



Fourteenth sitting

Monday, 13 June 2005, 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Alsalim, Mr. Finlay

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

Original Arabic The PRESIDENT

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

Original Spanish: Mr. BONOMI (*Government, Uruguay*)

The other day, the Director-General began his introduction to the Conference with the following words: "We continue to live in a time of rapid change in the world of work that poses many new organizational and policy challenges for governments and workers' and employers' organizations. The period ahead is likely to be critical to the shaping of the ILO's role and of the multilateral system for the decade to come. At issue is the value and the dignity of work in our contemporary society."

The Director-General went on to explore these concepts further, reiterating, however, the importance of tripartism with regard to their implementation. We support his statements and share the ideals expressed. We should like to highlight the responsibilities of governments and the role of the economic and social policies that are implemented because, if these policies do not lead to the creation of jobs, to the development of the productive system, to an increase in the purchasing power of the population and to the strengthening of domestic trade; if economic policies do not help to this end, then no Ministry of Labour, no force in the world can help to create quality employment.

The Government I represent came to power barely three months ago and is faced with a Herculean task, a country in crisis (the worst in its history), an enormous foreign debt that, at one point, was higher than the GDP, a productive system which has deteriorated dramatically and high levels of unemployment. When we came into office we were faced with a country capable of doing nothing more than meeting the cost of unemployment unless economic policy was overhauled.

The political coalition that entered office on 1 March of this year undertook to implement a programme consisting of five main sectors: productive Uruguay; democratic Uruguay; social Uruguay; innovative Uruguay and a Uruguay integrated at a regional and global level. The Government made a

commitment to seek to achieve the goal of decent, quality work within each of these five sectors.

To begin with, when the Government came into power scarcely three months ago, in accordance with the Government's priorities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security established three priorities and an action plan. The priorities were: collective bargaining, the fight for employment and the formalization of labour and the strengthening of investment. These priorities were and are to be fulfilled through tripartism.

In this regard, the President of the Republic, Dr. Tabaré Vázquez, and the Ministers of the Economy and Finance and of Labour and Social Security, called for the creation of a tripartite forum, which we called National Employment Reconversion, Income and Responsibilities. It was within this forum that we focused our strategy, establishing that the only adjustment variable is the increase of national productions through the increase of GDP. We spoke about growth with distribution and we clearly stated that distribution in a country with such high levels of unemployment would start with job creation by including people in work.

We made it clear that we were referring to genuine and quality work. We then called on this social monitoring forum to discuss and elaborate growth and distribution policies.

To this end, we invited workers, employers and representatives of cooperatives to work with the Government on macroeconomic policies, tax reform, social and labour policies, employment policies, labour conditions and regional and global integration.

Since 10 June, seven tripartite committees have been operational, overseeing this exchange concerning policy elaboration.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security has also begun developing three employment programmes. The formalization and use of banks by micro-enterprises which do not have access to the financial system, the recovery of idle capacity in Uruguay. In turn, the Ministry of Social Development is working on an inclusion programme and the Ministry of Industry is working on a programme supporting exporting SMEs.

I should like to conclude by highlighting certain points. There is no job creation without the necessary economic and social policies. There is no way of promoting genuine job creation, if at an international level, global policies, which make employ-

ment possible and necessary and, more concretely, the productive work of nations, are not promoted.

The protectionism practised by powerful countries and rules which prevent support for producers in small countries create unemployment.

The practice of buying undertakings, sometimes important ones in developing countries, on the part of powerful enterprises with the sole aim of closing them and then selling their own products leads to unemployment.

We do not have time to list the other limitations with which we are burdened: when we want to create decent quality work; genuine work is the only way of creating jobs which is not just a form of giving handouts; work which ends when there are no more handouts.

We have no other choice than a true commitment to the objectives of the ILO, expressed by the Director-General in his inaugural speech "... campaign to make decent work for all a guiding principle of national, economic, social and environmental development strategies".

This is part of our strategy and we will continue to strengthen tripartism and the inclusion and coordination of policies with countries which have similar problems in similar places throughout the world.

We have no other choice than to continue coordinating genuine employment policies within all international forums, particularly within the forum of the ILO, whose main objectives we share.

We hope, furthermore, that we will continue to enjoy the support that we have received until now.

