is another issue of concern to Romania's trade union organizations. We would like to mention that Romania has ratified the most important ILO instruments, i.e. the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

At the present time, forced labour is closely linked to illegal labour migration. The phenomenon of globalization is behind the dramatic increase in the trafficking of human beings at global level. Romania has a well developed legal framework in the area of migration and trafficking of persons. There is a national action plan for the prevention of trafficking in human beings, and in 2004 Romania was incorporated in the ILO's project to prevent trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced labour by monitoring agencies that recruit labour abroad.

It is extremely necessary to bring about increased participation by the social partners in the framework of networks aimed at preventing trafficking in human beings created at national level, along with more efficient cooperation among similar institutions in the countries of origin and destination of migrant workers.

Romania cooperates, and participates in the projects conducted in the context of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, IPEC, whose urgent aim is the prevention and gradual elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and also to increase awareness in communities of this phenomenon.

If I may, I would like to mention several issues which are currently of concern to Romanian workers. In September 2004, the previous Government of Romania entered into a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund. It was the first time that a standby agreement entered into by a Government and the IMF had provided expressly for more flexible measures in the labour market. It was also the first time that the obligation was imposed to transpose, *ad litteram*, the expertise of a representative of the World Bank into national labour relations legislation. We consider that this action constitutes an attack on the role of the ILO and that the principles of tripartism which it supports have been impaired.

The provisions of the Labour Code, which is currently in force, comply with ILO Conventions and Recommendations and European Union recommendations in this area. It is supported by the representatives and members of our country's trade union confederations. That is why Romanian workers, whether or not they are members of the representative trade unions and confederations at the national

level, have reacted to this intention to modify the Labour Code.

In March, in a spirit of solidarity, they organized protest actions all over the country – actions which rallied together more than a quarter of a million trade unionists. We succeeded in making the political leaders understand that social dialogue is essential to solving conflict situations. Negotiations are currently under way to highlight the provisions of the Labour Code which could be modified.

In our view, the right to organize in trade unions, the right to collective bargaining, the right of workers to be protected against any abuse by their employers, working hours, the right to continuing vocational training, the protection of trade union officials during their term of office, which are all provided for in the Labour Code in accordance with the ILO's Conventions and with European Union Directives, are all undisputed values which we will defend. Furthermore, one of the requests constantly made to the Government of Romania, is precisely that it should ratify the largest possible number of ILO Conventions. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Labour Office for its support in this process and we hope that this support will continue in future.

Romania's accession to the European Union is, for Romanian workers, yet another reason to support the fact that tripartism and social dialogue are essential to the success of this process. We support action towards legislative reform, and the fight against corruption. Romania's trade union organizations are ready to play a constructive role as social partners in order to achieve cohesion and social peace while respecting workers' fundamental rights and freedoms.

I would like to close by conveying the warm greetings of Romanian trade unionists and by assuring you that we will lend our full support to the ILO's actions aimed at creating decent jobs for all workers.

Original French: Mr. BLONDEL (Worker, France)

I should like to thank the President and delegates of the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference for their participation.

Indeed, it seems to me especially important that, through your presence, each year you demonstrate the attention that your country pays to the world of work.

I am glad to note that the level of representation is improving. It is fortunate that ministers, and even Heads of State and Government, confirm, through their presence and participation, the esteem in which their country holds the International Labour Organization. It is especially positive that workers' representatives from around the world meet here.

However, it is unfortunate that some countries are absent, while others fail to respect the rules of tripartism by disregarding, or contesting, workers' representatives.

Too many countries pretend not to know that democracy goes hand in hand with freedom of association and of expression of workers, and thus with the recognition of independent trade unions.

Too many countries, and even some international institutions and unfortunately I have to include the United Nations in this list, continue to bypass, or suppress, trade union rights.

On this point, the ratification of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise

Convention, 1948 (No. 87), remains an indispensable condition to obtain international respect.

Economic prosperity cannot mask a dictatorship.

In place of his traditional general Report, the ILO's Director-General, who is the Secretary-General of the Conference, has encouraged us to reflect and invited us to discuss the future development of the Conference. This first part of my statement will refer to this point.

It seems impossible to me, unless we were to alter the very nature of the ILO, for us to take away the responsibility of nation States to participate, on a tripartite basis, at an annual meeting.

Tripartism is the responsibility of States, and the Conference is the means through which we can monitor the effective application of tripartism.

Tripartism requires that workers, employers and governments meet to compare their ideas in a peaceful, relaxed manner.

The Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), starts in this room.

No voluntary forum supported solely by the financial contributions of its participants could replace our assembly.

As for the idea of holding our assembly outside of Geneva, I can already imagine the political nature of the debates that choosing another city or continent would engender. For instance, what signal would be sent were we to hold the Conference in a country which had not yet ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)? Would we abandon our independence based on universality and group autonomy by becoming a kind of travelling circus, visiting the most generous bidder? The question is worth asking.

The ILO must keep pace with technological developments. Modern means of communication should bring added value to disseminating the position actions, standards and Recommendations of our Organization. I should like to emphasize that I am referring to added value, rather than replacing or even destroying our existing achievements.

I have already had the opportunity to say, and I repeat, that workers would be happy to see employees carrying placards and calling for the application of one or another ILO Convention in countries far from Geneva, as this would demonstrate the importance of our existence, as well as interest in our actions.

Often, the ILO is only present through its documents. Not all workers throughout the world have access to the Internet. We should not thus increase the knowledge divide. This is why I believe that we must be careful not to change what we know, just for the sake of change.

It would seem useful to me to study the real impact of our publications and programmes in the world before taking any definitive decisions.

Having made these observations on the functioning of the Conference, allow me to express our reservations on the reforms which would place in doubt the political dimension of our institution, and I use the word "political". This is particularly the case of the Resolutions Committee, which I believe is indispensable for the ILO's actions.

Let me recall that the principle objective of our institution is to establish standards and, through the intermediary of States and through their active co-

operation and commitment, to ensure the application of such standards.

We must thus provide the Organization with the necessary financial means. Here, I am glad to note that the Finance Committee has supported the budget which we submitted. We must provide financial and political means, through the commitment of States.

There are still too many countries, and not the least important ones, which do not respect these standards which form the basis of democracy. We must, at this juncture, denounce China that has not yet ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), nor the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). On this subject, I also have a hard time understanding why the United States still has reservations as to these ratifications. We must also note that Belarus and Myanmar, though they have been examined by a Commission of Inquiry, continue to flout our principles. Let me say that it would be futile, even dangerous, for our institution to weaken its machinery for monitoring and implementing standards-related commitments.

Lastly, we must call for the free exercise of trade union rights in Colombia and Romania, where miner activist, Miron Cosma, is currently imprisoned for his trade union activities.

The Committee on Freedom of Association, which is the moral conscience of our institution, must be respected. It must maintain its effectiveness and its independence, and it must not be discredited.

Respect of freedom of association for workers and employers remains the foundation of our actions. In taking into account this need, we must incorporate into our daily actions the relevant conclusions and analyses of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which recommends, among other measures, the coordination between United Nations institutions, the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO.

Although it is obvious that globalization is not the cause of all the problems encountered in the world of work, it is just as obvious that the response to its consequences can only be found at the global level and multilaterally.

We must now work to transform our reflections into real ILO language and action.

We, as workers, stand ready to meet this challenge.

Mr. MECINA (*Government, Poland*)

Last year was very important, if not crucial, for Poland, mainly because of our accession to the European Union, along with nine other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Today, one year later, we can attempt to make some initial evaluations. The outcomes so far have been most positive. This year was better than we expected: economic growth has remained at a level of 5 per cent; unemployment has been slowly declining. However, the Polish Government has been taking a number of steps to accelerate this process.

Our membership of the European Union has not influenced our approach towards the International Labour Organization. On the contrary, it has made us even more sensitive to the values of which the ILO is the best guardian and promoter. At this point, I would like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia for his visit to Poland. The Director-General provided

us with much of his knowledge and experience during the tripartite conference entitled: "Welfare State reform: A vision for Poland and the ILO's efforts towards a fair globalization". The Director-General's visit was also an excellent opportunity to review our relationship and I must say that the ILO is still a very important partner for us. I hope that the proposal resulting from the visits to co-fund, together with the ILO, the Jacek Kuroń Prize for contributions to the struggle for the freedom of association will promote the fullest implementation of this right and will help build sound industrial relations worldwide.

This year, in August, we shall be celebrating the 25th anniversary of "Solidarność", a great social movement which initiated democratic changes in my country. The ILO made a great contribution to those changes while supporting Solidarność. Solidarność contributed to the development of social dialogue and tripartism in my country, which are necessary for social and economic development and for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In the last few years, the activities of all the social partners in the Tripartite Commission for the Social-Economic Affairs, which include the three biggest trade unions and four employers' organizations, have been intensified.

The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and its follow-up clearly indicate that the promotion and implementation of decent work is necessary for equitable and fully inclusive globalization. I fully support making decent work a global goal, granting it a central position in the ILO Programme and Budget for 2006-07. I have noted with great interest the ILO plans to develop decent work country programmes as the main delivery vehicle of the next biennial programme and budget, because to create a fair globalization one should start at home, taking into account the national characteristics and development conditions.

The Conference, at its 93rd Session, is discussing the very important issue of youth employment promotion. This is a crucial question for all countries in the world. Youth unemployment is also a serious problem in Poland. As in many countries, the rate of unemployment among young people aged between 15 and 24 is almost twice the average. Since 1996, the Government, with the social partners, has been working hard to promote the employment of young people. The principal goal of these measures is activation of young people, primarily through the development of entrepreneurship, self-employment, volunteer work and increasing their qualifications. I am convinced that the action plan to be adopted by the Conference will equip us with new solutions to this problem.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the International Labour Office for the excellent Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*. This is the first comprehensive review of this phenomenon, providing a full picture of it in the world.

In conclusion, let me refer to the changes in the functioning of the Conference. The reform of the Conference's work, especially the form and course of the plenary, has been discussed for some time. We welcome the publication of the Director-General's introduction to the International Labour Conference. In my opinion, thanks to this, the plenary discussion is more interactive and interesting.

What could Malta, from the centre of the Mediterranean, a new and small member State of the European Union, possibly add to this year's ILO debate?

In a commendable attempt to address the somewhat cumbersome form and style of the Conference, the Director-General gave us a concise and focused introduction rather than the usual lengthy report for us to digest. I have attentively considered this introduction in which the Director-General outlines his ideas for consolidating progress and moving ahead with the ILO agenda of "Making decent work a global goal" on the basis of the four pillars sketched in the ILO Strategic Policy Framework. Allow me to state at the very outset that I completely endorse his conclusion. He tells us "At issue is the value and the dignity of work in our contemporary societies."

In Malta, as in Europe with the Lisbon Agenda, we are grappling with the challenge to devise ways and means to concretely implement, at the national level one, of the four interlinked sets of actions the ILO has embarked upon in its framework programme. In fact, we have made decent work for all a guiding principle of our national economic, social and environmental development strategy. By working for "a fair chance at a decent job" for every person, we want to enhance our democratic and free environment with a better quality of life at work for all people.

At the same time we want to give our modest contribution to all efforts aimed at extending the practical implementation of this objective to the Euro-Mediterranean region. Malta is fully committed to the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals of poverty reduction and a fully inclusive and equitable globalization. In particular, Malta would like to encourage the widest concrete support possible for the Africa Initiative launched by British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, for his call on developed countries to expand the youth employment network to more African countries.

As Minister responsible for Education, Youth and Employment, I cannot but be especially interested in this year's social policy Report, *Youth: Pathways to decent work*. I would like to thank the Director-General and the Governing Body for increasing funding for the tripartite initiatives on youth.

Despite a period of improvement in the late 1990s, ILO data confirm that youth unemployment presents a challenge to policy-makers beyond European borders. More often than not, young women face higher unemployment rates than young men, as do youth minorities and youth with disabilities. I need not elaborate upon those policy instruments of which most of us here have experience: regulatory reforms; vocational and career guidance; apprenticeship skills and basic skills training; and active labour market measures such as work experience programmes.

Certain areas however, remain underdeveloped, such as the monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes, the crucial links between education and industry and cost-sharing mechanisms in training. I fully agree with the Director-General when he emphasizes the need to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise creation as an important key to increasing employment for young women and men. Undoubtedly all this will play an important part in the policy mix for young people in the years to come, reflected

in all the social partners' active promotion of employability and decent work opportunities for youth. The recently formulated European Youth Pact is a good example of how different policy areas may be mobilized and coordinated in favour of youth.

However, an informed and innovate policy mix is necessary but not sufficient to the labour market integration of young people. We can and must think beyond policy and legislation to politics in its broadest sense. We need to foster societies in which individuals are encouraged and strengthened with the necessary skills to live productively and with a sense of fulfilment in a rapidly evolving society. We need more and more areas of cooperation and not only of competition. Yes, let us teach young people the importance of contract but let us also teach them about covenant. I mean, let us provide models of long-term commitment of trust, reciprocity and altruism – all of which give us strength as we face uncertainty. A vibrant civil society is crucial to building good habits of the heart in our young, offering them hope and empowering them to be co-creators of a better future.

By all means we need to strengthen the environment for job creation, to improve our laws and incentives, to enhance employability and equality at work, but it is also a challenge to us all here today to empower young people to avail themselves wisely of these opportunities.

Mr. DALLEY (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica*)

In the last six years, the ILO has been working assiduously to give effect to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as an expression of our commitment to ensuring that social progress and economic growth are seen as the pillars of sustained development. In this regard, we commend the Director-General for his Report, *A global alliance against forced labour* which draws attention to the grave threat to mankind that is evidences in this continued practice and highlights the insidious forms of forced labour that have recently emerged.

On behalf of the Government of Jamaica, I place on record our unequivocal condemnation of all forms of human trafficking and forced labour, including its most recent manifestations and underscore Jamaica's commitment to working with local groups and the international community to eliminate the scourge.

As part of the solution to the wider problem, however, we urge the developed countries to put in place structured programmes so as to accommodate the need for migrant workers, mainly from developing countries, and thereby contribute to the prevention of illicit work and labour exploitation.

In our particular circumstances, while we have no experience of a bonded labour system or debt bondage, we nevertheless recognize the possibility that such newer forms of forced labour might occur among children. We in Jamaica, in collaboration with the ILO, through the IPEC programme and with the assistance of the United States Department of Labor, have identified activities where children are likely to be involved in forced labour and have made a number of interventions to eliminate the worst manifestations.

It is quite clear that existing global arrangements will not fulfil the needs of mankind if inequity, social injustice and weak democratic institutions exist anywhere. In a world of growing economic interde-

pendence, we all have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and justice and to provide a safe and secure future for succeeding generations.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals are a pledge of the world's commitment to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. We pledge that we will achieve universal primary education, promote gender equity and empower women. We pledge that we will reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, eradicate malaria and other disease, ensure environmental sustainability and help develop a global partnership.

The tripartite partners in Jamaica and indeed in the Caribbean, are committed to these Millennium Goals and reaffirm our faith in the fundamental principle that all persons have the right to achieve their full potential on the basis of equality of opportunity and a fair share of the wealth they help to produce. In this regard, the continued search for meaningful employment for young people becomes a matter of extreme urgency.

At present we witness a world in which 47 per cent of the approximately 190 million unemployed persons globally are youth. An estimated 59 million young persons between the ages of 15 and 17 engage in hazardous work. In another ten years, an estimated 1 billion young persons will be entering the world of work and the question we must ask ourselves is what future is there for youth under globalization?

In Jamaica, our efforts have been directed towards developing policies which promote decent work through investments in economic and social infrastructure and towards providing full and equal access to training opportunities on a lifelong learning basis through our national training programmes.

For the disadvantaged and dispossessed peoples of the world, as well as unemployed youth, momentum must be accelerated and hope rekindled. We as Governments, Employers and Workers gathered here for the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference must recommit ourselves to the fundamental principles and rights at work and recognize that, as long as our objectives remain noble and our cause remains just, we cannot fail in our pursuit of an equitable and fair world for the next generations.

(Mr. Chiriboga takes the Chair.)

Mr. CHANPORN PONG *(Employer, Thailand)*

I am pleased to inform you of the improvement in the employment situation in Thailand over the past year. The relationship between employers and workers can be characterized by relative peace and tranquillity, reflecting better understanding between the two parties. There have been fewer serious disputes between workers and management over the past year, thanks to the better understanding and maturity of labour leaders. This has enabled employers to devote more time and effort towards developing human resources for better productivity, as evidenced in the training and retraining of workers in the new production techniques and technologies. Newly trained and retrained workers with better or upgraded skills are qualified for promotion and better pay leading to improved living conditions for these workers. This process is continuing in many industrial and business enterprises in Thailand.

On the Government side, the aggressive, social and economic policies adopted and implemented by the present administration, have been reforming Thai society down to the grass-roots level. The budgetary allocation for social development in 2004-05, including the outlay for poverty elimination, amounted to 427,565 million baht, or \$10,539 million, which was 38 per cent of the total annual budget. For the year 2005-06, the amount will be increased to 540,600 million baht or \$13,515 million, representing 40 per cent of the total budget.

There are many more welfare measures to alleviate the living conditions of the Thai people. There are also other schemes, programmes and measures, adopted as a result of the efforts of the various tripartite bodies, comprising Government, workers and employers, that have been or will be of direct benefit to workers.

On 1 January 2005, the unemployment compensation scheme was implemented covering all workers in the formal sectors. There is one shortcoming in the scheme, however, the Government pays only half of the contribution by the employers or workers, in spite of the fact that workers pay both income and other taxes to the Government. This should be corrected as soon as possible.

A study is being made to extend the social coverage to workers in the informal sector, comprising homeworkers, farmers, fishers etc., who number approximately 24 million, or about 70 per cent of the total workforce.

Stepped efforts by the Social Security Office, in cooperation with government agencies, employers' organizations and labour unions, for the promotion of occupational safety, health and the environment, as evidenced by organizing safety training programmes in various enterprises and public relations programmes to disseminate safety awareness to workers. More doctors have been trained and clinics for work-related diseases have been opened to treat workers. As a result, the number of workers suffering industrial accidents was reduced from 30 per 1,000 workers to 29 per 1,000 last year. We are not satisfied with this result and efforts have been stepped up to reduce the accident rate further.

There is one big shortcoming in the safety system in Thailand, which is that there are no licensing requirements for professional technicians, for building contractors, electricians, plumbers, etc., for work that involves many safety risks. There is an urgent need for Thailand to have a law or regulations enacted to provide for licensing technicians. The Government already has a tool to provide the necessary tests and to process the licensing formalities.

To sum up, Thailand has been going through a process of transformation and restructuring that, hopefully, will bring prosperity to the country and a better life for all.

Mr. KAPUYA *(Minister for Labour and Youth Development, United Republic of Tanzania)*

Allow me also to convey, on behalf of my delegation and the people of the United Republic of Tanzania, my congratulations to the Director-General for releasing the Global Report and for the progress made by the ILO on the implementation of the work programme. We support and reaffirm our commitment on the efforts and decisions made by the Governing Body.

Youth employment is an issue which needs urgent attention, now more than ever, in most developing

countries, due to high unemployment rates and poverty. Tanzania, with 68 per cent of the active population consisting of youth, attaches great importance to youth employment. Our current engagement is youth mapping, which entails taking stock of the number and location of the youth, identifying where they are located, and assess, their potential and requirements. These are important components of the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (MKUKUTA) in the United Republic of Tanzania. The major objective of the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction is to enhance local development capacities and to build a broad consensus on what is needed to eradicate poverty and improve living conditions, particularly for youth. This is reflected in commitments made with the proclamation of the Millennium Declaration and the setting up of the MDGs.

One important area of policy concern in our country is unemployment reduction. The Integrated Labour Force Survey conducted in 2000-01 reveals, among others, that 2.3 million people are unemployed, that is 12.9 per cent of the labour force. Further, it is observed that youth unemployment is worse and is also affecting the educated. Employment opportunities for people with disabilities are limited and there are no specific support structures in the workplace.

Let this Conference take note that the ILO has undertaken a number of studies and projects in the past, that are aimed at addressing youth unemployment. The results of those studies and projects have been instrumental in shaping our policies on youth development, and employment in particular. I would like to take this opportunity to inform your august assembly that the United Republic of Tanzania has reviewed its policies and legislation with the objective, among others, of facilitating youth employability.

I wish to thank the ILO for its commitment and dedication to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries, the United Republic of Tanzania included. The ILO has also done a commendable job in producing the Report on this agenda. The Report is a synthesis of what happens throughout the world and a reflection of initiatives at national levels. It also identifies key lessons for formulating successful policies and programmes.

The issues of forced labour and child labour concern most of our countries. Their problems manifest themselves more in the social fabric of our societies. I would like to commend the ILO for undertaking a detailed study on these issues and presenting the Report to this Conference.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has been actively implementing various recommendations emerging from the international forum in collaboration with the ILO. Among the important recommendations is the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization entitled, *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*. In this context, the Government has established a task force to prepare a plan of action for the purpose of implementing the report; translated the report into the national language Kiswahili; undertaken an analysis of the socio-economic impact of globalization in the United Republic of Tanzania; initiated dialogue with social partners and stakeholders; analysed and evaluated existing policies; and developed coherent harmonized national strategies to create fair globalization opportunities.

I would like to thank the ILO for choosing Tanzania as one of the pilot countries to start implementing the recommendations of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. We promise to live up to the challenges and show the world that it can be done.

The United Republic of Tanzania participated in the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Employment and Poverty Alleviation held in Burkina Faso last September, and in subsequent regional meetings that resulted in declarations and recommendations on the implementation of the plan of action and follow-up mechanism in our respective countries. The United Republic of Tanzania also had the opportunity to participate in the deliberations of the 43rd Session of the Commission for Social Development in early February this year in New York, where we reaffirmed our commitment to the Copenhagen Plan of Action and the outcome of the 24th Special Session of the General Assembly.

Noteworthy, activities undertaken by the United Republic of Tanzania include the commemoration of World Day for Safety and Health at Work; the launching of the ILO European Union for East African Community Labour Migration Project for East Africa; the launching of the campaign against forced labour on 25 May 2005; and the laying of the foundation stone for the building to house the ILO Area Office in Dar es Salaam by His Excellency, Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, on 30 May 2005.

At this juncture, I am obliged to make a proposal concerning the achievement of full employment in our countries. First, we need to develop a youth employment strategy, as contained in the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth, as a first step in strengthening and broadening the focus on employment-oriented development strategies. Second, we need to increase participation in the Youth Employment Network and ensure the implementation of the four global priorities for national action to promote youth employment. The priority areas are employment creation, employability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities. Finally, we need to emphasize the transfer of technology and know-how as a means to create employment and foster skills development.

In conclusion, I would like to call for strong networking and partnership among all stakeholders and development partners in order to devise implementable and achievable programmes that are geared towards youth employment and empowerment.

Original Arabic: Mr. HADI (Minister of Labour, Iraq)

We hope that this distinguished international effort will culminate in progress for all humankind.

It is my pleasure to lead the delegation of my country, and to convey to you here at this forum the greetings of my newly elected Government and of the Iraqi people.

We shall be discussing issues of social justice and promotion of democracy within the framework of internationally accepted principles. We are meeting at this Conference at a time when all decision-makers now in Iraq, all its leaders academics, and intellectuals, be they Arabs, Kurds or other nationalities, are embarking on elaborating a new Constitution that will re-establish the rule of law and make Iraq a pluralist state.

Iraq is committed to reducing inequalities in all areas of life, and to developing closer relations with other countries in order to overcome the aftermath of war and the embargo that has isolated us from the rest of the world.

Donor countries and non-governmental organizations have had a pivotal role in reconstructing our country, and this will help us make up for some of the losses incurred by the Iraqi people.

The previous Iraqi Government set aside the rights of the workers and others. Here I would like to express thanks for the huge efforts undertaken by donor countries and international institutions, especially the International Labour Organization, which has prepared a new draft Labour Code which will apply in order to safeguard individual and collective rights. We are also grateful for the equal opportunities given to trade unions and other institutions so that we can settle all our conflicts in a peaceful way.

This has helped us to give effect to the human rights principle and guarantee equality of women and men especially the principle of equal pay for equal work. We have tried to fight discrimination in all aspects of life.

Iraq is passing through exceptional circumstances. Fighting international terrorism, the cause of the lack of security, is one of the top priorities of the new Government. This new Government has adopted a strong plan of action in order to eradicate all acts of terrorism. The crime rate has dropped and acts of terrorism have been considerably reduced. This will lead, we hope, to greater prosperity and stability and will reactivate the foreign direct investments in Iraq, especially now that we have adopted new policies to encourage investment.

We are confident that we will enjoy the support of the ILO and its strategic programmes to promote the labour policy that will be implemented in the second half of this year.

A number of policies will be established. First of all, measures will be adopted to improve the quality of services given to all population groups, including the social security system and the establishment of a developed programme. Second, we will reinforce the social rehabilitation programme by adding new categories to our social security scheme such as orphans, the disabled and the unemployed. We have also improved social services in areas such as homes for senior citizens, replacing those destroyed by the war. We intend to construct new buildings for the ministry of labour, which is responsible for social security.

In order to coordinate with Iraq universities, and with the support of the International Labour Organization, and to encourage new students and graduates to look into these social problems, we intend to coordinate with the ILO, other international organizations and NGOs with a view to promoting opportunities and ensuring social rehabilitation.

Finally, the ILO should have exempted Iraq from its long over due contributions. However, we welcome the initiative of the Organization to reschedule these contributions and over several years. We hope that all the participants will support the right of Iraq to get back its voting rights.

Before concluding, I would like to highlight the dire situation of the Palestinian workers in terms of arbitrary aggression by Israel on a daily basis. It is urgently necessary to provide protection for these

workers in accordance with the principles of social peace and stability.

Mr. KUTI (*Worker, Hungary*)

It is my privilege to attend the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference and represent the Hungarian employees, and to express their opinion.

In February this year, Hungary played host to the Seventh ILO European Regional Meeting. In the discussions there we analysed the situation of the workers in our region and held discussions on the consequences and the challenges of globalization.

Hungarian trade unions consider the content and results of the Budapest discussions significant, and stress that emphasis must be put on the practical application of the pledges, declarations and recommendations made there.

Workers' representatives are deeply convinced that the employment situation, its quality and the everyday implementation of the concept of decent work is a tripartite responsibility of both on the national and international levels.

We also consider it an important task of this Conference to reinforce the mandate of the ILO, and create the practice of well-balanced industrial relations based on cooperation for social and economic progress. To that end, standard setting, monitoring and supervision are necessary, as well as assuring the corresponding resources. In this context, we consider a 1.1 per cent increase in the budget to be the minimum.

The discussions at the Budapest Seventh European Regional Meeting indicated that improvement in the employment of young workers is a great challenge for our societies. It is unacceptable that the ambitions and energy of a whole generation, which is the key to our future, should be wasted as a result of the inadequate financial and employment policies and incoherent social policies.

It is a burning task – which also needs tripartite responsibility to be taken – to harmonize education and training strategies with employment policy. In a global economy, employment policies and competitiveness must be set to correspond to the development of societies, with policies also at regional level to promote greater mobility.

Decent work does not only presuppose a quantitative increase in employment, but also a qualitative one. Therefore, Hungarian employees consider that labour regulations for safety and occupational health should be promoted and coordinated within standard setting too.

It is time to understand that a workplace with good health and safety conditions, that are not harmful to the health of the workers, is not a gift from the employer, but a basic condition of employment. The discussions of our colleagues are indicating that that fundamental right, on the basis of common interests, should be protected by the elaboration of a Convention.

On behalf of the Hungarian trade unions, I want to thank the ILO Budapest Office and its staff for the continuous assistance that they have given us. The staff of that Office provide significant backup in the region, including in our country, to the proper protection and representation of employees' interests, and assist the deepening democratization process and the development of a well-balanced social partnership.

I wish once again successful work to the Conference and thank you for your kind attention.

The present forum takes place in the framework of a year that proved to be exceptionally important for the development of Bulgaria. On 25 April 2005, the European Union Treaty of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania was signed – a document of historical significance, that maps out the European future of our country and forms its new international status.

Inevitably, this event will give new impetus to the development of social-economic relations in Bulgaria and will additionally stimulate the social partners to take an even more active part in social dialogue. For Bulgarian Employers, that will also mean a new approach to the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), aiming for complete adoption of the idea of responsible business behaviour, creating added value and strategic investment. We are working actively along these lines by organizing training and seminars, publishing and dissemination of printed materials, encouraging companies to observe codes of ethics in business activities, etc.

During this year, significant progress was made in the development of relations between Bulgarian employers' organizations and the trade unions. A month ago, for the first time in the history of Bulgarian social dialogue, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the other employers' organizations – members of the Association of the Organization of Bulgarian Employers (the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA), the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA), the Union of Private Bulgarian Entrepreneurs (UPBE), the Bulgarian Union of Private Entrepreneurs (Vuzrazdane) and the Union of Private Economic Enterprise (UPEE) and the nationally representative trade unions – the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB), and the Confederation of Labour (Podkrepa), reached an agreement on the basic issues of the public, political and social-economic development of the country.

Declaring their adherence to the principles of the European social models, social partnerships, social market economy and the European models of industrial relations, the abovementioned organizations presented their common position in the form of an address to the political parties and participants of the forthcoming parliamentary elections to be held on 25 June 2005. We expect those of them who find that their pre-election platforms are close to the goals of this important public act to assume political responsibility for their achievement. In our opinion, some of the most important issues for effective social dialogue stipulated in the document are: constitutional regulation of the tripartite cooperation and Economic and Social Council, which proved to be an effectively working body; conclusion by the Government, the nationally representative organizations of the employers and those of employees of a national economic-social pact for the development of the country for the periods 2005-07 and 2007-10; and improvement of the mechanisms indicated to recognize the national representative nature of the social partners, etc.

Notwithstanding the good results, we are aware that many tasks still lie before us. We find ourselves strictly observing the rules of the law on health and safety at work. The organizations of employers of Bulgaria are united in their willingness to have the activity of their members conform with interna-

tional standards in this sphere. In 2004 alone, the representative employers' organizations, in coordination with the safety at work fund, trained 6,840 managers and other senior representatives of Bulgarian firms.

Methods about the regulations for the determination of the rate of social security instalments for work accidents and professional diseases was worked out by a tripartite working group and with the kind assistance of ILO experts. This normative act is in force in the present moment. However, with regard to this, I would like to stress the fact that employers raised questions several times about improving this methodology with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. We believe that the *bonus-malus* principle should be developed and therefore applied in order for firms to become really interested in the radical improvement of working conditions. Unfortunately, that request has still not been satisfied.

An important priority in the activities of the social partners will be the promotion of youth employment. The high levels of youth emigration and unemployment show that the measures stipulated by the law on the promotion of employment and those realized in the framework of the project: *Clearing the path to employment for youth*, are insufficient.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that as organizations representing the interests of employers, we will continue our efforts to create an increasingly more attractive and hospitable economic environment in Bulgaria, including the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of Bulgarian and foreign investments in Bulgarian laws.

Original Spanish: Mr. ABREU (Worker, Dominican Republic)

On behalf of the workers of the Dominican Republic, I would like to extend warm greetings to all of the delegates here at the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference.

The International Labour Organization was founded with the aim of securing a social dimension to work, so that it ceased to be simply a means to exploit poor men and women; to that end, 184 international Conventions and a large number of Recommendations have been adopted. Today, 86 years after its foundation, the rights of working men and women are at risk for a number of reasons: violations of rights committed daily in enterprises and workplaces; changes in the global economy, which, in the case of the Dominican Republic, have led to a disproportionate growth of the informal sector, precarious employment and growing segmentation of the labour market, affecting mainly women and young people; despite an increase in their participation in the workforce, they are in the lowest-paid jobs with increasingly precarious working conditions; another factor is the problem of subcontracting, which is the greatest threat to labour rights as we know them today.

The ILO's efforts, throughout its existence, to improve working conditions must be given renewed thrust or a new focus, with the cooperation of all its constituents and Members, so that we can respond to the following challenges.

The trade unions being set up in sectors such as the *maquiladoras* in the free zones are being undermined, while in some sectors the workers do not even have the possibility of organizing in trade unions, for example in the telecommunications, energy, commerce, finance and banking sectors.

Collective bargaining is being undermined. In our country it has been two years since we have negotiated new collective agreements; all that is being done is to renegotiate agreements in those companies with a tradition of allowing freedom of association, which have been bargaining for the last five to 20 years. If collective bargaining is a measure of how wealth is distributed, the Dominican Republic is a poor example of an appropriate distribution of wealth.

The tendency with regard to job creation could hardly be more at odds with the tenets of the ILO with regard to decent work. There is no point in hoping that the signing of free trade agreements, which occurred in a context of deep inequalities, will improve the situation: those agreements are generally aimed at reducing production costs under the pretext that this is the only way to remain competitive, and exert a downward pressure on wages while making jobs more precarious.

Issues such as social security with regard to health care continue to be blocked by employers, who view it merely as a bargaining chip, while intransigently opposing the provision of a health service conducive to the well-being of workers and their families.

The main issue under discussion this year, which has been dealt with in the Global Report is that of forced labour. This subject is relevant in our country on two accounts: on the one hand, we are a receiving country for foreign workers mostly from Haiti; on the other, our nationals leave their families and their homes to emigrate to countries such as the United States or those of Europe in search of better standards of living and working conditions, but in fact they often fall victim to smugglers and traffickers. In fact, these problems are closely linked to the effects of structural adjustment programmes applied by our Government, on the advice of multinational financial institutions, with the result that labour markets are unable to absorb the number of job-seekers entering them daily. These multinational institutions are only concerned with stabilizing the macroeconomic situation and care little for the social dimension.

The Dominican Republic has ratified the Conventions on which the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is based. Two important Acts have been promulgated in support of the fight against forced labour and human trafficking: the Act establishing the code for the protection of the rights of children and adolescents, and the Act on illegal human trafficking. In addition, an Inter-institutional Committee on Protection and Support for Migrant Women was set up under the coordination of the State Secretariat for Women's Affairs.

The workers of the Dominican Republic have continued to make progress along the path to unity. A process is now under way, to culminate in December this year, in which the four national trade union confederations will be merged into a single organization, as a means of strengthening our ability to mobilize and exert pressure. We would appreciate everyone's encouragement in this process.

As constituents of the ILO, we are committed to its development, in an environment that has given rise to a different set of realities from those that existed at its inception, in a world where there is a growing need for institutions such as ours which monitor, promote and advocate social justice.

Today, the Preamble to the ILO Constitution of 1919 is more relevant than ever when it says that "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice".

Mr. CHEN (*Employer, China*)

We are glad to see, in his Introduction to the Conference: *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, that the Director-General reviewed the fruitful work that the ILO has fulfilled in the past years, analysed the new situation we are currently facing and pointed the way for the tripartite constituents of member countries to play a better role.

As the Director-General has mentioned, the twenty-first century is an era of both opportunities and challenges. The multi polarization of the world and economic globalization are developing unevenly. Globalization and the rapid development of technology have boosted the growth of the world economy, accelerated dissemination of technological achievements and helped to optimize the allocation of resources around the world. Naturally, globalization has also brought about some negative effects. While the unreasonable and unjust international political and economic order basically remains unchanged, globalization will also worsen the imbalance of development among countries, enlarge the gap between the rich and the poor and even threaten the sustainable development of the whole world. To exploit the benefits and avoid the negative side of globalization has become a key issue for the success of decision-makers, economists and entrepreneurs, in various countries, in choosing and implementing responsive strategies. We hope that, by relying on the strengths it has developed over the past 80 years, by carrying forward the spirit of moving with the times and by taking full account of the wishes and demands of the vast number of developing countries, the ILO will be able to continue to make still more contributions towards steering globalization in a fair, equitable and win-win direction and towards promoting employment, alleviating poverty and achieving the goal of decent work for all.

In today's world, the pursuit of peace and the development and desire for exchanges and cooperation remain the shared wish of people all over the world and a theme of our times. Through reform and opening up, China has pioneered a path of peaceful development suited to its own national conditions. For the past 26 years China's economy has been growing at an annual rate of 9.4 per cent, its total volume of foreign trade increasing at 16 per cent, and the 1.3 billion Chinese people have achieved an historic leap from a life of basic subsistence to a well-off one. Entering the new century, China has formulated the grand goal of building an equitable, moderately prosperous society, through comprehensive socio-economic development, guided by the scientific approach of development. In our drive for modernization, particularly in economic and technical cooperation between Chinese businesses and their foreign counterparts, we feel deeply that China cannot develop without the rest of the world, while the development of the world also needs China. The rapid development of China provides an important opportunity and a strong engine for development and cooperation for Asia and countries all over the world.

Currently, China is at a critical juncture of rapid economic growth, when there are extremely favour-

able conditions for business and industrial development, and the largest potential market in the world. In recent years, many multinationals and large corporations have been coming to China to invest and run their businesses. It has become fashionable to go to China for a fair share of the fruit of her reform and development.

This has been fully demonstrated by the fact that the Fortune Global Forum has chosen China as its venue for three out of its nine annual conferences since 1995. This is because the best business opportunities are in China, because investing in China is investing in the future.