Mr. SZIRMAI (*Employer, Hungary*)

I have attended a number of conferences in the past 15 years, including several that were organized by the ILO, addressing the problems of transitional economies. The purpose of these conferences is both to transfer the experiences of mature market economies to these emerging economies, in order to help them resolve the problems arising from the fact that they are developing into market economies from centrally planned economies and into democracies from an authoritarian political system. Today, one year after Hungary's accession to the European Union, I can confidently say, on behalf of the National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers, that the transitional period is over and Hungary is now a proper market economy.

Of course, this is not to say that we are not having typical and, often grave, economic problems or that we are never confronted with previously unknown social conflicts. It only means that our current problems are essentially not arising from the legacy of communism. Instead, they are similar to those experienced by other market economies. We are now seeking common solutions to common problems, as was evidenced by the European Regional Meeting of the ILO held in Budapest in February this year.

The issues addressed at this meeting such as migration, the employment of young people or unemployment, are certainly pressing for Hungary. We need to bear in mind the recommendations of the Regional Meeting, especially those concerning the unemployment of young people, as well as the debate of the working committee of this ILO session, addressing this topic. Our responsibility is enormous in that, if young people are socialized as being unemployed they will in turn become more vulnerable and could fall victim to delinquency all too soon, while a society that allows this to happen will

also be ailing, weighed down by a number of overwhelming problems that are very difficult to overcome.

The Hungarian Government has now set out to suppress illegal employment and to make the world of work clearer, more transparent and legitimate. Employers agree with this goal. However, while we agree in principle, we have certain reservations concerning some of the methods used by the Government to reach these goals.

In our opinion, it is important to involve us in the development of actual solutions so that the relevant regulations could be based on tripartite consultations. For example, employers are having serious doubts about some suggestions according to which labour relations would also be taken into account in the evaluation of public tenders by using the amount spent on assistance for vocational training as an index. This would put a wide range of small businesses at a disadvantage in public tendering.

The proposal of the trade unions, according to which the index representing labour relations should be based on collective agreements and the level of trade unionization within the relevant company, also raises serious concerns.

Understandably, after the country's accession to the European Union, many are demanding that Hungarian wages be aligned with European Union wages. The consistent position of the ILO, namely that wage policy should be based on performance and productivity and that if wages rise without an improvement in productivity, then wages will cause inflation and, in turn, make the economy uncompetitive, is very important to us.

This position was confirmed at the conference organized last year by the ILO multidisciplinary team operating in Budapest. We firmly believe that the experiences of our ILO partners will help us overcome these problems as well.

Original Arabic: Ms. ARIF (Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Syrian Arab Republic)

I would also like to thank Mr. Taleb Rifai, the Director of the ILO's Regional Office in Beirut, and all his staff, for their valuable efforts to promote the ILO's objectives and principles. We thank them for their assistance, and hope that this fruitful collaboration will continue.

It is impossible, however eloquent the speaker, to summarize in five minutes the policies and general trends with regard to matters of human resources, which are the pillar of our country's economy. A large portion of those human resources is deprived of their opportunities and rights. This is particularly true of our workers in the occupied Golan, who are deprived of the most basic human rights. They have no social security, and suffer all manner of discrimination, especially with regard to Israeli labour and migrant labour in Israel. These workers are the victims of violations of most of the relevant ILO Conventions. They are prevented from travelling freely, high taxes are imposed in the agricultural sector, and the fact that markets are closed to products from the region forces the inhabitants of the region to give up their work and ultimately to leave the area. In addition, we see the demolition of houses, the expropriation of land in order to build settlements, and the fact that Syrian Arabs cannot use the water resources of the Golan.

The Syrian Arab Republic has not remained indifferent to this situation, and has been making every

effort to resolve the problems of its citizens. Nevertheless, our efforts have not been sufficient in the face of the occupation which is stifling people living in the region. The Government has submitted a detailed report on the situation of Syrian workers in the occupied Golan, but the ILO report addresses only a small part of the problem. We hope this deficiency may be corrected through dialogue and in-depth discussion during the Conference.

In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic has been exemplary in applying international resolutions, and is entitled to expect that the Security Council and the international community show the same determination to implement the resolutions calling for total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan. We affirm the willingness of the Syrian Government to work with the international community and to honour all its commitments. The implementation of resolution 1559 and the ratification of most of the international Conventions show the sincere determination of the Syrian Arab Republic to advance the peace process and promote development and growth.