As an organization of enterprises and entrepreneurs in China, and a representative organization of Chinese employers, the China Enterprise Confederation is committed to serving enterprises and entrepreneurs, and its work has been duly welcomed and acknowledged. In view of the new situation, the China Enterprise Confederation will strive to further strengthen cooperation and exchanges with the ILO and employers' organizations in other countries to promote the participation of China's enterprises in other globalization in a responsible way and to improve their competitiveness and strengthen their business cooperation with enterprises in other countries, in order to work for the greater development and prosperity of the world.

Original Arabic: Mr. BOUZIA (Worker, Morocco)

I would like to commend the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body for their excellence preparatory work for this session.

I would also like to congratulate all the new members of the Governing Body on the confidence that has been placed in them by the Organization, in a specific international context, described by the Director-General in his address as a source of deepening concern on a global scale, given the gap between globalization of development and job creation. Thus, the new Governing Body will face major challenges, as pointed out by the Director-General, in shaping the role of the ILO and the multilateral system in the coming decade.

The Director-General's Report voices our concerns, which have underpinned many complaints submitted by trade union organizations.

The proposals and ideas contained in the Report, while still the subject of debate, give reason for hope, as well as being rich in intellectual and organizational content, which can serve as a basis for the Organization's work during these annual sessions, in the drafting of international standards and instruments in the service of human beings, with the aim of mitigating the adverse effect of rampant globalization.

There is a gap between the decisions of the social partners and their application in practice. Hence, the need for the ILO to promote follow-up machinery on international standards and instruments.

The subjects chosen for this session – forced labour, occupational safety and health, working time, youth employment and work in the fishing sector – will play an important part in the Organization's activities in the years to come.

As far as Morocco is concerned, we consider that the problem of employment in general, and youth employment in particular, is of paramount importance. To address this issue, the Moroccan authorities are preparing a national debate on the subject, together with the other social partners. The ideas

and experience we will hear about in this session will enable us to refine our proposals during this debate, which, we trust, will lead to the conclusion that decent work is the means of freeing young people from marginalization, extremism and the risks of emigration.

Morocco is aware of the importance of social dialogue. As a trade union, we participate alongside employers and the Government in drafting instruments that meet our needs with a view to reorganizing labour relations, securing justice for the workers and ensuring social stability. Examples of this are the Declaration of 19 May 1994 following tripartite negotiations, the agreements of 1 August 1996 and 23 April 2003, the Tripartite Agreement on the Labour Code, implementing decrees, and the Act on compulsory basic medical coverage and insurance against occupational diseases and injuries.

These agreements marked the advent of a new atmosphere, conducive to national and foreign investment, pending the completion of banking, fiscal, administrative and judiciary reforms, and enabling the effective reorganization of the Moroccan economy.

Morocco officially announced the adoption of its national project for sustainable human resource development in the latest speech of His Majesty the King, which referred to the deterioration in the social conditions of large sectors of society and the spread of poverty, unemployment and marginalization. He described the poverty that exists among different segments of society and highlighted the priorities of the Government: to put in place urgent programmes to alleviate poverty in marginalized sectors. He also called on civil society to participate in the success of this important project.

Accordingly, our Confederation declared its support for this initiative, calling for an exceptional mobilization to hold development workshops throughout the country just as we did in 1998, with the participation of civil society.

As regards the Arab Maghreb, we count on its unity for an integrated regional development process, which will open up possibilities of economic complementarities and sustainable social development in order to overcome problems and restore hope in stability, peace and social justice.

The Report of the Director-General on the situation of the Arab workers of Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories refers to the devastating effects of Israeli settlement policy on the exercise of fundamental human rights.

In this respect, we can only condemn the policy of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, symbolized by the segregationist separation wall and the policy of collective sanctions and economic blockade aimed at starving the population, as well as the demolition of neighbourhoods and homes. What is happening in Palestine is a grave crime against human rights, with houses being destroyed, trees uprooted, water confiscated, universities and schools closed and holy places desecrated.

A just settlement of the Palestinian cause lies in the implementation of the United Nations resolutions providing for the creation of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital, the right of return and the release of prisoners.

Not far from Palestine lies Iraq, cradle of civilizations, which is also living under the yoke of an occupation based on spurious pretexts. It is time the

occupation forces withdrew to allow Iraq to determine its own destiny, without foreign intervention.

The ILO, with its tripartite structure, is the most balanced organization within the United Nations system, as may be seen from its resolutions each year.

In order for its social and humanitarian role to have an impact, it is crucial for the other United Nations organizations and institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the WTO to join their efforts in an integrated and harmonious humanitarian project, to fulfil humankind's hopes for a decent life, peace, security and social justice.

The working class has historically always been in favour of peace, security, freedom, democracy and social justice. It is also opposed to all forms of extremism and terrorism, irrespective of their source or the pretexts invoked. For it is the working class that suffers the most from war.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-MAHFOODH (Worker, Bahrain)

The report presented by the Director-General this year has revealed a painful reality and drawn attention to poorly healed social wounds. The report rightly links decent work, and in particular the employment of young people, with a number of issues that will be dealt with at the Heads of State Summit to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, with which the United Nations General Assembly will open in September this year. The Report also underlines the role of the ILO in monitoring employment and labour issues within gender equality and social development programmes and programmes for the economic empowerment of women.

The employment of young people is considered to be an urgent issue and a worrying problem, particularly for my country where most of our young people are affected by unemployment. Moreover, our country suffers the loss due to the paralysis of this vast human capital for whom an enormous outlay has been granted without society or the economy seeing the benefit, thus creating political and social tensions and worsening the poverty situation, in addition to the lack of any social security for the unemployed and the failure to respect the minimum wage.

The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain has embarked on a new project to regulate the labour market, and has established a labour market body and a special employment fund, which has given us some hope, because if this project goes ahead, it would make it possible to protect the established rights of workers, in particular the right to security and professional stability.

With regard to youth employment, we would like, on behalf of our Federation, to thank all the countries who have joined the Youth Employment Network in order to ensure the application and monitoring of policies to promote youth employment and to support the efforts of the ILO as the pioneer body in this network established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations under a General Assembly Resolution adopted in 2002, with the support of the World Bank. We hope that the Arab countries, and more particularly the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, will take part in this network and will be able to play an active role in the implementation of national action plans for youth employment. We think that the Director-General is right to emphasize

the need to strengthen entrepreneurship and to create new businesses, because this is an essential element in improving employment and especially the employment of young people. The creation of small and medium-sized businesses is notably of primary importance if we want to break the vicious circle of poverty and social exclusion. Governments must encourage all individual and joint initiatives – initiatives by civil society, by cooperatives and by the private sector – to expand this promising economic sector.

We would like to reiterate here our support for the rights of all workers in the public and private sectors, for their right to create trade unions, in particular in my country Bahrain, in accordance with the directives given by his Majesty the King of Bahrain, the Constitution, legislation on trade unions and international agreements. To that end, we hope that the ILO will continue to advise the Government of Bahrain to rescind the administrative circular on the civil service which prohibits the creation of trade unions in the State sector. Out of concern for strengthening social dialogue and consensus between all the social partners on all social and economic issues, we hope that this particular stance by the Government might be strengthened by respect for the fundamental principles of the ILO, in particular those relating to freedom of association and collective bargaining, on the basis of the ratification of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

I would also like to praise the progress made in my country and the attention my Government has paid to the regulation of the labour market, the participation and the tripartite dialogue in the special commission responsible for examining the new Labour Code and the promulgation of the decision to allow workers to do trade union work, thereby opening the way to strengthening the trade union's role in enterprises. We would like to see the adoption of other measures of this kind in the future in order to implement the principle of social partnership, and also to see workers represented by the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions present in tripartite commissions, on an equal footing with the other social partners.

The Director-General's Report on *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* raises a certain level of concern vis-à-vis the policies and practices in Israel, in particular the fact that it continues with the construction of the separation wall and colonies on the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and in the Golan, along with the closure operations and the setting up of checkpoints and military barrages, which limit movement of people and goods and increase unemployment and poverty, already prevalent among workers and their families. This crisis is aggravated by the detention of Palestinians whose numbers are estimated to have reached 7,000 prisoners, at the start of April 2005, including 318 minors under 18. The Report also noted the situation of young Palestinians, which causes no less concern, and which produces unease for the future of this country, especially given the inability, the international paralysis and the incapacity of the international community to end the Zionist occupation of the Arab territories.

With respect to the Report on *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, we would

like to indicate that, in fact, occupation is in itself a form of terrorism and that establishing just and sustainable peace in Palestine and in the region will only be possible if we end occupation in Palestine, in Syrian Golan and in the Lebanese Shebaa farms and if we give the Palestinian people the right to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent State having Al-Quds as its capital.

Lastly, it is our wish that this session of the Conference is successful in reaching its objectives. We thank the Director-General once again for this excellent work and extend our gratitude to the many people who work behind the scenes to make sure this session of the Conference runs smoothly.

Original Portuguese: Mr. MUSSA BALDÉ (Government, Guinea-Bissau)

I was very happy to see that, in his Report, the Director-General reaffirmed the principles and ideas that I believe are guidelines for a better and more just society. I will also be happy to see the goodwill expressed by the ILO and its determination to contribute to the construction of a more humane world.

The agenda of this session of the International Labour Conference demonstrates the fundamental importance of being aware of the problems being faced throughout the world today, a world stricken by war and abject poverty. Thus, we must try to build a just society in our countries.

Work is something that links us all and we need to focus on modern-day problems, such as working conditions, decent work, issues related to migrants and the inalienable rights of the workers. We are all dependent on social justice, a vital element in sustainable and lasting peace.

The member States share a common credo; we must combine our efforts at an international level. Shortcomings and failures will sound the death knell for peace and social justice. We must face up to the challenge of poverty in the name of social justice and solidarity and we need to achieve positive social change.

The issues of poverty and peace form the main axes of the political debate. I am utterly convinced that cooperation with the ILO will be essential in this fight against poverty and inequality.

It was not by chance that youth employment was included on the agenda of this Conference. This issue is also currently a priority for my Government. We need to modernize labour structures and administration immediately, as well as revising legislation, launching a vocational training policy and elaborating a new social policy to promote youth employment.

As to social protection, the fight against the factors behind poverty requires us to elaborate effective strategies, alongside coherent policies. It is vital to have access to immediate anti-poverty measures aimed at promoting sustainable economic development.

Our Government intends to increase social aid, to apply reasonable and measured programmes to immediately reduce poverty, programmes which will have an immediate effect on access to basic services. We also plan to improve the future of the most vulnerable groups, reduce inequality, involve institutions in good governance and rally the whole of society in the fight against poverty.

In order to make a real and lasting difference, we need to tackle the scourge of poverty and combat the dichotomies existing between urban and rural

areas. To this end, our Government has undertaken to introduce a minimum wage, in order to ensure equal access to work. We have also initiated projects aimed at improving the lot of the least favoured sections of society living in rural areas. We are working to create better employment conditions at all levels and to get people into work. The object of these initiatives is to ensure that our labour market is competitive, inclusive and respectful of social justice.

The Labour Code is currently being revised to ensure that the workers receive protection.

Mr. NARUSEB (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Namibia)

Before independence, Namibia experienced forced labour in different ways. One was the contract labour system, under which workers were taken from their homes to work in other regions of Namibia for little or no remuneration. They were provided with inadequate and improper housing away from their families for months and even years on end. There was no respect for basic conditions of employment and labour legislation was enforced along racial lines to the detriment of workers and to the advantage of employers.

With these historical injustices in mind, Namibia ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).

Apart from the two standing committees, the Finance Committee and the Committee on the Application of Standards, the 93rd Session of the Conference has as its agenda items committees on safety and health, the fishing sector and promoting youth employment. For the global agenda in general and undoubtedly for Namibia in particular, these agenda items are indeed very significant.

As a country with a relatively large fishing sector, we have a vested interest in the deliberations of the Committee on Fishing and that is why we have been able to actively participate in the first discussion that took place during the June 2004 session of the Conference and in the Tripartite Meeting of Expert on the Fishing Sector in December 2004.

The instrument envisaged, as is the case with the other two committees, is discussed within the context of the integrated approach adopted recently by the ILO. This approach has its advantages as well as disadvantages, and I would humbly call on the ILO to guard against the drafting and adoption of an overly prescriptive instrument which member States may find difficult to ratify and ultimately implement.

It was therefore with great interest that I listened to the Director-General's Report in the plenary this week, when he elaborated on the global employment crisis. There can be very few countries, if any, that are not concerned with rising levels of unemployment, especially among youth. In Africa, developing countries are facing a daunting challenge to address this phenomenon. Comparatively speaking, not many secondary school leavers continue with their education at tertiary level, which means that they have to take up employment as an alternative, mainly due to a lack of financial resources.

Those who continue with their education are not always focused on training for specifically targeted career opportunities that are in line with labour market requirements. The majority of the school leavers are therefore taken up in the informal sector.

In Africa it is a reality that the formal sector is shrinking, whereas the informal sector is expanding. It is therefore incumbent on us to urgently and critically evaluate our efforts to develop the skills and potential of the youth, while at the same time remain cognizant of the special needs and characteristics of the informal sector in the developing countries.

The Namibian Government undertook several initiatives to address the challenge of youth unemployment. These include, inter alia, the establishment of the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture, the National Commission on Employment Creation and the National Youth Service Act. Namibia is also one of the 11 countries that stepped forward to become a lead country in the Youth Employment Network that was launched in July 2001 to give effect to the global commitment of developing and implementing strategies that provide young people everywhere with a real chance to find decent and productive work.

National programmes and systems should be implemented in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to ensure full coverage across all economic sectors. Once again, I want to urge the ILO to take cognizance of the informal sector which is thriving but has been neglected in this regard.

I am delighted to take note that for the 2006-07 biennium the ILO is submitting a budget proposal for an increase of 1.1 per cent in real terms. We are aware that the need for ILO services and assistance is continuously increasing, especially on the African continent, owing to the challenges of poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS that we are facing, to mention but a few.

We cannot afford to continue approving a zero growth budget which will, in the long run, adversely influence the level and quality of the services the ILO is rendering to its constituents.

May I conclude by saying that every single one of the tripartite constituents has a duty and obligation continuously to reflect and give consideration to whether our actions are ultimately working towards reducing poverty and making the world of work a better place for the people of our countries.

Allow me to conclude by saying "Long live the ILO, and long live the spirit of tripartism".

Mr. ADDA (*Government, Ghana*)

The challenges that societies face in the global economy today call for pragmatic and concerted responses from all – governments, workers and employers.

Some of us live in a world of work with pervasive apprehension and insidious frustration over the forces shaping our world, and we are sucked into a maelstrom of poverty. And for many, there is a wide gulf between needs and financial capabilities.

This is the great quagmire that we have to overcome and this indeed calls for integrated interdisciplinary responses. Fortunately, these responses are not lacking. The ILO and its constituents continue to make strides and have demonstrated both the capability and commitment to deal with the situation.

With the Decent Work Agenda launched by the ILO, the Government of Ghana, within the context of a Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) is currently pursuing various programmes and projects aimed at employment generation and poverty reduction through increased social spending and in-

creased access to income and the creation of employment opportunities.

Ghana's poverty reduction strategy sets the national framework for policies and intervention to combat poverty. To contribute to this process, the country programme uses a two-pronged strategy; first, of enhancing the capacity of social partners to participate meaningfully in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy process and to place decent work on the poverty agenda; and secondly, of developing an integrated approach to reducing poverty and improving incomes in the informal economy at local level.

The ILO continues to provide technical, advisory and other support services within the context of the Decent Work Agenda. The Ghanaian Government regards the Decent Work Agenda as central to poverty reduction, social inclusion and development, hence its total commitment to the principle purpose of the Agenda.

We have vigorously pursued the four pillars of decent work: fundamental principles and rights at work; employment and income opportunities for women and men; social protection; and social dialogue and tripartism. We are also carrying out a social marketing campaign for better job quality, occupational safety and health. This campaign is being run under the auspices of the ILO's InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment through Small Enterprises Development, aimed at improving job quality in micro - and small enterprises.

My Government believes that one of the pathways to decent work for youth is through high-quality micro - and small enterprises.

It is in this light that we laud the inclusion on this year's Conference agenda of the issue of promoting youth employment.

For Ghana, reducing the decent work deficit and working out of poverty is a matter of time. After all, Rome was not built in a day. As we continue to make further progress in our efforts towards making the world of work a better place for us all, it is just and proper that we reflect on our past efforts and our way forward.

The issue of international trade affects not only employment in Ghana, but also cross-border labour mobility. How well Ghana implements the decent work programme or is able to reduce poverty within our territorial borders is affected by what happens in our neighbouring countries such as Togo, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Even far away Mali and Niger are affected in a way, as is our more-distant brotherly country Nigeria, with whom we have had good relations for so long.

The issues of international trade, its attendant problem of unemployment and the results of labour mobility make it necessary to coordinate the policies and programmes of member countries, particularly at the subregional level. The ILO has a very important role to play in this regard. Subregional cooperation on this programme must begin with the member countries themselves. All aspects of their trade, programmes and labour policies must be transparent and above board and the same applies to representation at the ILO level so as to ensure that issues are well presented here and that countries have their views heard. The principle of rotation must be adhered to particularly in Africa as regards representation at the ILO level.

Regional organizations must respect the sovereignty of member countries as they chose their rep-

representatives. It is important for the ILO to re-examine the situation of representation in order to ensure that the situation at subregional level is reflected through effective representation of the countries of the region.

Ghana will continue to adhere not only to democratic principles but also to all the Protocols that it has ratified and in this regard, will collaborate with the ILO particularly on the decent work programme because of the benefits it brings to our people.

It is for this reason that the Director-General's theme for this year's session of the Conference, *Consolidating progress and moving forward* can be

dubbed far-reaching and laudable. We therefore urge in this regard that the issue of cross-border labour mobility across regional territorial borders should be brought to the fore of deliberations at this level.

The rapid metamorphosis of the world of work, spreading inequalities and question marks concerning globalization suggests that we must always be on our feet and guard against complacency.

My Government is optimistic that the ILO and its constituents are well placed to sustain cohesion in policy-making and implementation.

(The Conference adjourned at 1.05 p.m.)

Twelfth sitting

Friday, 10 June 2005, 3.50 p.m.

President: Ms. Anderson, Mr. Finlay

RATIFICATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTION BY TAJIKISTAN

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT (Ms. ANDERSON)

I am delighted to declare the 12th sitting of the Conference open. I give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

I am pleased to announce the ratification by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, on 8 June 2005, of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

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

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT (Ms. ANDERSON)

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

Mr. GOSNAR (*Government, Slovenia*)

In the rapidly changing world in which we live, it is all too rare that we stop and reconsider our past achievements, define the issues to which we should pay more attention, and thoughtfully set the path for future action. Therefore, my compliments to the Director-General and his decision to dedicate some precious time for reflection on the major trends and their implications for the mandate of the ILO.

It is our firm belief that, in recent years, the ILO has succeeded in placing decent work as a global goal high on the agenda within the multilateral system. Raising awareness about the relevance of such work is of key importance, especially due to the often-overlooked social dimension of occurring changes. In this respect, the ILO has made significant progress in the promotion of coherent international policies.

Nevertheless, initiatives and the political will to implement global policies have to come from the country level. As there is no one-size-fits-all policy, each country has to develop its own perception of decent work and, in close cooperation with all the actors concerned, define the policies for its implementation.

Slovenia has launched a number of programmes and policies aimed at attaining decent employment, especially in the fields of labour legislation, labour

market policies, social security and safety and health at work. In this respect, we are looking forward to sharing our experiences, which could be of the utmost benefit, especially to countries with a similar social and political background undergoing the transition process or accessing the European Union.

We strongly support the efforts made by the ILO to increase funding for tripartite initiatives for youth employment, since investment in youth is investment in sustainable growth and in the welfare of societies.

As mentioned in the ILO's Report on the promotion of youth employment, Slovenia's social partners have contributed significantly to the overall performance of the country, including in terms of employment, by seeking industrial stability through tripartite cooperation. This way, Slovenia has managed to retain its high overall employment rate which, according to the most recent data, stands at 67 per cent.

Nevertheless, the youth employment rate remains relatively low. To a great extent, this is the consequence of increased educational participation in Slovenia. On the other hand, we are aware of the need for further adjustment of the education system to meet labour-market needs, and of the need to create new higher value-added jobs with better career perspectives. To achieve this aim, we are going to accommodate our scholarship policy and give young people a chance to gain the experience and skills required for work before they enter the labour market.

In addition, particular attention should be paid to further developments in the field of education, training and lifelong learning; enhanced participation of local authorities and the private sector in the promotion of youth employment; reconciliation of work and family life; increased mobility of the workforce; and an adequate balance between the flexibility of the labour market, job security and the rights of workers.

A similar vision, expressed at the European Union's high political level, is pursued within the European Youth Pact, European employment and social inclusion strategies and other initiatives.

To conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to compliment all those who have been involved in the preparation of the 7th European Regional Meeting that took place in February in Budapest on the excellently prepared event. It could, to some extent,

be used as a model when considering possible improvements of the International Labour Conference; namely, it has, through the dynamic discussions, brought about the rich and fruitful debate that gave food for thought to each and every one of the participants.

Original Vietnamese: Ms. NGUYEN (Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam)

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the delegation of the Government of Viet Nam at this important forum.

Firstly, we would like to congratulate the Director-General on his Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*. We share common concerns with the international community and appreciate the efforts made to prevent and eliminate forced labour. Forced labour under any form and manifestation is prohibited by Vietnamese law. Coercive labour relations are not accepted in Vietnamese society. Therefore, the Government of Viet Nam and its social partners greatly appreciate the visits of ILO specialists who have brought their technical expertise to assist us in studying the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). The study of these Conventions is being undertaken by an inter-agency task force comprising representatives from 13 ministries, agencies and workers' and employers' organizations in order to get an overview of the aspects of the legal system and practice related to forced labour and to compare national laws with the relevant ILO Conventions. As they share the view that forced labour must be prohibited and action should be taken against it in any of its forms, Viet Nam's and ILO's specialists are working together to resolve some differences in technical issues between national laws and the Conventions, involving definition, scope of application, coverage of matters and so on. We want to thank ILO specialists for their active cooperation and advice to governmental agencies and social partners in Viet Nam, and hope to receive further support from the ILO in this regard. On the basis of the report made by the inter-agency task force, after technical differences are resolved, it is likely that Viet Nam will ratify the ILO's Conventions on forced labour, starting with Convention No. 29.

Also with regard to forced labour, the Government of Viet Nam has been instructing ministries, relevant agencies and local authorities to work jointly with social organizations to proactively prevent and combat cross-border trafficking in women and children. Trafficking in persons is a criminal offence under Vietnamese law and shall be prosecuted in accordance with penal legislation. In practice, the majority of victims of this crime are women and children, from poor, rural areas with low public awareness and insufficient information, who are credulous and vulnerable to enticement and deception. Therefore, to combat this crime, law enforcement agencies in Viet Nam have tightened their control; they patrol and they fight against gangs and rings of human traffickers, on the one hand, and they collaborate actively with mass organizations, on the other hand, to disseminate information and raise public awareness. At the same time, official efforts at poverty reduction and employment programmes to assist people to be self-employed or refer to reliable addresses for jobs are

designed to prevent women and children from falling victim to traffickers.

We welcome the fact that at this session of the ILC, a new instrument to promote occupational health and safety will be discussed. We believe that with the adoption of this instrument, OSH will be better improved. The Government of Viet Nam attaches great importance to improving OSH and dedicates its efforts to doing so. I am glad to inform the Conference that on 10 February 2005, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam issued a decision on establishing the National Council on Labour Safety, presided over by the Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, comprised of leaders from 14 ministries and industries and representatives from workers' and employers' organizations. The Council will advise the Government on means and ways, mechanisms and policies to improve OSH and coordinate all activities of parties concerned. It is to assume a focal role in advising the Prime Minister on structuring and directing the implementation of the national programme on occupational safety and health.

The 2006-10 national programme on OSH has been drafted for the purposes of preventing, as far as possible, and reducing the frequency of work-related accidents, particularly in high risk areas; lowering the percentage of enterprises and workplaces with poor working conditions; enhancing the effectiveness of state administration; strengthening capacity, raising awareness and the sense of responsibility for OSH issues in all sectors at all levels, among both levels, employees and employers.

I am happy to inform the Conference that coinciding with the discussion on youth employment at this session, in Hanoi, the National Assembly of Viet Nam has just mooted a draft Youth Law, with a chapter devoted to youth employment. The Prime Minister has issued a Directive on the participation of young people in socio-economic development which has translated into concrete action to strengthen vocational training and job creation for young people.

We are making efforts to promote the formulation of labour legislation, which will lay the bedrock for public administration reform and international economic integration. Laws on social security, on vocational training, on temporary Vietnamese workers overseas and the Ordinance on strike action are in the course of being drafted and are listed as items on the official law-making agenda of the National Assembly in 2005 and 2006.

In our relations with the ILO, besides ongoing cooperative projects, social partners in Viet Nam and the ILO Hanoi, after a period of discussion and consultation, have finalized the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the ILO and Viet Nam on the Decent Work Agenda and Country Framework – a comprehensive cooperation framework for realizing the goals and objectives of the ILO Decent Work Agenda in Viet Nam.

Our final words are devoted to expressing our gratitude to the ILO for the technical cooperation it has brought to Viet Nam over the past few years. We hope to receive continued assistance from the ILO, particularly for researching and evaluating the impact of Viet Nam's entry into the WTO on issues of labour and employment in order to make timely and appropriate adjustments.

First, I wish to pay tribute to all of those who have contributed to the successful holding of this Conference.

Allow me to thank the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, not only for his illuminating and hope-inspiring Report, but also for his enormous and immeasurable contribution to the good work that the ILO continues to perform in member States, particularly in developing countries.

My Government and the people of Zambia appreciate the close and warm cooperation that we have for a long time now enjoyed with the ILO through various programmes and projects. We are indeed most grateful for the various forms of support that the ILO has continued to render which have supplemented the Government's efforts and commitment towards uplifting the welfare and living standards of our people.

The Improving Labour Systems in Southern Africa (ILO/ILSSA) project, which is aimed at improving labour standards and systems in six countries, including Zambia, is one of the commendable initiatives being carried out by the ILO in the region.

Notable results, among others, have been recorded in the management of labour inspections and training of entrants.

The disaster management and mitigation project which the ILO has been implementing in Zambia in the past three years has succeeded in bringing the ILO as close to the people at the grass roots level as possible. Therefore, we wish to call upon the ILO to consider a second phase of this important intervention.

My delegation is greatly inspired by the items placed on the agenda of this year's session of the Conference. It is particularly pleasing to note that among other important topics that have been brought before the Conference is the one dealing with youth employment, the issue which has become a subject of great concern to many countries the world over.

Currently, unemployment, and particularly that of young persons, is one of the most serious developmental challenges that my country is struggling to address. To this effect, my Government recently approved and adopted a National Employment and Labour Market Policy to act as a roadmap as the Government and other stakeholders continue to deal with the unemployment problem. It is therefore my great expectation and hope that the resolutions that the Conference will adopt on this particular topic will greatly enhance the efforts that Africa in general, and Zambia in particular, continues to make in its fight against unemployment, especially among young women and men.

Following the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in 2001, my country has made remarkable progress in combating child labour.

To this end, a draft National Child Labour Policy has been formulated in consultation with tripartite partners and other key stakeholders in the country. A comprehensive programme of action that will lead to the implementation of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour has also been formulated. We are committed to its successful implementation.

Occupational safety and health is a subject which is close to the hearts of most of us, as it can either uplift or bring down productivity at enterprise, industrial and national levels. The protection of employees from disease, injury and death in their working environment, therefore, need not be over emphasized.

My own country has recently been faced with the challenge of the fight against fatalities in the mining industry and other related establishments.

The high prevalence rate of these accidents can be attributed to, among other things, common problems affecting the majority of the developing countries, namely low capacity in the occupational safety and health inspectorates coupled with continued use of obsolete equipment.

Zambia, therefore, fully supports all the measures that the ILO is planning to put in place aimed at developing a new instrument to establish a framework for the effective promotion of occupational safety and health in member States.

The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS continues to deprive the country of its human resources, which are critical to the social and economic development of the country. To this end, and in collaboration with the ILO, Zambia has embarked on awareness-raising programmes both in communities and workplaces to mitigate the widespread impact of this scourge.

Original Russian: Mr. NAGHIYEV (Government, Azerbaijan)

I would like to express our gratitude that this forum exists and note that the topics discussed at this session of the International Labour Conference can help to modernize the concept of social development, both at country and at regional level. To achieve the aims we have set ourselves we need to take a long-term approach, along a difficult road.

As a result of measures taken by the Government in recent years, there has been a real improvement in the social and economic situation in Azerbaijan. We have seen, for example, more decent work and employment. Carrying out these strategic tasks has been reflected in government programmes aimed at reducing poverty, promoting social and economic development in the regions, reforming the pensions system, creating a targeted social assistance mechanism and population development in formulating a new strategy for employment and a migration policy.

The successful implementation of the oil strategy, the opening of a pipeline from Baku to Tbilisi to Ceyhan, the construction of the rail transport corridor from Baku to Tbilisi to Kars and the further development of economic integration will directly help develop the social sphere.

I would particularly like to stress the ILO's role in this development, as seen in its cooperation in preparing a national employment strategy, consultations on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and the development of social dialogue. We have given priority to youth employment policy in Azerbaijan. This has helped our country to be included among the ten ILO countries championing the employment of young people.

At the same time, in spite of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations and the Council of Europe on the territorial integrity of our country, the Armenian aggression that has been going on for more than 16 years, together with the presence of more than 1 million refugees and forcibly displaced

persons, the forced labour of Azerbaijani citizens who are prisoners in Armenia in military installations and the problem of jobs for refugees and forcibly displaced persons, including many young people, is limiting the possibilities for social development.

At national level, we are considering decent work and the problems of youth employment in the context of the general problems of developing our macroeconomic policy. Unfortunately, I have to state that employment is not always a guarantee of protection from poverty. We have to look at employment through the prism of ensuring decent work in the context of providing productive employment and increasing the number of stable jobs. In this connection, we are perfecting the system of employment and pay and our taxation policy. The forecast for future economic growth requires urgent reforms of the educational system to meet the needs of the labour market. More attention is being given to the succession of generations, gender aspects of development and social dialogue.

At the same time, I would like to say that providing decent work closely depends on stable economic and social policies, not only at national and regional level, but on a global level as well.

Here the main question is obviously: "Can individual governments in most countries manage to achieve these targets when globalization is becoming evermore acute?" However the processes of globalization are interpreted today, it is a real phenomenon which is having more and more influence on the changing values of society and this brings unavoidable changes with it.

In this context, closer economic relations are creating international interdependence, which requires new approaches to solving social problems.

There is no doubt that each State has to work out and implement national strategies to provide decent work and develop society in the context of globalization.

The achievement of these aims requires not only the consolidation of efforts at the country and regional levels, but also effective coordination among international institutions.

The experience of developing cooperation on the basis of corporate social responsibility between Azerbaijan, the ILO, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and other international structures bears out the need to develop our efforts in this direction. I also think it is necessary to consolidate the activities of transnational corporations and the international financial institutions in this process.

I would also like to express a few opinions on the address by the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Somavia, on the disparity between the ILO's requirements and its financial resources.

In my view, funding should be more targeted, and should be directed towards supporting projects in the countries which are most discriminated against by globalization. In order to cut costs in implementing programmes, what is needed is maximum use of national potentials. At the same time, more attention must be paid to achieving shorter decision-making times for the implementation of projects. I think that these aspects are important for the implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2006-07. May I once again express our gratitude for the organization of the work of the Conference.

Mr. MAGAYA (*Minister of Labour and Administrative Reform, Sudan*)

The Director-General, Mr. Somavia, in his address to the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa said "poverty reduction will not succeed without jobs". He also said "work for all is more than a source of income".

The African Summit was convinced that widespread poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment compromise human rights and the dignity of individuals, and represent a threat to social and political stability. Consequently, the Summit adopted a declaration and a plan of action which places employment creation as an explicit and central objective of economic and social policies at national, regional and continental level for sustainable poverty alleviation, with a view to improving the living conditions of the people of Africa.

I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the delegation of Sudan, our thanks and gratitude to the ILO for the invaluable assistance rendered in the preparation and the implementation of the Employment Summit Conference, which adopted valuable documents to pave the way for African countries to work out a plan to alleviate poverty.

I also take this opportunity to express the support of Sudan to increase the ILO budget to meet the increasing and changing requirements of its constituents. The ILO is also encouraged to develop policies and programmes with international financial institutions in areas relating to employment creation and poverty alleviation, and to seek extra-budgetary resources to support technical cooperation.

One of the important items on the agenda of this session, especially for African countries, is youth employment. This issue was given due attention in the declaration of the African Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation, which decided to implement strategies that give young people in Africa a real chance to find decent and productive work. The Government of Sudan has taken far-reaching steps to promote youth employment by provision of appropriate education, training, recruitment opportunities in the public sector, provision of microfinance and credits for self-employment and training on the ILO/SEED *Start your Business*. This year the budget included financial allocations to create 25,000 opportunities in the government sector alone for university graduates, both in the north and the south of Sudan in addition to anticipated new jobs as a result of investment in the private sector.

In spite of exceptional and unfavourable circumstances resulting from civil war in southern and western Sudan, and in spite of the resultant human suffering, which are regrettably the hallmarks of any conflict in any part of the world, in 2004 the Sudanese people managed to lay a solid foundation for a durable and lasting peace in the entire country.

This achievement is by all measures a source of pride for our people in Sudan and for Africa and the Arab world, the African Union and the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which has been so instrumental beside the European partners and the United States in bringing about peace in our country. Their involvement and achievements must be applauded.

During the course of 2004, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement agreed on six protocols which paved the way for signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 9 January 2005 in Nairobi. This agreement not only ended the longest-running civil war in Africa, but also laid the basis for a democratic, inclusive, representative and accountable Government in Sudan.

The devolution of power and establishment of structures in the agreement include the recognition of the need for autonomy for southern Sudan and other areas in the country. The agreement has also provided for protection of human rights and fundamental freedom. These rights are guaranteed for all and will be entrenched in the national interim Constitution that is being drafted to replace the present national Constitution.

The international community is called upon to contribute positively in laying the foundations for lasting prosperity and peace in Sudan.

The framework of peace is in place. The next phase is peace building. The challenge is now to add as quickly as possible to the architecture of our peace in Sudan.

The building materials are universal. They include political and economic empowerment by enhancing the role of civil society, especially women, and economic development with particular focus on technology, rural development, environmental issues, infrastructure of projects and access to employment. There can be no development without peace and there can be no peace without development. A donors' conference which pledged US\$4.5 billion for the reconstruction of the war-affected parts of Sudan was convened in Oslo. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government of Norway and all other countries that pledged funds.

The achievement we have accomplished was not confined to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of January 2005. We have sought to address the conflict in Darfur, in western Sudan. The Government and the two Darfur rebel movements signed several humanitarian and ceasefire protocols in Ndjamen, Chad and Abuja, Nigeria in the course of 2004.

The Government is cooperating fully with Nigeria, the chair of the African Union, and with the Chadian and African Union mediators to peacefully resolve the Darfur conflict.

Several regional summit and ministerial meetings took place in Libya, Egypt and Chad, with a view to solving the problem in Darfur. We have also actively worked with the United Nations to address the humanitarian crisis. The Government has recently submitted a further detailed plan for disarming the armed groups active in Darfur and reaching a full political settlement of the conflict. The situation in Darfur continues to be of deep concern to the Government. Although an improvement in the situation have been acknowledged in meetings with United Nations organs, agreement reached between the parties to the conflict have yet to be fully implemented and a political agreement reached.

The vital role of the African Union in Darfur therefore has to be preserved, strengthened and augmented. Financial, logistical and technical assistance is needed by the African Union to shoulder its responsibilities and fulfil its mandate. The model provided in the agreement for power sharing and wealth sharing and strong federal States in the comprehensive peace agreement can provide an opportunity to resolve the conflict in Darfur.

Before I end, I would like to say the situation of the Arab workers in Palestine and other occupied territories is worse than before. Israel continues to kill, destroy houses and productive infrastructure and create considerable poverty among the people. I call on the international community to take firm action to bring peace and restore the rights of the people of Palestine and other occupied areas and enable the establishment of a viable Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem.

Original Arabic: Mr. TRABELSI (Worker, Tunisia)

I would like to thank the Director-General for his Global Report under the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-Up, which this year is devoted to combating forced labour and the need for a global alliance to combat this evil. The Report follows scientific methodology in its analysis of international law and labour standards, and makes use of statistical data and factual information. It clarifies the notion of forced labour, which it estimates affect 12 million men and women workers. But we think that forced labour is even more widespread than is stated in this Report, and that the number of real victims goes far beyond the figure given. This is due to unfair neo-liberalism and the impact of globalization, and the consequent and ever more acute imbalances which limit opportunities open to jobseekers, especially young people who have to accept dire working conditions in order to support their families. Millions of people are losing the freedom to choose their work, and very often have to accept low pay and degrading work. We are not exaggerating if we say that these workers are performing forced labour.