This leads me to a brief review of the general situation of Syrian workers. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, which is the competent authority in this area, is currently restructuring its institutions with a view to establishing a broad social protection and social security system, through the following initiatives: reform of labour and social security law in accordance with international labour standards; reorganization of the labour market; modernization of the National Employment Agency in order to improve support for small and medium-sized enterprises; and lastly, formulation of a national strategy to create jobs for young people, a programme to which the highest authorities are giving their attention. We believe that our joining the Youth Employment Network is also an important step in promoting this strategy.

I would like to recall our hope that the ILO will continue and extend its efforts to support our projects. We also wish to call for wider use of Arabic in the Organization's activities. We note here that the number of Arab ILO officials, and especially the number of Syrian officials, is regrettably declining. Our expectations of the ILO are as great as our hopes, and our hopes are great in the light of the ILO's expertise. We wish it all the success it deserves.

Mr. ARNOLD (*Employer, New Zealand*)

The Director-General's decision to focus this year's Report on the ILO's progress to date and the way forward is timely, particularly as the issues considered have not changed to any great extent since the decent work concept was first introduced. What is unresolved is precisely how, given different country circumstances, decent work is to be achieved. Certainly from an employer's point of view, high productivity levels are notably important.

How to realize the decent work objective is a question my organization has frequently addressed, so it is good that the ILO intends to discuss with constituents how it can best support them to achieve the decent work programme currently being prepared. It is reassuring to find that progressively, country-based programmes will be the main delivery vehicle of the 2006-07 programme and budget. On this point, it was pleasing to note the success of

the ILO's Subregional Tripartite Forum on Decent Work that was held in Melbourne, Australia in April 2005.

It is also good, in relation to youth employment, to see the emphasis placed on the promotion of entrepreneurship and enterprise creation. The Director-General's Report considers these to be the key to increasing employment generally and youth employment in particular. However, there is some concern that official views of what constitutes decent work can, at least in developed countries, have the effect of inhibiting entrepreneurship.

This is not to suggest that employment protections should be ignored, and we also support the priority given to the promotional framework for occupational safety and health. But that said, developed countries generally provide more than is reasonable. It would be better to create a fair, and realistically achievable minima that can be achieved by all countries, and leave additional terms and conditions to the parties themselves. Imposed legislative constraints often make it more difficult to grow small firms or take on new employees.

It is probably the effect of highly prescriptive employment protection that has encouraged the growth in different forms of work organization observable over recent years. Some, of course, reflect what individuals themselves want – the increase in part-time employment for women is a good example. By contrast, other forms are a response to excessive employment obligations that, given the nature of the jobs on offer, employers and prospective employers either cannot afford or cannot sustain, with the resultant drive by many into the informal sector.

Entrepreneurship is all too easily stifled by over-regulation. The increasing emphasis on so-called flexible employment is a case in point. Most employers who can, willingly accommodate employees with family commitments. They accept that to do so encourages loyalty and effective job performance. On the other hand, the likely effect of legislated flexibility will run counter to many of the arrangements that already exist in many enterprises, undoubtedly an unintended consequence.

Legislation cannot create productive employment, but it can provide a productive infrastructure. Acknowledging and supporting the need for entrepreneurial activity is useful; it would be equally useful to accept that excessive regulation can stifle that same activity. Governments should set decent work minima; standards should not be set so high that only the large companies can achieve them. By the same token, ILO instruments should adopt a principled, not a prescriptive approach to employment protection. A prescriptive approach will not reduce poverty or provide greater employment opportunities. Too often, prescription makes Convention ratification impossible for many countries. Then the principle may be lost as well.

In conclusion, the Director-General's aims of decent work and social justice cannot be faulted but to flourish, they need stable and prospering economies. Over-prescription and restrictive practices defeat these good intentions. For New Zealand, it must be asked whether recently enacted prescriptive changes will have just that effect. What must override all our considerations is the need to recognize the importance of promoting an environment and regulatory framework that does not have inappropriate barriers to business activity.

Trinidad and Tobago is a Republic consisting of two islands situated at the southernmost tip of the Caribbean archipelago. Its main economic driver is the petroleum sector; revenue from the sale of oil and natural gas is used to propel growth in the other sectors of the economy.

Like in many developing countries, the services sector is growing rapidly; in 2004 it contributed 53.3 per cent to GDP. In 2003 our GDP per capita was recorded at US\$8,242.4. In 2004, the unemployment rate stood at 10.2 per cent.

The 2004 UNDP Human Development Report ranked our country as 54th among the 177 countries surveyed and eighth on the Human and Income Poverty Index.

While these rankings are fairly high, 21 per cent of the population live beneath the national poverty line. According to statistics for the period 1990 to 2002, 12.4 per cent and 39 per cent of the population live on less than US\$1 or US\$2 per day respectively.

We are rich in cultural, ethnic and social diversity and are known globally for our carnival, festivals and calypso music, and as the creator of the steel pan.

In pursuit of the objective of full, decent and sustainable employment, the Government is always mindful of the four fundamental pillars of the ILO, whose provisions are incorporated into our medium-term national objectives. In the area of fundamental principles and rights at work, I am pleased to say that Trinidad and Tobago has ratified all the core Conventions. Indeed, in September 2004 we ratified Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), thus declaring 16 years as the minimum age of admission to employment.

At present, legislative measures are being taken give effect to this Convention. In addition, we are in the process of developing both an employment policy and an employment standards policy, to ensure a fair, productive and decent working environment and achieve decent employment.

The achievement of full employment has been, and continues to be, a core objective of our national development framework. In 2004, we recorded the lowest unemployment rate of 10.2 per cent in 20 years.

Despite this, we are mindful of our poverty ranking and the need to improve the level of educational attainment and access to sustainable decent employment for our population. At present, 7.8 per cent of our labour force has attained tertiary education, a rate we are seeking to increase through active labour market policies. One of these policies is subsidized tertiary education.

Like in many of the member countries represented here today, youth unemployment is cause for serious concern. Twenty per cent of our labour force is comprised of youth, 18.1 per cent of whom are unemployed.

The female youth unemployment rate of 24 per cent in 2003 exceeded the general unemployment and youth unemployment rates. We have been following the dialogue in the Committee on Youth Employment and look forward to its recommendations, which will guide us as in maximizing the potential of our youth in the labour market.

This is particularly important for a small island economy such as ours, which loses much of its labour force through migration.

The discussions on a promotional framework on occupational safety and health are as important as those pertaining to youth. Last year, Trinidad and Tobago reported that it had passed legislation on occupational safety and health. However, giving effect to the law has been challenging, given the immense cost of upgrading our workplaces. We are exploring mechanisms for gradual, especially for high-risk situations.

Being a twin-island country, Trinidad and Tobago has a small fishing sector, which employs more than 14,000 persons and contributes 9 per cent to GDP.

Recommendations on addressing the decent work deficit for this sector would be invaluable to us. We look forward to the decision on an instrument on work in the fishing sector.

I take this opportunity to thank the Director and staff of the Subregional Caribbean Office for their continuous support of our Government. They have provided support in all spheres of the operations. Of special importance has been their involvement in the areas of child labour, productivity, labour administration, application of standards and HIV/AIDS.

May I take this opportunity to support the Director-General in his call on the occasion of his opening of this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, consolidating progress and moving ahead? It is truly important that we reflect on the rich policy guidance the ILO has been given to member States since 1999 to shape the national, regional, hemispheric and international employment environment. As member States, we have a common goal of decent work, a goal which transcends borders, economic conditions, and cultural and social differences.

Finally, I look forward to the discussions and conclusions of the 93rd International Labour Conference and, more critically, to its Recommendations. These will indeed assist us as member States in ensuring the provision of employment in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity.

Mr. LAMBERT (*Employer, United Kingdom*)

I am very pleased to be here this morning to talk to you and to have this opportunity to present the United Kingdom employers' position with regard to ILO activities and the future of the Organization and to comment on the Report of the ILO Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia.

I am sure that we can all agree that one of the main reasons for the existence of the ILO is to ensure the improvement of the world of work in a global sense and to take concerted action in order to create decent work opportunities for all. A transcending fact is that millions of people live in abject poverty in today's world with little or no prospect of employment. The ILO has a crucial part to play in aiding the eradication of poverty through its role of encouraging employment creation and, as such, it is of the utmost importance that the ILO remains focused on this role. In our opinion, the ILO's greatest ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is through employment. The Organization must be determined in its contribution to achieve decent employment in those areas of the world that are so impoverished and the budget

should therefore be focused on encouraging employment creation.