Another aspect of forced labour is the creation of employment agencies which place workers under subcontracting arrangements. Again, through these means people have to accept difficult and dirty work in conditions that are not "decent". These people very often do not have a choice. This is another form of slavery which we are witnessing and must combat.

We believe that child labour is another form of forced labour because children do not have a choice, they have no possibility of escaping these conditions. The Report of the Director-General on forced labour does not fully reflect the breadth and scope of this problem. The concept must be clarified to take account of all forms of labour that are imposed without freedom of choice, without the right to decent work, and performed by people who are forced to accept degrading work just to stay alive.

I also wish to thank the Director-General for his concern to implement the resolutions of the International Labour Conference of 1974 and 1980 concerning the workers in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories. We appreciate his efforts to assess their situation.

There are, however, many gaps in the Report. We hope these will be addressed in the future. For instance, the Report does not consider the two resolutions of 1974 and 1980 with regard to the policy of discrimination perpetrated by the Israeli authorities, the creation of settlements, and the disastrous economic and social consequences for the Arab workers. The Report does not mention the true causes of the situation of which the Palestinians are victims: the continuation of the occupation in defiance of United Nations resolutions, the creation of settle-

ments, the closure of territory, expropriation of land, demolition of homes, and the construction of the walls which is a wall of discrimination.

The Palestinian people has made many sacrifices and our people knows that democracy cannot be attained unless there is stable and lasting peace in the region, an end to the occupation of all the lands that are occupied, and the restoration of the rights of all the peoples of the region.

Tunisia is holding new negotiations to conclude agreements with the social partners for the next three years. This is the sixth round of such talks since 1990. We hope that this time we will have placed another stone in the edifice that we are constructing with the social partners to protect workers' buying power, and to improve working conditions and the social environment in our country. We would like to thank the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) for the efforts it has made in this connection. We hope to strengthen cooperation with the ILO in order to strengthen the negotiating powers of our association and achieve the aspirations of the working class in Tunisia.

Original French: Mr. TRENCHÉV (Worker, Bulgaria)

The two Bulgarian trade unions, PODKREPA and CITUB, as genuine representatives of workers in Bulgaria, have substantially contributed towards making it possible for Bulgaria to sign the treaty of accession to the European Union, which will enable our country to become a full Member of the Union on 1 January 2007. There is no doubt that the acceptance of the European basic principles of social dialogue, social security and social justice represents an enormous challenge for Bulgaria, where the workers have already paid the price of 15 years of transition. Unfortunately, the government policy on social dialogue reflects its desire to derogate from trade-union rights and its attempt to completely undermine the role, importance and function of social partners. Evidence of this may be found in the executive's policy on attempts to amend social legislation in the interests of big business and under the pressure of international financial institutions, under the guise of concerns about labour market flexibility and the competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy.

Here from this rostrum, I express the official protests of genuine Bulgarian trade unions against the illegal, groundless, baseless recognition given to a blackleg pro-government trade union, which has been allowed to participate in tripartite cooperation. We consider that this recognition was prompted by personal ambition and impulsiveness and, more importantly, it was the response of a government at the end of its term of office to the quite natural, fair reaction of Bulgarian workers to safeguard their social rights and interests.

To this end, and by way of confirmation of its ten years of membership of European and worldwide trade union organizations, the labour confederation of PODKREPA and CITUB have drawn up a joint memorandum addressed to political forces in Bulgaria on the eve of the general election, in which they set out their priorities for the country's future leaders. Furthermore, after serious efforts and a display of goodwill and realism, a bipartite social dialogue culminated in the signature of an appeal from genuine trade unions and employers' organizations in Bulgaria to the politicians who aspire to govern the country, an appeal in which labour and capital

map out their joint vision for the immediate socio-economic development of the country.

It is unfortunate to note that, notwithstanding the application of certain incentive policies, supported by the trade unions, Bulgarian businesses and business leaders, have adopted inappropriate behaviour with regard to occupational health and safety problems, since the introduction of European health and safety standards will require massive investment in terms of volume, quality and cost, a cost which cannot be borne by consumers alone. There is no denying that the efforts of authorities, such as the General Labour Inspectorate, require sustained support and understanding from Bulgarian employers. That is why we consider that the efforts of the ILO in the field of occupational health and safety standards are extremely useful. That is why we are going to support the new instrument on this subject which is under debate.

To conclude, I would like to assure you that the genuine Bulgarian trade unions will give high priority to a focus on decent work and living conditions for the workers of the country on the eve of Bulgaria joining Europe, and its social arrangements.

I wish the International Labour Conference every success; we are sure that it will strengthen the role of freely chosen, decent work and social dialogue as factors and stimuli for progressive global development.

Mr. MAMMADOV (Employer, Azerbaijan)

The Employers of Azerbaijan have read with keen interest the Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*, which provides an opportunity to get a better understanding of the importance of the elimination of forced and compulsory labour in the creation of decent work, which is the basic right in the world of work and the most important element of economic and political processes.

Today, forced labour remains one of the challenges to be addressed all over the world, including in Azerbaijan. So, having established its independence, Azerbaijan is undergoing multifaceted changes, and a programme of large-scale economic and social reforms is being implemented in the country. These reforms provide for significant measures in the transition of the country to a democratic secular society with the rule of law and a free market.

Besides the achievements and the significant opportunities that have arisen, Azerbaijan, like other CIS countries, has faced a lot of problems associated with the transitional period. As a result of its transformation into a market economy, fundamental political, economic and social changes in the country have affected every sphere of the economy. Moreover, like most other former Soviet countries, Azerbaijan has also faced some forms of forced labour. As one of the negative phenomena of a transitional economy, forced and compulsory labour in Azerbaijan has arisen from: poverty (about 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line); unemployment; insufficient social maintenance and security; military conflict that Azerbaijan is involved in (about 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan has been occupied by Armenia; as a result, a social group of 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons has appeared in the country); a lack of application of international labour standards; and an insufficient level of occupational safety and health.

In this connection, the issues of employment, poverty reduction, gender equality, social support and security, elimination of forced labour, occupational safety and health, elimination of forced and compulsory work and the development of social dialogue and tripartite structure, remain the main challenges for our community.

The Azerbaijan Entrepreneurs' Confederation (AEC) strives to implement its obligations to contribute to resolving the abovementioned issues as one of the parties of tripartite structure.

Thanks to ILO support in the recent past, the Confederation has joined, and is successfully implementing, a number of projects, the development of which is considered a main factor in the fight against forced labour.

I would like to focus on the progress of work on these projects and to put them into perspective. Thanks to the support of the ILO, the Azerbaijan Entrepreneurs' Confederation has successfully implemented the project, "Development of Entrepreneurship among Women through Employers' Organizations in Azerbaijan". We have discovered the conditions and reasons for the current situation with regard to entrepreneurship among women in Azerbaijan and the problems faced in this sphere, and have also investigated factors that encourage entrepreneurship among women.

Taking into consideration the standing of the project, we have prepared a proposal on the project which is aimed at training women to acquire knowledge and skills for entrepreneurial activity, and to improve and extend their businesses.

The Confederation cooperates with other programmes aimed at providing employment for women and young people and has become involved with the ILO programmes *Know About Business* and *Starting and Improving Your Business*. The aim of these programmes is to give young people basic business knowledge and to help them master their skills.

The Confederation intends to expand its cooperation with the ILO and, with the ILO's support, to implement other projects directed towards improving the business environment so that it can contribute to poverty reduction in Azerbaijan. Implementation and development of projects such as *Capacity Building of Employers' Organizations in Productivity and Competitiveness*, has begun and the *Youth Employment Project* belongs to such kinds of activities which can promote improvement in the issues mentioned above.

In addition to these, I would like to address the issues related to combating forced labour and the joint ILO programmes aimed at solving the problems of forced labour. In this connection, I have already had some meetings with ILO experts on the project proposals for the role of entrepreneurs' organizations in the elimination of forced and compulsory labour.

The proposals require the implementation of the project on the application of forced labour standards in the construction industry, which is one of the most challenging spheres for application of forced labour standards. This branch of economic activity is one of the fastest developing and expanding fields in Azerbaijan. It should be noted that the construction industry's share of GDP is 13.5 per cent.

At the same time, construction remains one of the most hazardous sectors of industry. Often, the working conditions of construction workers are ex-

tremely risky and dangerous. Industrial accidents are made all the more common by overcrowding, poor nourishment and healthcare, insufficient sanitation, the lack of safety equipment and overalls, and sheer poverty. Given the above, and the fact that 2005 has been declared a year of safety in the construction industry, it would be very constructive to develop a project under which forced labour in construction can be investigated and studied.

Original French: Ms. SIGMUND (representative, European Economic and Social Committee)

The European Economic and Social Committee is a consultative assembly established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. It comprises representatives of various economic and social interest groups of European organized civil society from the 25 Member States of the union. The Committee's main purpose is to fulfil consultative functions within the three major institutions of the European Union, namely the Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

Aside from its active participation in policy-making and the drafting of Community decisions, the European Economic and Social Committee had two complementary missions. Firstly, it seeks to enhance the support and participation of organized civil society in European projects, both at the national and the European levels. Secondly, it aims at strengthening the role of organized civil societies in countries and geographical groupings outside the European Union. To that effect, the Committee engages in structured dialogue with civil society organizations to promote the creation of consultative structures based on the European model.

We have established close cooperation with the International Labour Organization and we intend to develop this common work further. I believe that this type of project, which aims at developing not only social dialogue but also, more generally speaking, civil dialogue and consultative functions should be increased both in the Euro-Mediterranean region and in South America, Africa, Asia or in the Pacific. As an example, the Committee, in cooperation with the ILO, has worked on the question of human rights at work. More recently, the Committee adopted an opinion on the social dimension of globalization, a topic which had been a focus of ILO attention.

Please allow me to go over some of the main conclusions that we have reached, which are quite similar to those formulated by your Organization.

We wish to stress the importance of turning multilateralism into a major protagonist and ensuring the promotion of global governance. In this context, we must strengthen the operational capacities of international organizations within the United Nations system and call for the implementation of more coherent policies and enhanced coordination between these organizations, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that it is possible to go further in promoting dialogue between the International Labour Organization and the World Trade Organization, as well as between the ILO and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Furthermore, we underscore the need to strengthen existing standards in the field of social development such as the basic ILO labour standards and the United Nations human rights Conventions. We would also lend our support to the proposal of the World Committee on the Social Dimension of

Globalization to set up an economic and social committee. Furthermore, we are of the opinion that the promotion of decent work is a crucial instrument for the eradication of poverty.

In conclusion, I reiterate the wish, that the cooperation that has been established between the International Labour Organization and the European Economic and Social Committee be given fresh impetus, both by considering jointly the major relevance to our two institutions and by continuing the existing, cooperation in promoting social and civil dialogue in countries outside the European Union.

Original Arabic: Mr. MATUGH MOHAMED (Secretary, General People's Committee for Workforce, Training and Employment, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

I would like to thank the Director-General of the International Labour Organization for the efforts and activities undertaken in order to strengthen the work and activities of the Organization in all sectors. I would also like to pay tribute to what has been done between the 92nd and 93rd Sessions of this Conference and I thank the Organization for the efforts made in order to rise to our expectations. This can be seen in the Report of the Director-General that has underscored the importance of decent work and the fight against poverty, especially in today's world where a new world order imposes its philosophy on all societies. I would also like to thank the members of the Governing Body and congratulate the new members and wish them every success in their endeavours during the period 2005-08.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has contributed greatly to the respect and strengthening of principles and fundamental labour rights. We have enacted certain laws which lead to strengthening of social dialogue among social partners, combating of different forms of forced labour, combating of all forms of child labour and guaranteeing of education and training as required by the labour market. Today, we have started revising our legislation with the aim of producing a new strategic formulation to strengthen and develop human resources. My country is also consolidating our combat against forced labour. We prohibit it in our country. We are raising awareness in society generally about the dangers of forced labour and we are adopting measures necessary to promote equal opportunities among the vulnerable. We are establishing the necessary legal structure in order to enable the State to fight against the new and pernicious forms of forced labour. We have established guidelines concerning work in prisons as a contribution to the process of establishing international instruments concerning prisons and penitentiary staff training.

In the area of decent work, and the fight against poverty, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is making efforts which do not simply stop at guaranteeing its citizens the opportunity to have work, encouraging them to set up their own businesses by supporting private enterprise and granting credit and other facilities. We are also helping Arab and African workers enter our country through legislation that facilitates their work in the country. We are also worried about clandestine migration, and we hope that international agreements will be enacted to combat this type of immigration. We are also active at a regional and bilateral level in this regard.

We have also adopted a policy for the promotion of women, so that they can take their rightful place

in Libyan society. Women amount to 48 per cent of those receiving education and training and 18 per cent of those attending universities. The participation of women on the labour market exceeds 32.5 per cent, and the percentage of women in education and teaching is in general very high today.

Moreover, women's participation in the area of health services is widespread. A percentage of women working in the paramedical sector is very high; we also have a large number of female doctors working in various hospitals throughout our country. We also have many women as university lecturers and professors and, in civil society, women play a role of prime importance.

Young people make up 60 per cent of Libyan society. This is the category of people that helps our country to increase its productivity and support families. We are working to help young people to find employment through training, and our policy is to establish solid foundations of training that enable young people to get decent work. We offer them credit so that they can set up small and medium-sized enterprises.

In the field of human rights, Libyan society holds human life sacred and tries to protect it. We aspire to the abolition of capital punishment in our country.

Our laws guarantee freedom of thought, expression and religion. Our texts also guarantee total independence of justice, as well as guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary. We have prepared a number of texts and instruments, including the Constitutional Declaration, the Great Green Charter of Human Rights in the Jamahiriyan Era and the Act "On Consolidating Freedom", 1991 (No. 20). The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has ratified all instruments concerning fundamental principles and rights at work.

The situation that exists in the occupied Arab territories runs counter to all international instruments and declaration on human rights. The occupying forces are taking human life hostage in all its forms and trying to bring about the Judaization of the Arab lands by demolishing houses, ripping out trees and tearing down industrial plants, and the international community does not do anything to condemn these acts.

The action of the International Labour Organization no longer means anything for the occupier in that region. We therefore would like to ask the ILO to take all necessary measures to bring about justice and to shelter the Palestinian people from this injustice. We would like to stress the importance of handing back the territories to their rightful people, and we demand that the Palestinian people be able to enjoy their inalienable rights, especially the right to establish their own state.

To impose a fait accompli on the Palestinian people will not resolve the situation. We have constantly emphasized the need to come up with one single solution which would enable the Palestinian people and the Israeli people to live side by side, as has been the case in South Africa with the abolition of the apartheid regime. We are looking on with great misgiving at what is happening in Iraq; we think this is a violation of international labour standards. People cannot be prevented from aspiring to decent work.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation of the work done by your Excellency, and of the excellent, but at the same time, disturbing Report of the Director-General.

Two years ago, during the annual session, we discussed the possibility of eliminating poverty through labour. Today, it is almost as though we were discussing the issue departing from the same basis.

The Decent Work Agenda could (and should, if taken seriously in all its aspects) constitute a valuable aid in pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, and consequently in providing an essential basis for the eradication of forced labour.

However, the wind is blowing in a different direction – in that of globalization, directed by transnational capital that generates inequalities and intolerable injustices, as is demonstrated by the excellent report on the social dimension of globalization.

It is the results of these policies, and not simply cultural and historical reasons, that have propelled the phenomenon to such heights that the Director-General, very opportunely, has made it one of the topics of his annual Report. In this document, he makes the worrying observation that there is a link between globalization and forced labour.

A way out has to be found through development strategies that prioritize social objectives, such as fighting the poverty and exclusion born of unemployment, precariousness, low wages and the absence of the basic rights contained in the main ILO Conventions.

In Portugal, about 20 per cent of the population lives below the poverty threshold and, unfortunately, the trend is not being reversed, as inequalities are worsening due to an increasing concentration of wealth.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for a development strategy that will promote growth and prioritize fairer distribution of the wealth being produced. If nothing is done, then the factors that could lead to the forced labour mentioned in the Director-General's Report will become more accentuated.

Here, we are not talking in hypothetical and abstract terms.

The trans-border movements between Portugal and Spain, in certain instances, provide us with examples of forced labour, according to the classification defined by the ILO and set out in the Report to this Conference.

Indeed, this is how they were presented in the media, and we would like to take the opportunity to highlight the prompt intervention of the trade unions of Spain in solving these problems.

The same can be said of many cases of migrants without papers who seek opportunities in Portugal and who frequently end up as virtual slaves in the hands of mafia networks.

This is not a structural problem of Portuguese society; given its residual nature, but it exists. With the neo-liberal competitiveness that currently prevails everywhere, it is only right that we should ask where these policies will lead us.

The situation in our country is difficult at this moment in time due to a public deficit, and an attempt is being made to seek a solution to this problem through measures that impose new sacrifices on workers.

As far as we are concerned, the basic problem in the country is not the public deficit, but the real economy. This means that, in the first place, we must rigorously defend and maintain our mechanisms of production and employment and social cohesion policies as an integral part of development. This means breaking away from the current model, abandoning the erroneous economic and social policies that have been pursued in the past and that lie behind the current serious situation.

Valuing work and the workers, attaching priority to mechanisms of production and employment, policies that focus on wages, truly fighting inequalities and poverty and social injustice. This is the way to provide the basis of a fairer, more supportive society.

(Mr. Finlay takes the Chair.)

We have taken note of the Report presented by the Director-General of the ILO. In particular, we have noted his observations on the development of decent work policies, as well as his pertinent denunciation of the various forms of forced labour, slavery and debt bondage. The workers of the Republic of Colombia cannot but express our concerns with regard to the difficult situation which is affecting us as a result of the implementation of the most brutal neo liberal model which is today, under the guise of capitalist globalization, marginalizing, excluding and penalizing the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Today more than ever, the theory and the practices of the so-called "Washington Consensus" are creating a great number of victims among the workers. If you want proof, you need to look no further than the dramatic fall in the quality of life; the increase of unemployment and the rise of the informal sector; the rise of outsourcing; the impoverishment of the farmers; the privatization of public services; the massive redundancies; the discrimination against women; the abandonment of the young; increasing child labour, and so forth.

The workers of Colombia hope to see more action by the international community to encourage the Government of my country to respect and guarantee workers' rights to organize, to conduct collective bargaining, and to strike, in accordance with the Conventions and Recommendations that have been ratified by the Colombian Congress.

For the workers organized in confederations and coordinated in the National Executive Committee, there is concern about the closure or constant restructuring of public and private companies with the resulting layoffs of thousands of workers, as we have seen in companies such as Audiovisuales, Infravisión, Telecom, Ecopetrol, the Banco Cafetero, the Post Office, and many others.

For the workers, the ongoing development of anti-union practices which violate the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), is unacceptable. Those practices include the denunciation of collective labour agreements to promote counter-claims by employers, the obstacles constantly put in the way of the creation of new organizations, the imposition of work cooperatives to create flexibility in labour relations and by so doing

to weaken trade unionism – all these attacks we have been suffering over the last ten years.

We workers must say that it is not possible to continue to talk about peace and democracy and consultation while our rights are not fully guaranteed. In this context, it is essential that the Government commit itself seriously to guaranteeing the right to collective bargaining for public sector workers, as set forth in the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154). This would prevent Act No. 411 from being a “dead letter”. Perhaps if the Attorney-General were to consider the demands presented by the trade unions in the last ten years, the other bodies of the Government would follow suit.

We must state forcefully that we are tired of such denunciations, tired of burying so many trade unionists (94 this year). We are tired of living in forced exile, and we are also tired of seeing hundreds of organizations die out. It would appear that, for the warlords and for the enemies of trade unionism, there are no frontiers, no commitment to the country, as though the last 15 years of the imposition of this economic model were not enough for them.

But nevertheless we are here, reaffirming our commitment to our workers, to our country, to the whole of the society, nationally and internationally, despite the tiredness, despite the apparent fruitlessness of the struggle, in the profound conviction that one day the glorious dawn of freedom, justice, democracy and solidarity will be seen in every one of our countries. However, it is essential that businessmen and governments promote, transparently, opportunities for dialogue and consultation that go beyond mere words. Take as an example the problems faced by pensioners in my country, whose contributions are being increased and benefits are being decreased. In this context, we wholeheartedly support the conclusions of the Committee on the Application of Standards following the visit to our country of a tripartite High-Level Commission to construct a path which will lead to the establishment of freedom of association.

Original Afghani: Mr. MASOOMI (Government, Afghanistan)

(The interpreter reads out the English speech that has been provided.)

The people of Afghanistan, loyal to the Bonn Agreement and after the establishment of an interim administration and then the Transitional Islamic Government, have succeeded in convening a *loya jirga* for the approval and ratification of the Constitution of Afghanistan. Following a *loya jirga* for the presidential election, the President was elected. Afghanistan has taken effective steps towards the consolidation of peace, democracy, reconstruction and rehabilitation in the country, supported by peace-loving, friendly countries and the international community.

As the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has placed reconstruction and rehabilitation as a top priority, it is now in dire need of experts. On the other hand, the majority of Afghan refugees have returned from neighbouring and other countries and many of them need employment and jobs.

Although the return of a large number of refugees from other countries has increased the index of unemployment in Afghanistan, created a gap in professional experts and makes access to economic and

social growth and development a difficult task, still, out of the total of 8 million qualified workers, there are 2 million who are estimated to be unemployed.

An estimated 80 per cent of the active population is engaged in agriculture, approximately 6 per cent in industry and another 12 per cent in the service sector. The GNP per capita is approximately US\$190 per year, which is amongst the lowest in the world.

There is evidence of rising underemployment in rural areas and increasing unemployment in urban areas. There is also evidence of high youth unemployment with 3 million estimated to be unskilled, with this figure rising by 300,000 per year.

Against this background, and built into a national strategy for poverty alleviation through employment creation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs sees the correction of labour market imbalances as the main challenge.

It is within this framework, and with the technical assistance of the ILO, that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is at present establishing a network of employment service centres in Kabul and nine provinces. An ILO technical cooperation project, funded by the Government of Germany, began to operate in early 2004. These centres will contribute to the reduction of labour market imbalances by providing job placement services, vocational counselling and information on self-employment opportunities, such as microfinance facilities and business development services. It is also expected that this network of employment service centres will make a valuable contribution towards a national labour market information system.

At the moment, the project is seeking funding for the year 2006 in order to consolidate its operations. The overall target is that approximately 20,000 jobseekers annually will benefit from these services. During the first year of operation, more than 6,000 jobseekers in Kabul alone have chosen to seek help through the counselling and placement services of the employment services centre. Out of these, more than 3,000 could be referred to job opportunities available in the local labour market.

Article 41 of the Constitution, and paragraph 11 of the Labour Code, stipulates that “forced labour is forbidden”, as is compulsory work, which is defined as work where “the person concerned is forced to perform it by means of intimidation or other methods against his or her will”.

The recent drought and poverty have created a very difficult environment for Afghan families and their children. The overall social economic vulnerability is likely to last for many years. In consideration of the Constitution and the Labour Code of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the condition of human trafficking, particularly child kidnapping and abduction to neighbouring countries, is a serious concern for the Government.

The Afghan Government has taken important steps towards tackling the issue of child trafficking. Notable achievements in this area include the establishment of the multisectoral Committee to Counter Child Trafficking, the adoption of a National Plan of Action to Combat Child Trafficking in Afghanistan and the creation of childcare centres. The issuance of the Decree of the President of Afghanistan in July 2004 is another major success. The Decree provides for harsh punishment for those who are involved in kidnapping and child trafficking.

Afghanistan has also demonstrated its commitment to improving the legal protection of children through the design and implementation of child protection laws according to global conventions, and has taken positive steps towards the equal rights of girls and boys, as well as child-friendly procedures for children in trouble with the law, and children at risk.

The provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the secondary level is specified in the Constitution of Afghanistan. This reflects the Government's wish for Afghan children to have a prosperous future. This commitment to education has resulted in an increase in school enrolment figures. In 2005, 5.5 million children are continuing their education in schools.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the ILO on its timely contribution and cooperation to start the child labour survey project, with the collaboration of funding donors in our country. We hope to have closer cooperation with the International Labour Organization in the future.

Original Arabic: Mr. EL AZALI (Worker, Egypt)

I would like to commend the Director-General for choosing *Consolidating progress and moving ahead* as the title for his concise introduction; we support the content of the report, especially with regard to combating unemployment and alleviating poverty, promoting tripartism and strengthening social dialogue, as well as extending social protection. We hope to contribute to bringing about a just globalization with a human dimension which would be beneficial for all.

We share the Director-General's regrets with regard to the constraints and reductions imposed on the budget of our Organization for the next biennium, with a negative impact on the implementation of some of the programmes and the requirements for technical cooperation to meet the needs of workers in particular, and developing countries in general. It is surprising to see that most of the States rejecting budget growth belong to the wealthy countries and have permanent seats in the Governing Body, with all that this implies in terms of solidarity. As for us, we support the adoption of the budget recommended by the Governing Body and we invite you to adopt it.

Allow me to express my interest in the subject of youth employment which is before us, and the conclusions adopted in the context of combating unemployment, which we hope, will include practical measures commensurate with the gravity and urgency of this problem, especially in developing countries.

The mobilization of resources and national and international efforts to address youth unemployment is part and parcel of the need to secure stability and social peace, both nationally and internationally. In this connection, we welcome the valuable contribution of the ILO to the success of the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, held in Ouagadougou in September last year, especially with regard to strengthening of the roles of social partners. We hope that the Organization will continue to play its part in this area to enhance our countries' capacity to meet their commitments under the Summit.

We also hope that there will be an increase in investment in Africa as well as debt cancellation to

promote economic growth as well as better access for young people to decent work.

With regard to the Director-General's Report on *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, we would like to express our disappointment at the deterioration of the situation as a result of the inhuman treatment perpetrated daily by the Israeli occupying forces in the Palestinian territories, in South Lebanon and in the Syrian Golan. The confiscation of land, the destruction of homes, the uprooting of trees, measures aimed at starving the population, and the closures, murders, collective punishment and other acts of aggression and humiliation are aimed at breaking down the will and resistance of the Palestinian people as well as their rejection of the occupation, so that it can continue. Despite the willingness of the Palestinian side to bring about an enabling environment for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, so that the two peoples can live in peace, the occupying authorities are expanding settlements in defiance of international resolutions on this subject. All peace-loving forces that respect human rights, led by the ILO, are called upon to demand an end to the occupation, which is a source of violence and terrorism, in order to move forward on the path to peace.

Mr. PAIXÃO BANO (Government, Timor-Leste)

The important remarks of Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, in his Report entitled *A global alliance against forced labour*, especially on the issues of the current global employment crisis, inspired my delegation.

This Conference is providing a good opportunity for Timor-Leste, as a new nation, to learn from the ILO and its member States, in particular with regard to creating conditions that foster employment and ensuring that economic growth translates into job creation, especially for our youth.

We have also learned in this Conference how to strengthen labour systems and create the necessary conditions in Timor-Leste to prevent all forms of forced labour. For this reason, I would like to congratulate the ILO for drawing our attention to the disturbing issues of forced labour in this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference.

As a new country, we would like to share with you some of the realities and issues concerning employment in Timor-Leste. Currently, Timor-Leste has a total population of 925,000 persons, 60 per cent of whom are youth and children. Out of this number, 42 per cent are estimated to live under the poverty line; this means some 450,000 Timorese live on less than US\$1 a day. Our annual population growth is estimated to be around 3 per cent. Thus, the population grows faster than GDP, which is estimated to increase by 1.3 per cent per annum.

Each year, approximately 10,000 Timorese youth enter our labour market. The majority of them do not have sufficient skills and professional experience to find or create their own jobs. According to our estimates, by 2015 Timor-Leste will need to provide jobs for at least 150,000 jobseekers.

The first, and present, elected Government of Timor-Leste, which was established in May 2002 under the leadership of Prime Minister His Excellency Dr. Mari Alkatiri, has moved forward in adopting a five-year national development plan, in an effort to reduce poverty and promote economic growth for the benefit of all Timorese. Emphasis has been placed on the areas of education, health

infrastructure and agriculture. Among these priorities, the Government's focus in the past three years has been on establishing institutions to implement the national development plan.

In the field of labour, the Government has taken various significant measures to achieve the national development plan objectives, the first of which was to lay down labour policies and legislation in accordance with ILO standards. In 2002, with ILO technical assistance, Timor-Leste adopted a Labour Code that regulates labour administration and labour relations, and which enshrines principles to prevent the practices of forced labour and child labour.

The Labour Code also mandates the Government's Department of Labour to promote social dialogue, including by drafting necessary policies and legislation to promote an environment conducive to economic growth.

The second step concerns the engagement of Timor-Leste as an ILO member State. In 2003, my country was admitted as the 177th ILO member State. We are now looking into the ratification of the ILO Conventions, especially the eight core Conventions on the rights at work.

The third step is to continue mobilizing technical assistance in the areas of labour, employment creation and skill development. In this connection, I wish to inform you that the ILO Jakarta Office has provided us with assistance in the areas of social protection, industrial relations, capacity building for government departments, job and skills promotions. We are also working with other government partners, including the Department of Labour and Solidarity of Portugal, in the areas of skill development and job creation.

To conclude, I believe that the tripartite mechanism, as advocated by the ILO, is indeed a useful instrument to solve different labour-related problems. Therefore, ensuring greater participation of workers' and employers' organizations in our government decision-making process is essential. The Government of Timor-Leste believes that the future policies, legislation and programmes that aimed at preventing the ill-treatment of our workers, particularly forced labour, and promoting youth employment, will not succeed in Timor-Leste without the support of the International Labour Organization and its constituents, including Timorese workers' and employers' organizations.

Original Chinese: Mr. XU (Worker, China)

The Director-General has, in his concise Report, reviewed the past and looked into the future. The Report will have positive implications for the future work of the ILO. I am glad to see that, through the joint efforts of the ILO and its constituents, decent work, with the four strategic objectives as its basis, has been gradually integrated into national, regional and multilateral policy agendas. The realization of decent work cannot be isolated from overall economic and social development. Only if humanity as a whole achieves common development can decent work be translated from a concept into a reality.

Today, the world's political and economic situation is undergoing profound changes. Economic globalization has not only generated far-reaching impacts on the economic and industrial relations of all countries, but has also brought new opportunities and severe challenges to the international trade union movement.

In a context of the global economy, the Chinese trade unions attach great importance to the unique role of the ILO in promoting social justice. At the same time, we maintain that in the entire process of ILO reform, the electoral machinery for the Worker's group of the Governing Body must be transformed into a democratic and transparent one. At present, the manipulation of the election process by a single international trade union organization has not conformed to the spirit of the ILO Constitution and has been detrimental to its credibility among the broad masses of workers, its democratic image as an international body and the attainment of its objective of social justice. Therefore, we strongly appeal that such malpractice be rectified as soon as possible.

The Chinese trade unions take "get workers organized and provide better protection" as their guiding principle in their work. In other words, the Chinese trade unions make every effort to attract the broad masses of workers to the trade union movement and protect their legitimate rights and interests in real earnest. Likewise, trade unions in various countries should centre around the three themes of peace, development and workers' protection if they are to meet the challenges brought to bear by economic globalization. They should further optimize their organizational structures, enhance unionization rates and union density, actively explore effective channels to reduce poverty and promote employment and constantly improve living conditions of workers, so as to increase the attractiveness and cohesiveness of trade unions. Only in this way can trade unions help boost the coordinated development of economy and society, achieve social fairness and justice and play a greater role in the political, economic and social life in their own countries.

The Chinese trade unions maintain that the following principles be followed in their international activities: independence and autonomy; mutual respect; treating each other as equal; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; seeking common ground while putting aside differences; and unity and cooperation. The international trade union movement should transcend differences in ideology, culture and religion, as well as international affiliations, in order to promote communications and dialogues and strengthen unity and cooperation. We are also of the view that the world's labour movement should be democratic and equal and pursue common development. Trade unions, big or small, should be treated as equals and participate in international trade union affairs on an equal footing. Trade unions should develop various forms of exchanges and cooperation.

In the context of globalization, the Chinese trade unions will, as always, strengthen cooperation with friendly trade unions in a bid to better defend the interests of workers, especially those in developing countries, to realize an all-win situation for all trade unions in the world and to safeguard the rights of workers.

Last but not least, I trust that, with our concerted efforts, the ILO will definitely play an ever greater role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.

Original Spanish: Mr. PARRA ROJAS (Employer, Cuba)

Viewed with optimism and faith in the best of humanity, making decent work a global goal appears to be an ambitious aim but one that is achiev-

able over time, although the complexity of the problems facing the world today makes us doubt seriously whether it can be achieved immediately.

Can we say that providing employment opportunities depends exclusively on the goodwill of the public and private authorities? Definitely not. There are problems which are so large and interconnected that they go beyond national will and require the determined decision to engage in international cooperation: unfair trade, the degradation of the environment, the energy problem, the transfer of technology or the foreign debt of third world countries.

A joint effort to reduce the enormous gap between developed and developing countries is especially important. Globalization, which is essential, makes it senseless to think of decent work for a very small part of the world's population, when most people do not have the minimum resources needed to live a decent life. From that point of view, the ILO's technical cooperation should be strengthened and improved, within the limits of the budget, using all available resources with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

We agree with the vision of productive employment as a way of reducing poverty, but the Report does not clearly show the link between the aims of decent work and other current global problems, nor does it focus in a critical manner on the fact that these problems are multiplying.

In this effort, it is very important for the Office to demonstrate the effectiveness of its programmes and the clear need for the developed and the developing world to guarantee greater cooperation based on ensuring that resources are effectively invested, and used to the benefit of all the social partners.

South-south cooperation is important, as is the support that the Office can provide for sharing experiences between developing countries regarding technical matters and international policy.

When we talk of spending 30 million to fund the establishment of a Youth Employment Network, it is encouraging, but if we compare the magnitude of the problems to the fact that there is more spent on the military in one day than this, then the figure appears ridiculous and contrary to human intelligence.

We are not helped in these efforts by the growing politicization of the debates, which are evermore complex as the procedures become less transparent. Are we being balanced and objective in our analysis of the situation in different countries? Are we giving them the same treatment? Are we getting to the root of the problems? Or are we just satisfied to attack a select group which, except in a few cases, are the poorest countries, with which there has never been any real cooperation to reduce levels of poverty and unemployment?

I believe that our country's experience which, in spite of being the victim of a cruel and stifling embargo by the most powerful force on the planet, has shown the viability of a different model with its own ways of developing effective social dialogue and where we employers, in a more and more competitive environment, can show positive results with modesty and humility in the development of human capital.

We can and should pass on a new and different world to future generations, with room for all and which rules out any form of exclusion and unilateralism. In this fine task we are all sailing in the ILO ship on a rough sea but confident of reaching a safe haven.

Original Arabic: Mr. HABAB (Worker, Syrian Arab Republic)

I hope that this session of the International Labour Conference will achieve many things for all the social partners and give practical effect to upholding the objectives, principles and norms set out in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, in order to promote the human values of the world of work. This is because we believe that the resulting advantages will benefit all, regardless of their nationality or social standing.

We are meeting at a unique period in history where the logic of force is taking precedence over the force of logic, and is taking a heavy toll on workers. This is not surprising, as nations are threatened by occupation, repression, humiliation and the violation of their sovereignty. Workers cannot be disassociated from the rest of the population and they suffer the worst consequences.

In the twenty-first century, a century of technological progress and scientific prosperity, workers aspire to live in dignity, enjoy better living and working conditions and better salaries. But today, when brutal globalization reigns, they are at the mercy of the multinationals and transnationals who seek profit with no regard for their workers' need to have a decent life; the gulf between workers and their aspirations is widening.

On top of all the suffering endured by workers all over the world, the workers in our region have additional suffering as they live in fear under the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Arab Syrian Golan and the Shebaa farms in Lebanon, because of Israel's nuclear weapons, the barbaric treatment of the Palestinian Arab population, the construction of the wall, racial discrimination and flagrant violation of workers' rights and the non-respect of United Nations resolutions calling for peace and the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories, in particular, United Nations Security Council resolutions 338 and 242. This is an affront to the international rule of law.

Added to this is the refusal of the Sharon Government to accept Arab peace initiatives, a source of concern and tension both in our region and across the world.

The Anglo-American occupation of Iraq, under the pretext of the existence of weapons of mass destruction and the resulting attack on the rights, freedoms and sovereignty of Iraq set a dangerous precedent with regard to international relations. The United States, not content with its actions in Iraq, has also decided to impose economic sanctions on sovereign countries, as is the case with the law on economic sanctions against Syria, the duration of which has just been extended.

However, we, the trade unionists of the Syrian Arab Republic, refuse to accept any form of domination, hegemony or colonialism. We shall not cease in our efforts to defend our land, our sovereignty and our independence until our lands in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and throughout the occupied Arab territories are liberated.

Our country has made enormous progress concerning the elimination of forced labour and child labour, as well as in ensuring gender equality and the protection of the rights of migrant workers, in accordance with the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Syrian Arab Republic was at the forefront when it came to re-

specting and implementing international labour standards, well before the adoption of the declaration in question. Our country was one of the first to ratify and implement the seven basic Conventions on human rights

Our achievements have respected international labour standards, and we therefore have a clear conscience. Our trade union movement does not limit itself to ratified Conventions; we continue to ask the Government to ratify and ensure the application of new Conventions once our legislation has been aligned with their provisions.