Employment creation is inextricably linked with a sound economy, where those with entrepreneurial skills can use their competencies to develop flourishing businesses. An economic environment that allows for fair competition between businesses and does not burden business start-ups is the first step in employment creation; an environment where regulation and control is measured and appropriate and, however well-meaning, does not lead to the unintended consequences of damaging growth and employment creation. We all must not let that happen.

Because of this, employment policy must be integrated within a broad economic and social policy perspective that encourages the creation of decent jobs through economic growth. But we must also ensure that people have the skills to take on these new jobs, active policies to encourage skill development, both at school and in later life, are essential.

The business case is not only important with regard to employment creation, but also in relation to the governance of the organization itself. As in all organizations, of whatever type, a sound plan that does not erode the principles of the organization, within and without the establishment, is crucial. In addition to this, a strong determination is needed to make international debates turn into practical, national realities. It is no good having a talking shop like this and doing nothing afterwards.

In the case of the ILO, we feel that the major focus of the Organization must be on the principle of decent employment and that the key programmes of the ILO are not there to be eroded by other priorities.

I would like to finish this brief intervention by quoting Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, when he said, "The greatest anti-poverty programme of all is employment."

The world's poor are reaching out to us for help, we must face up to the challenge and not lose focus.

Original French: Ms. AWASSI ATSIMADJA (Employer, Gabon)

I would like to say how pleased I am to make this statement on behalf of our employers' organization, the Confederation of Gabonese Employers (CPG).

All the members of the CPG would like to thank the Employers' delegates and the African Employers' delegates, in particular, who have just elected me deputy member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. We are also grateful to the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) for its unstinting support to all its members.

I would also like to thank the ILO for its choice of subjects for the Conference this year. These wisely chosen topics are of concern to the entire private sector because they are all relevant issues.

I would also like to thank the Director-General for having given pride of place to Africa this year – two prominent African Heads of State were guests of honour at the Conference. This bears witness to the importance the ILO attaches to the problems facing Africa.

I would also like to pay tribute to the President of Algeria, His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, for being the architects of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Whilst the plan was being drawn up, these two Heads of State recog-

nized that the African continent was still being marginalized when it came to foreign direct investment and trade. In order to attract investors, African employers continue to encourage Africa to take steps to create an enabling macroeconomic environment, to combat insecurity and to provide adequate infrastructure. Africa needs a strategic development framework in order to make up for the ground it has lost over many years.

It is therefore gratifying to see that African employers have begun to prepare to shape the role they will play in the process of implementing NEPAD.

While Africa needs investment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it also needs highly skilled human resources to ensure that there is a return on these investments. It is crucial for the economic development and social progress of this continent that we have an efficient system of education and vocational training, which will dispense basic knowledge and the skills and attitudes required to be competitive in a difficult environment.

I therefore welcome the initiative taken by the G8 countries to write off the debt of the poorest countries. The money that will thus be released can be used effectively by the countries concerned to invest in key sectors.

Developing human resources should provide enterprises with skilled men and women. However, I also agree with those who maintain that enterprises should not only be on the receiving end of trained staff, but should also be a venue for training. Training must become a key element of corporate strategy. Companies should not just expect the educational system to supply them with a finished product which meets their needs. Consequently, it is crucial that heads of enterprise and their organizations demand and accept a participatory role in designing training curricula by taking part in the consultation bodies engaged in drafting such curricula.

I would like to pay tribute to the work done at this Conference in the field of youth employment, an issue of key importance for our continent, where young people with no work and no hope are fertile ground for political crises and civil wars. Tackling unemployment amongst young people in Africa today means guaranteeing stability in our countries.

In many African countries, as you know, enterprises on their own cannot pay the cost of training and education. Thus, perhaps more than on other continents, African enterprises need employers' organizations with a sound structure, which are strong and representative and which can provide them with the services they need to improve the quality of their performance. By strengthening its members, an employers' organization strengthens itself.

I would like to thank the IOE, which provides practical assistance to its members in countries where the environment is difficult, and sometimes even hostile, for employers.

Although we obviously have limited financial resources, there is one resource which we have in abundance: the experience and know-how of our members in the countries that history has treated more favourably, who have already obtained what we are still fighting for.