One of the problems being experienced by our country is that of unemployment, and we are working with the Government and employers in the private sector to remedy this problem.

During the last five years, and thanks to President Bashar-Al-Assad, we have made progress with regard to development, economic and social progress and in the areas of culture, education and health-care, particularly in order to improve the living conditions of the working classes, develop our systems and laws, promote a constitutional state and foster democracy. This is a way to protect our country against the negative effects of uncontrolled globalization, which is threatening the values, identity and traditions that we hold dear.

We consider new colonialist forces which try to impose their values and concepts on our country to be aggressive forces that we must resist.

The struggle for the rights and interests of workers must go hand in hand with the struggle for a safer, more stable and fairer world, where there is no exploitation of human beings by human beings, no interference in the affairs of sovereign States, be it Sudan or other countries, under the pretext of spreading democracy and protecting human rights "the American way", as we have seen all too well at Abu Ghraib prison, Guantanamo Bay, and in other occupied territories.

There are major challenges before us, but we have faith in those who govern this Organization and we appreciate the efforts made by the staff of the Organization all around the world to defend workers' interests.

We believe that member States should increase their financial and moral support for the Organization so that it can better ensure training and education for workers, in particular in our region because we are in real need of training, and put emphasis on the application of the provisions of international labour Conventions. We must help governments to implement these Conventions and increase the powers and the effectiveness of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, to protect the rights of workers.

Original Arabic Mr. AL-KUHLANI (Worker, Yemen)

This session of the International Labour Conference is being held at a critical time of far-reaching political, economic and social change.

The Report of the Director-General merits our close attention by virtue of the subjects which it addresses: the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, youth employment, work in the fishing sector, and safety and health at work.

As regards the situation of Palestinian workers, we must draw your attention to the devastating consequences of the colonialist Israeli expansion in the occupied Arab territories and the inhuman practices of the Israeli authorities, as reflected in arbitrary

violations of human rights, repressive measures such as arrests, assassinations, dismissals, racial discrimination against Arab workers in favour of Jewish workers, and the expropriation of sources of water. The number of people killed exceeds 4,000 – a figure which includes children, women and old people. The number of people detained exceeds 8,000. Workers and other inhabitants are deprived of their resources and land and live as refugees. Workers in the other Arab occupied territories, namely the occupied Golan in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Shebaa farms in Lebanon, are experiencing the same fate. Their rights are disregarded in full view of an international community that does nothing.

We wonder today about the role of the ILO, the Security Council and all the other organizations that defend human rights against these practices and these violations.

This practice of double standards imperils peace, security and stability, and undermines the principles and credibility of the international community.

We appreciate and approve the contents of the Report, which covers occupational safety and health, youth employment, and the need for global strategies. We call on all governments to ratify and implement the relevant Conventions in the interests of safeguarding decent work for all the world's workers.

We wish to thank the ILO for the technical assistance it has given to our country to help us set up a database of available information on the labour market in Yemen, which is experiencing a number of problems including unemployment, informal sector employment of young people, and the growth of child labour.

We hope this assistance to Yemen and other Arab countries may be increased, especially in the area of technical cooperation. We also hope that the ILO's contributions to Arab centres may be increased, and that the Palestinian Authority can be given financial and technical assistance. For that reason we call on the Director-General to help reinforce the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection and encourage governments to support it.

We would also like all the ILO's publications and documents to be translated into Arabic, and the ILO to use Arabic more widely in its activities. We would like to be able to draw on the expertise of qualified Arab specialists, who are underrepresented in the Organization.

We fully support the principle of dialogue and partnership in solving the many problems faced by our workers. It is essential to strengthen internal democracy within our trade unions in order to allow wider participation by men and women workers and young workers in the private, public and informal sectors.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ILO and its Regional Office, the ICFTU, the Norwegian trade unions, and all the organizations that have helped us to improve the capacities of our trade unions. Their contribution has been a valuable one and has helped us to attain our goals, in particular supporting our country in its democratic process by enabling the trade unions to play a part in the establishment of dialogue between the social partners.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Director-General, and to express my thanks also to the army of "un-

known soldiers" within the ILO who labour tirelessly to make this Conference a success.

Mr. SINGH (Minister of Labour and Transport Management, Nepal)

Once upon a time, world peace lay in six inches of soil. But now peace lies in the busy and working hands of the youth population.

So youth unemployment has become a very big problem for the world. It may be the problem of one country, a few countries, many countries, but after all, in total it is the problem of the world at large.

We have given very serious attention to this problem of youth unemployment. Hence His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG) has declared a 21-point programme for decent work and youth employment. Accordingly, our National Planning Commission is developing a plan of action for youth employment. We strongly believe in education and training for decent work. Hence, Nepal has placed decent work high on its national agenda. For this purpose, we have established a number of training centres at a governmental level and, at the same time, several in the private sector to produce skilled and semi-skilled labour.

We highly appreciate the Director-General for his courageous mention and disclosure in his Report about the cause and effect of youth unemployment. The problem of unemployment is a challenge to peace, a threat to security and a danger to democracy at present and in the future society of the globe. He has drawn the attention of developed and underdeveloped nations so that they join hands together in time to solve this problem.

During the last decade, terrorism has reared its ugly head in our country. It is a well-known fact that democracy and terrorism cannot go together anywhere on earth. We find that murder, extortion and forced closure by terrorists have violated the fundamental rights and liberties of the people and at the same time the right to work in my country. In brief, it has posed a serious challenge to the natural right to life and democracy itself. Hence, we have been compelled to fight against terrorism to restore peace for the smooth functioning of democracy. On that point, we thank our social partners and friendly countries for their understanding and cooperation in this context.

I have the honour of informing this session of the Conference that Nepal is determined to implement the principles and provisions of the ILO core Conventions with the full cooperation and coordination of trade unions and employers' organizations. We have drafted a new employment policy and a plan of action for decent work with the cooperation of this Organization.

I have the pleasure of informing you that Nepal has already eliminated the *kamaiya* system of enforced labour and has managed to gain financial support for their settlement and work.

Nepal has done a lot of work to stop the worst forms of child labour with the cooperation of the ILO under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). His Majesty's Government of Nepal has also been implementing a National Master Plan for Child Labour which aims at eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2009 and all forms of child labour by 2014. Likewise, it has enforced the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1995 which provides for the

regulatory framework for child labour prohibition and protection.

Poverty is the main cause of child labour, of forced labour and youth unemployment. So I request for the extension of the IPEC programme for a few more years in Nepal. As the same time, I invite Mr. Chairman and the Director-General to visit Nepal and to see what tremendous work we have done in this field.

Mr. SAJDA (Government, Czech Republic)

Please let me express my gratitude to the Director-General and the Office for presenting a number of inspiring and high-quality reports, which have launched many highly interesting discussions, both in the committees and the plenary.

Economic globalization and continuous development of modern technologies have an enormous impact on the world of work. They bring about new challenges, which cannot be ignored. This Conference is dealing with a wide range of these issues in the context of our common goal, decent work for all.

One of these issues currently being discussed here in Geneva, and also at the European Union level, are new trends in working hours. The Conference delegates have expressed many interesting ideas that should be taken into account in the process of modernizing international labour standards and national legislations.

New promotional instruments in the area of occupational health and safety and the role of the international community in finding pathways to decent work for young people are also topics of the highest importance. Allow me to share with you the experience we have in this regard in the Czech Republic.

Earlier this year, the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs finalized a new draft Act on Injury Insurance. We tried to ensure that this new provision focuses not merely on the social aspects of accidents at work and occupational diseases, but primarily on prevention and also on vocational rehabilitation. The key idea of this draft law is to develop a comprehensive and efficient insurance system based on interconnection of accident, sickness and pension insurance as well as the assessment services.

Furthermore, a new Act on Labour Inspection is currently being discussed in the Czech Parliament. This new piece of legislation introduces a new integrated system of Labour Inspectorates, which should focus on both control and prevention. The Labour Inspection Offices should check on fulfilment of legal provisions in both employment relations and occupational safety. At the same time, they should provide assistance and advice to employees and employers in these two respects. We believe this change will significantly contribute to safer and healthier working conditions in the Czech Republic.

As the recent ILO report for the World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2005 reminded us, young workers are at greater risk from serious accidents. We completely agree with the Office that their vulnerability due to lack of work experience and poor understanding of workplace hazards needs to be addressed, through providing for better general risk education, promoting specialized safety and health programmes within vocational training, ensuring adequate supervision at the enterprise level and through various media campaigns aimed at in-

creasing young people's awareness of work-related hazards and ways to avoid them.

Nevertheless, health and safety at work is unfortunately not the only work-related area where young people are more vulnerable than other groups. In the Czech Republic, as in many other countries in the world, the unemployment rate of young people is more than double that of general unemployment. Therefore, the new Act on Employment, which came into force in October last year, introduced several new measures aimed at increasing the motivation of employers to hire young people and provided for more and specialized assistance to young people by our employment offices. We hope these new opportunities will help young people in the Czech Republic to facilitate their school-to-work transition and make good use of and further develop their huge potential.

I would like to conclude by wishing this Conference and the ILO a lot of success in the fulfilment of their important task.

(Ms. Anderson takes the chair.)

Original Vietnamese: Mr. NGUYEN (Worker, Viet Nam)

We warmly welcome the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General of the ILO on the activities and achievements of the ILO in recent past. Occupational safety and health, youth employment, work in the fishing sector, and forced labour are also issues to which much attention is paid by the State and trade union in Viet Nam.

Regarding forced labour, the Vietnamese trade union has actively participated with the Government and organs concerned in issuing legal regulations against the different forms of forced labour and is now developing and implementing the action plan to move forward the ratification of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).

Occupational safety and health constitutes one of the priority programmes of Vietnamese trade unions. At present a network of occupational safety and health workers has been set up, from central level to the local one. The Trade Union Scientific and Technological Research Institute for Labour Protection continuously carries out research and methods of application in order to prevent factors that harm workers' health and safety. In the National Council of Labour Protection the Viet Nam Trade Union holds the position of Vice-Chairperson.

The Week of Occupational Safety and Health Prevention of Fire and Explosion, which is launched yearly by the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour and the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, has made a positive impact and has received an active response from workers and enterprises, thus helping to reduce accidents and to improve working conditions.

Employment for youth is also paid significant attention by the State and the trade unions. More than 40 centres for job promotion set up by the Provincial Federation of Labour have done much to help tens of thousands of young people in vocational training and in finding jobs. Owing to the free-of-charge job-finding programme initiated by a labour newspaper, many young people were able to find jobs suitable to their wishes.

Viet Nam is a country with more than 3,000 kilometres of coastline and plenty of rivers and streams, so there is great potential for development of the fishing industry – an interest shared by the Government, workers in the fishery sector and the trade union. The Viet Nam National Union of Sea Product Workers has carried out much research on occupational diseases and the working conditions of workers in the industry in three sectors – processing, feeding and fishing.

The Fishery Humanitarian Fund, of which the trade union is one of the three founders, could mobilize millions of Vietnamese to support workers at risk.

To protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers and to contribute to the development of the country, the Vietnamese trade union has unceasingly participated with the State in making policies completing the labour legislation system, for example by amending labour law, elaborating social insurance law, improving wage policy and handling housing issues for workers in industrial zones.

The trade union in Viet Nam has also carried out many activities in providing information on labour legislation, giving assistance to workers in legal matters and supervising the implementation of labour policies and legislation on workers. Of great concern to the trade union of Viet Nam is the task of creating jobs, reducing unemployment and poverty, training and retraining to develop skills and the educational level of workers, and improving their living and working conditions. In order to build an ever-stronger organization, the Vietnamese trade union is carrying out a programme of recruitment of 1 million more members from 2003-08, in which the non-state sector is the main target. The technical support we have received from the ILO and other organizations are very practical and efficient.

On this occasion, on behalf of the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, we express our sincere thanks to the ILO in Geneva, the ILO Asia and Pacific Office, and the ILO Hanoi for their valued support. We believe that the relationship between the VGCL, the ILO and trade union organizations in other countries is growing daily for the sake of a better life for all workers.

Original Spanish: Ms. TRIANA ALVIS (representative, Latin American Central of Workers)

It is only fair to recognize the depth and insight of the Report presented by the Director-General of the ILO, which describes the Office's follow-up on progress towards decent work the world over and which also expresses a deep concern about forced labour, slavery and debt bondage to employers, which create an endless tragedy for million of human beings who are trapped in these absurd forms of exploitation.

The common denominators in the Latin American and Caribbean region are: automation; job insecurity; the imposition of irregular forms of labour contract; disregard of international standards; repeated reforms of labour laws; reforms of pension schemes; the dismantling of social security systems; and the elimination in most countries of the welfare state, all of which are widening the gap between rich and poor and preventing the majority of our population from obtaining access to health, recreation, employment and a decent standard of living, to which we are entitled.

The people worst affected by this desolate state of affairs are women and young people whose constant struggle to find decent work is fruitless. Latin America and the Caribbean are not the poorest regions of the world, but that is where we find the greatest social inequalities, as a result of the high concentration of wealth in very few hands, while the abject poverty and marginalization of the majority could even threaten social harmony. Yet to date the ruling class has not understood that we are sitting on a social time bomb the explosion of which could have incalculable consequences.

Luckily, there is light at the end of the tunnel, at least as regards the encouraging situation in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela, countries where new power structures are laboratories which, if well managed, could bring a fresh wind of democracy to the Latin American and Caribbean region.

On behalf of the Latin American Central of Workers, CLAT, we express our complete solidarity and support for these new options and we ask those who favour violence as a means of solving political, social and economic conflicts to renounce these methods which lead only to hate, pain and backwardness in the countries where they are applied, to wit Guatemala and Colombia.

The Latin American Central of Workers has been and will continue to be committed to helping the masses who suffer the consequences of capitalist globalization which is trying to destroy the trade union movement by using all the means at its disposal to achieve its perverse aims. The Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization are instruments for the application of all kinds of policies to protect the interests of a privileged minority. Repayment of foreign debt, the wars to which millions of human beings have been subjected and capitalist arrogance must be replaced by something which should unite us all, namely social justice,

We agree with the concern of the Director-General of the ILO to strengthen the Organization and consolidate its monitoring mechanisms so that today more than ever before the systems of world dialogue and consultation can be improved thereby ensuring that tripartism works in practice, even though in some Latin American countries dialogue and consultation are regarded as being tantamount to surrendering or giving up.

Finally, we would like to affirm our unwavering commitment to the defeat of the savage North American blockade of our Cuban brothers but, at the same time, we call upon President Fidel Castro to free our union comrades who have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for exercising the right of association.

Mr. KEARNEY (*representative, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation*)

Shafiqul Islam today lies paralysed in Dakar following the collapse of the Spectrum garment factory in Bangladesh two months ago, which left 64 workers dead, 84 injured and hundreds jobless. Shafiqul is only 18 years old and had worked at Spectrum for three months. He had never experienced decent work, having been, with his colleagues, subjected to 12-18 hour workdays, seven days a week, in dangerous conditions in an unsafe

building, and with wages below the legal minimum for a standard working week.

The Bangladesh Government is as criminally negligent as the factory owner in turning a blind eye to these and similar abuses in thousands of garment factories across the country. Workers at Tri-Star Apparel in Uganda earn US\$23 a month, while their counterparts in neighbouring factories take home US\$86, which forces them to work unlimited, unpaid overtime. The company has systematically resisted trade union recognition for over three years. The Government of Uganda has colluded in this, as it has in other cases where union recognition demands have been outstanding for more than ten years, in spite of nearly 100 per cent union membership.

There is not much hope of achieving decent work globally with such employer resistance and such government inaction nationally.

Sok Vy is a mild-mannered Cambodian whose only crime is that of being able to speak Chinese. He was asked by his 2,700 fellow workers at Fortune Garment Factory to present their demand for a wage increase to the Taiwanese owners one year ago. Repeatedly suspended and fired, he has now been convicted of "incitement to commit criminal acts" and of damaging company property, although the written judgement indicates that there is no evidence to support the charge. He, like other workers in Cambodia regarded as workers' leaders, now faces civil court actions for alleged business losses of nearly US\$300,000.

The increasing criminalization of trade union action in Cambodia's garment industry makes the achievement of decent work nearly impossible.

Irresponsible employers and negligent governments are a growing feature of working life in the textile, clothing and footwear sectors. Many such companies appear to be Korean-based and, in the aftermath of trade liberalization in the sector, are simply abandoning production and fleeing overnight.

Victoria Garment, Tae Hwa, Stirwen and Dong Ho Puspa have joined this band of runaways, leaving thousands of Indonesian workers jobless and without their earned wages and accrued benefits. Such criminal bosses impede the drive for decent work and should be driven from the industry, but the Indonesian Government seems powerless to act, while the Republic of Korea ignores the activities of its wayward citizens.

Without radical adjustments to their mode of operation, export processing zones will continue to be a barrier to decent work globally. Exemption from national labour legislation breeds exploitation and constant abuse of workers' rights. For example, 12 years after first promising that it would restore freedom of association and collective bargaining rights in its free trade zones, Bangladesh is still blatantly excluding trade unions from the zones. Not surprisingly, Bangladesh's legal minimum wage has halved in value since it was last adjusted 11 years ago.

How can decent work be promoted when governments repeatedly and blatantly ignore the ILO and its core Conventions?

The trailblazer in worker exploitation in today's textile, clothing and footwear sector is China. Denied freedom of association, workers in the special economic zones are paid starvation-level wages, work excessive hours seven days a week and endure

dangerous factory environments on a daily basis, where death and serious injury are commonplace. Recent surveys suggest that nine out of ten factories are labour law breakers, while seven out of eight systematically and cynically hide their violations in ways that render useless the limited external scrutiny through corporate codes of conduct.

China is not only the engine of the global textile, clothing and footwear industries, but is also the leading exporter of worker exploitation as other producing nations struggle to compete with the Chinese juggernaut in a relentless race to the bottom. Action to curb this destruction of decent work is urgently needed.

Greedy employers, global retailers and brands, negligent, insensitive or incompetent governments and worker fatigue are sapping the struggle for decent work in textiles, clothing and footwear. It needs kick-starting with a crusade for the dignity of workers in the sector everywhere.

Shafiqul Islam, lying helpless in his hospital bed in Dakar, deserved a better introduction to working life. His plight, and that of his colleagues, many equally young and horrendously maimed, should serve as a catalyst for a much more aggressive ILO-led offensive against marginalization, exclusion and exploitation of workers, and in pursuit of decent work. Targets should include China, export processing zones, Korean-based multinational companies and all governments that are inactive in the application of international labour standards.

Freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, the prerequisites for decent work, should be at the forefront of the objectives of this offensive.

Mr. RACHMAN (*Employer, Indonesia*)

On 26 December 2004, an extremely strong earthquake occurred under the Indian Ocean, northwest of the island of Sumatra. This earthquake later caused a tsunami which ravaged most of Aceh and Nias in Indonesia, parts of Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar and even the coast of Somalia.

In Aceh and Nias, the earthquake and tsunami damaged most of Aceh's coastal area, claiming heavy casualties, destroying infrastructure, houses, schools, health centres and private and public buildings. This disaster also affected the social and economic condition of the people and their psychological health and well-being.

Five months after the tsunami disaster, reconstruction work in Aceh province has begun. The Government needs to recognize that many people have lost their livelihoods. It is essential that we should get people back to work. We thank the ILO for its substantial contribution to reconstruction and to the elaboration of a new strategy.

Based on recent information obtained from the National Coordination Agency for Disaster Mitigation and Refugee Management (Bakornas PBP) on 21 March 2005, around 126,602 people in 20 districts of the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam are estimated to have been killed or injured, and 93,638 people are missing. In the Province of North Sumatra 130 people are estimated to have been killed and 20 are missing. The number of refugees stands at 514,150 in 20 towns and districts in the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam.

According to recent calculations, total damage and losses affecting the two regions are estimated at

41.4 trillion rupias, mostly involving private assets and, to a lesser extent, government assets.

Given these facts, the Indonesian Government, together with a sympathetic international community concerned at the disaster and its aftermath, have taken immediate emergency relief action. This action has mainly been aimed at helping survivors, burying bodies in order to prevent further problems and providing immediate support concerning the socio-economic situation of those affected.

On the other hand, many developing countries have recently experienced a unique combination of massive rural-to-urban population movements, stagnant agricultural productivity and growing urban and rural unemployment, as well as underemployment. Amongst these emerging issues, employment occupies a central place in the study of development. Unemployment is high, especially in urban areas, and now affects 10-20 per cent of the labour force in less developed countries. The incidence of unemployment is much higher among the youth and increasingly amongst the more educated in the 15-24 age bracket.

Youth, employment and unemployment in Indonesia.

Indonesia has more than 6 million unemployed young women and men between the ages of 15 and 29, representing three-quarters of the total unemployed population. The youth unemployment rate is about 15 per cent in rural areas and 25 per cent in urban areas. Of those young people who have jobs, 46 per cent are underemployed, working less than 35 hours a week.

The vast majority of employed youths work in the informal economy, where they lack adequate income, social protection, security and representation.

In terms of sheer numbers, the young will continue to make up the largest population group over the next few years. Looking at teenagers (15-19) and young adults (20-24), each group counts for around 20 million people, or roughly 10 per cent of the total population.

There has been a rapid increase in the number of young people in urban areas, as compared to rural areas. The increasing proportion of youth in urban areas is remarkable. Figures for 2000 are twice as high as in 1971. Meanwhile, rural areas have experienced a decline over the last 30 years.

In the year 2002, the 15-19 age group represented 9.3 per cent of the total Indonesian population, and the 20-24 age group made up 8.5 per cent of the total population.

Education and skills – 20 per cent of self-employed young people had no primary education, 60 per cent of self-employed young people and 40 per cent of jobseekers left school because of financial constraints; 39 per cent of those interviewed received educational and vocational guidance; less than 40 per cent have participated in work experience programmes.

In order to properly address the challenge of youth employment, the Government of Indonesia volunteered to be one of the lead countries in the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN) in August 2003, with the specific aim of developing a national action plan on youth employment.

The Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs has established an Indonesian Youth Employment Network (I-YEN). The I-YEN involves senior policy makers from the ministries of economic af-

fairs, manpower and transmigration, education, as well as prominent representatives from the YEN core partner institutions, workers' and employers' organizations, youth and civil society groupings and the academic community.

Some of the most frequent comments include observations regarding the high price of education, unequal opportunities in the workplace, especially concerning young women, the education system not providing students with vocational qualifications increasingly sought after by employee and employers, and the lack of policies conducive to the creation of business start-ups.

We hope that better communication within the tripartite group can be achieved in the years to come as we face these challenges. This will allow us to address the issues more effectively, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Mr. AHMED (*Worker, Pakistan*)

We offer our condolences to the victims of the tsunami and share the grief and suffering of our brothers in those parts of Asia – Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.

We would like to take this opportunity to convey our deep appreciation of the work of the ILO under the dedicated and visionary leadership of Mr. Juan Somavia, Director-General, and his able team, including the work of various departments – in particular those dealing with social protection, standards, social dialogue, employment, the Declaration, gender, migration and policy integration, as well as IPEC.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson and other members of the Governing Body during the past year and, in particular, Brother Roy Trotman, Chairperson of the Workers' group, along with his able secretary, Sister Anna Biondi Bird, who has ably led the Workers' group to defend and promote their economic, social and trade union rights during the year.

Our delegation fully supports the positive outcome of all the items placed on the agenda, including youth employment, occupational safety and health and the fishing sector, and their effective follow-up by the ILO. The member States, in developing decent work, stress the need for more technical assistance to the workers in the Arab occupied territories to alleviate their continuing economic and social suffering, and fully support the basic right of self-determination of nations to establish their independent homeland; we also ask the ILO to allocate more resources for technical cooperation.

In Pakistan, the decent work country programme has been developed with full consultation on a tripartite basis, and we look forward to the full support of the International Labour Office in Geneva and the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok.

The ILO *World Employment Report 2004-05* and the Global Report entitled *A Global Alliance against forced labour* were launched at a special ceremony held in Pakistan in the month of May, attended by a large number of representatives of the Government and employers' and workers' organizations, and was given wide coverage in the national print and electronic media.

The labour movement has forged unity in Pakistan in the interests of strengthening the concerted struggle for the promotion of social justice and democratic norms to face the challenges of globaliza-

tion of the economy and free trade in the world of work. We are holding our founding conference for the united organization of three trade union centres on 7 September 2005, which will usher in an era of promotion of fraternity, equality, democracy and social justice in the country. We appreciate the conclusions of the Committee on Freedom of Association and the Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, which called upon the Government of Pakistan to bring its legislation into conformity with ILO Conventions, in particular the Industrial Relations Ordinance 2002. The Government representative of Pakistan has assured the Committee that the amendment is in line with the recommendations made by the Committee. There is a need to restore trade union rights in the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and the Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC) under the process of deregulation to ensure safety nets for the workers.

The Director-General in his Report has acknowledged that the period is likely to be critical for shaping the ILO's role in multilateral system for the decade to come. At issue is the value and integrity of work in our contemporary world. The ILO report also points out that the most vulnerable groups are young people, 40 per cent of whom are living in poverty. Of these, 85 per cent are living in third-world countries and are involved in hazardous forms of labour.

A total of 47 per cent of young people are unemployed. Youth are our future and a promise for our prosperity. Their well-being is the responsibility of the national and international community. Mr. Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, has rightly highlighted that rising unemployment takes a heavy toll among young people and condemns many to a life of economic hardship and despair. We have seen all too often the tragedy of young lives misspent in crime, drug abuse, suicide and even terrorism. The ILO *World Employment Report* stressed the need to create 1.3 billion decent jobs for people who work but live far below US\$2 a day.

We rightly expect that this historic Conference will evolve a plan of action, not only to provide hope of a better life for youth, but also for the teeming masses and working men and women from all over the world. In line with the recommendations made by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the Global Employment Agenda, we believe that the will to bring about change should emanate from within the nation. Our national revolutionary philosopher and poet, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, said "death, not life, is the life no revelation stirs; change, upheaval, the air breathed by nations' souls armed by no blood from the hearts, all man's creations are botched". We must continue to bring about change to secure a better quality of life for the teeming masses.

We believe that the mass unemployment, growing poverty, ignorance and rising inequity between nations and among nations can only be remedied collectively by national and international action such as the following: national resources should be invested in the social and economic improvement of the teeming masses instead of in building up the arms race, with greater financial flows to the developing countries. Debt relief to developing countries whose burden totals US\$2.3 trillion and increased official development assistance; fairer terms of

trade allowing access of agricultural and industrial goods to the markets of the developed world; bridging the digital divide and transfer of knowledge and technology to build up human and natural resources; policies of the international financial institutions should be geared to alleviating poverty instead of promoting their free market and deregulation policies resulting in the reduction of public services.

At national level, policy-makers are called upon to develop a transparent, democratic system, ensuring participatory sustainable development and productive employment for poverty reduction and development; human resources development with life-long training geared to the requirements of the labour market, ending discrimination in employment, including that against women, immigrants, young people and others needing social protection; developing industrial relations respecting fundamental rights, thereby raising productivity and the welfare of workers and ensuring social protection; introduction of agrarian reforms and providing land and other market inputs and skills to landless peasants, including rural women; enforcement of austerity in all walks of life and protection of dignity of work, bridging the gap between the rich and poor and diverting these resources for the development of national agriculture and industries, to increase employment opportunities, and promotion of special measures for the welfare of women, children and the young in society; adopting a policy of planned parenthood and pursuing a policy of national economic self-reliance.

We hope that this historic Conference will yield positive results to strengthen the objectives of the ILO requiring establishing international peace, based upon social justice, through the promotion of the welfare of the teeming masses and working men and women, declaring that labour is not a commodity and poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere and can prevent us building better tomorrows for mankind all over the world.

*Original Spanish: Mr. ECHAVARRÍA SALDARRIAGA
(Employer, Colombia)*

I would like to refer briefly to the idea of strengthening tripartism as outlined in the Director-General's Report. There seems to be a recurring trend towards recognizing that the understanding between social partners and social progress are created through governments and employers' and workers' organizations. For the ILO, this implies undertaking a series of actions.

Firstly, it must undertake activities to strengthen the main national employers' organizations.

Secondly, it must promote, within governments, the participation of employers in social or labour-related decision-making processes.

Thirdly, it must assist democratically elected governments in operating within a framework of democratic principles.

That said, we are surprised at the words of the Director-General during his presentation of the Report stating that ILO resources stem from taxes paid by workers throughout the world, thus ignoring that employers equally pay taxes that go towards funding the Organization.

I would therefore like to invite the Office to reflect on the importance of acknowledging that both workers and employers pay taxes and thus contrib-

ute to the running of state institutions and United Nations agencies, including the ILO.

On the occasion of this Conference, Colombian employers would like to express their gratitude for the support provided by the ILO over the past year to strengthen labour relations through technical co-operation programmes.

A number of workshops have been held in different regions of the country on alternative methods for the settlement of industrial disputes. This has been the first step towards building constructive labour relations and strengthening dialogue as a means to resolve the differences that naturally arise in human relations. Those activities will be followed up by other relevant initiatives in the years to come.

We would like to commend the ILO on the assistance provided in the training of Colombian judges and public prosecutors, in particular as regards the fundamental principles and rights at work. The ILO has also provided financial support for initiatives aimed at protection workers' human rights, in particular the right to freedom of association, and initiatives to promote the thorough investigation of crimes committed in Colombia, especially those committed against trade unionists.

These activities, together with a series of other measures taken at the national level, have generated greater trust among Colombians, which is reflected in positive economic indicators, including greater domestic demand for consumer durables. This, in turn, has stimulated investment, employment generation and tax collection and has put downward pressure on inflation, unemployment and interest rates.

Indicators showing improvements in social welfare, in combating drug trafficking, in reducing the number of armed combatants and in reducing violence are very encouraging. We can conclude that GDP growth this year will be at least that of the previous year.

Colombian employers welcome the invitation extended by the Colombian Government to the Chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association and the Workers' and Employers' spokespersons of the Committee on the Application of Standards. We hope that this visit will contribute to enhancing understanding between the social partners; help us evaluate the situation on the ground; and facilitate progress in the implementation of the technical cooperation programme, whose extension was approved by the Governing Body in March this year. All this will help us strengthen tripartism.

In the light of the Government's call on employers to promote union activities, we would like to reiterate our unflinching commitment to workers' right to organize freely within the appropriate legislative framework. We will take no action that might infringe upon this right.

Finally, we are encouraged by the proposal to continue our debate on sensitive labour-related issues. Consideration of such issues, which include the formulation of a legal definition of basic public services and amendments to certain labour regulations that have been subject to conflicting interpretations, might improve labour relations and facilitate a review of existing legislation on cooperatives.

Original Mongolian: Mr. SODNOMDORJ (Worker, Mongolia)

The follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work calls on the

Director-General to issue an annual report providing a dynamic global picture relating to forced labour.

As a result of many years of proposals by the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions (CMTU), the tripartite negotiation which was launched in February of this year has reached a consensus for Mongolia to ratify the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), which constitute one of the four categories of fundamental principles and rights. Thus, a new legal environment was created which declared that no one can be forced to work.

According to the principles set out in the Constitution of Mongolia, forced labour is prohibited and the legal responsibility for this is stated. However, there appears to be some violation of the law's implementation in practice.

The ILO Japan Asian Subregional Seminar on the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, which was held in Mongolia in May this year, has contributed greatly to the implementation of forced labour Conventions. The ratification of the forced labour Conventions by Mongolia has increased the number of countries which have ratified all the core ILO Conventions and Mongolia has become the first country in East Asia to do so.

The CMTU fully supports and is trying to implement the ILO Decent Work Agenda, through the principle of "decent work must be safe work" in the context of globalization.

According to an ILO estimate, the worldwide fatality level from work-related injuries and diseases is about 2 million per annum. This clearly tells us that the world faces a big challenge if it is to combat the above phenomenon. Occupational accidents and diseases are not decreasing steadily in our country. Over the last 17 years, or between 1986 and 2003, a total of 19,734 accidents were reported in enterprises in Mongolia; 22,109 people suffered accidents; 971 employees died; 1,219 employees were disabled; 394 employees were moved onto light work; and 21,362 employees were rendered temporarily unfit for work. This proves that significant losses are being incurred in terms of the health and life of employees, as well as the economy of the country.

The National Conference on Occupational Safety and Health, which was organized this year in cooperation with the ILO, has developed a National Master Plan on occupational safety and health with two steps in 2005-10. We consider that the National Master Plan will assist in decreasing the causes of occupational accidents and establishing a national preventive safety and health culture. However, although the occupational safety and health issues have been reflected in labour law, until now Mongolia has not developed a separate law on occupational safety and health. In this regard, the CMTU has decided to develop a draft law on occupational safety and health which it will submit to Parliament for adoption in 2005, in accordance with the decision of the national tripartite negotiations.

The Mongolian Workers fully support the conclusions concerning ILO standard-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health.

The increasing number of people who are unemployed or underemployed is becoming one of the crucial issues in Mongolia. To date, 55 per cent of the population is of working age.

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

Original Spanish: Mr. MAILHOS (Employer, Uruguay)

In this statement, I would like to refer to the Report which has been submitted to us by the Director-General, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*. The dynamics and the great changes under way in the world of work today lead us to take up the proposal made by the Director-General, that is to reflect on the value and dignity of work in our societies. The goal of decent work, over and above global objectives, must find expression at national level in all our countries.

Coherence must, therefore, be sought at national level, because it is at this level that we can achieve results. History shows us that international coherence is impossible unless there is national commitment.

For this, it is crucial that we strengthen tripartism. Indeed, governments must consult social partners, employers and workers when they are dealing with issues concerning economic, social and labour policies. It is necessary to overcome the resistance or apathy of many governments with regard to carrying out consultations. Ministries of labour very often cannot themselves impose solutions on the social partners: if they do so, very often they in fact simply generate conflict and delay progress. Furthermore, consultations must be both genuine and carried out prior to the adoption of any decisions. It is only through appropriate consultations that we will be able to take into account the opinions of all the social partners.

The ILO should genuinely support national employers' organizations, providing them with the necessary resources in order to allow them to carry out capacity-building activities. This, in turn, will enable these organizations to make a more appropriate and pertinent contribution at national level.

It is also necessary for governments to respect the rule of law. Legislation must be implemented through labour inspection. This is essential in order to maintain minimum standards, guarantee legal certainty, and create an environment that is conducive to investment.

We therefore believe that the ILO should strengthen its technical cooperation activities with labour administrations, so that they can carry out their work in a permanent and sustainable way. In most of our countries, difficulties do not arise because of a lack of legislation, but rather because of a lack of implementation of that legislation.

Furthermore, these minimum standards must apply to all. The growth of the informal sector in our countries is often indirectly encouraged by the inertia of our governments in supervising or carrying out inspections. Consequently, there arises discrimination at national level between workers and businesses: some are required to comply with the law and some are not. It is only if we can do away with this double standard that we will be able to achieve our objective of decent work for all.

National development strategies must use decent work for all, as their guiding principle, and it is therefore essential to integrate labour policies into general debates on social, economic and political issues in our countries. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. We must take into account national socio-economic realities, and so dialogue is necessary between the social partners in order to determine the

way forward. The ILO can also help at a national level in trying to achieve this objective.

I would also like to observe that, in the context of the ILO programme and budget, the document on the Strategic Policy Framework was rejected by the ILO constituents in November 2004.

Employers did not identify with the document, given that their priorities were not reflected in the text. The ILO will have to better focus its limited resources on the needs of its constituents. It is necessary for it to implement better consultation processes so that it can properly interpret the interests of its constituents.

On another note, in accepting the Director-General's invitation to think about the form and style of the International Labour Conference in the future, we wish to make this comment: we should combine the constitutional obligations of the Conference with the most modern and interactive methods of holding our meeting. We believe that it would be appropriate to shorten the Conference to two weeks, and that we could use the first week to debate general issues and the second to look at specific proposals on standards. We must coordinate the technical and the political aspects of the Conference.

Furthermore, standard setting is a legislative exercise which always requires close reflection, and we could spread this over a three-year period. The Conference could, moreover, be held on a yearly basis in the different regions of the world, in order to

bring the International Labour Organization closer to its constituents.

Finally, with regard to the subjects under consideration at this, the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, the ILO has raised highly pertinent issues for discussion of which the Uruguayan Employers would like to highlight two. First of all, guides for young people in finding decent work; we share the view stated in the Director-General's Introduction that we have to foster an entrepreneurial spirit in starting up businesses in order to increase employment in general, and especially that of young people. Governments must encourage an entrepreneurial spirit in order to stimulate both individual initiative and broader initiatives in the private sector.

Right from primary school onwards, we must promote a culture of creativity.

In standard-setting activities in occupational safety and health, the Uruguayan Employers support the standard-setting initiative under discussion at this Conference, and we would ask our Government to ratify immediately the document which, no doubt, will be adopted by this Conference next week. Nevertheless, we would also insist that this document be applied immediately to the informal sector in our economy, so that we can eliminate those conditions of unfair competition which currently exist in our country.

(The Conference adjourned at 7.20 p.m.)

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