The IOE is supported by the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), with which it works closely. The partnership between the IOE and the ACT/EMP enables the concerns of employers' organizations to be taken account in both practical

and policy areas. It was at the instigation of the IOE that the Employers' group of the Governing Body took a clear stand in favour of strengthening ACT/EMP's material and human resources to enable it to fully accomplish its task of assisting employers' organizations. Despite its limited resources, ACT/EMP makes a big effort through its technical advisers in Geneva and those in the multidisciplinary teams throughout the world.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking ACT/EMP for a job well done, in particular with regard to strengthening the capacity of employers' organizations in Africa.

I would like to add that the best investments and the most highly skilled people cannot produce the desired results unless they work in a favourable political, social and economic environment. Employers are aware of this, and they will do everything they can to help the public authorities to create an enabling environment both for the competitiveness of national enterprises and for attracting national and international investment. Africa cannot meet the challenges it faces unless the wealth-creating private sector is fully involved, through its organization, in a dialogue which enables the employers' main concerns to be taken into account.

I wish you every success at this Conference.

Original Arabic: Mr. SUKKAR (Employer, Syrian Arab Republic)

The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first countries to join the ILO and respect its Constitution, its declarations, the international labour Conventions and its decisions. In this regard, I have the pleasure of informing you that the Syrian Arab Republic has to date ratified 50 international labour Conventions, including the core Conventions of this Organization.

This reflects our good intentions and the constant efforts being made to respect the aims and policies of the ILO, whilst seeking the best means and policies to ensure their protection.

We are living in a world of drastic and rapid social, economic and political changes. Multinational corporations have either got round or destroyed the political frontiers of States. Regional economic blocs have appeared, as have free trade zones and markets. This is affecting the labour market and sometimes leads to a cut in jobs. All of these changes bring with them opportunities as well as threats to the safety and stability of the individual and to social peace and security.

The Syrian Arab Republic, under the leadership of President Bashar Al-Assad, is experiencing political, economic and social reforms. These reforms show the importance given to workers, employment and employers. Various laws have been adopted to set up the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Industry, establish industrial zones and reduce income tax. Under Legislative Decree No. 43, private enterprises can enter the Syrian insurance market, and we have laws on the creation of private banks and universities. In addition, there are other laws to encourage industry and commerce. Furthermore, our Government wishes to examine employment and social security legislation to bring it into line with labour-related changes and standards.

We are pleased to see that this session of the Conference is addressing the issue of youth employment. In this regard, I should like to point out that the Syrian Arab Republic has set up a body to com-

bat unemployment and provides long-term loans with favourable conditions to small enterprises.

In addition, women participate at the governing council sessions of chambers of commerce and industry as well as in local civil society associations.

We hope that our Organization will increase its support and widen its programmes and activities, not only with governments and workers, but also employers, since they have a very important role to play in complementing and developing their working relations with the social partners.

We have studied carefully the Appendix to the Director-General's Report entitled, in particular the part dealing with the situation of Syrian workers in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. We thank the Director-General and the Organization for this report which, each year, raises humanitarian issues and addresses the disastrous situation of the workers and employers in the occupied Syrian Golan, Palestine and the parts of South Lebanon that have not been liberated.

The situation in these territories is deteriorating as a result of Israeli practices that are in violation of both United Nations Conventions and ILO Conventions and its Constitution. This constitutes a threat to peace and social security and the discriminatory policies prevent employers and workers from securing minimum subsistence levels.

We have noted that no special sitting has been scheduled to discuss this report, as has been done in the past. We hope that such a sitting will be held in the future to discuss the report and to enable heads of delegations to take the floor on the issue.

The Syrian Arab Republic, under the presidency of Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, has endeavoured to implement the United Nations Conventions and the Security Council resolutions. We hope that the United Nations, for its part, will call on Israel to respect the resolutions adopted by the international community by withdrawing from the Shebaa farms in Lebanon, the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and Palestine, as far as the 4 June 1967 borders, which will guarantee respect for the national rights of our families in the occupied territories.

We hope that the Conference will take important decisions that will be a source of hope for peace and economic and social security of the peoples of the world.

Mr. KULUNDU (Minister for Labour and Human Resource Development, Kenya)

On behalf of the Kenyan delegation, I wish to compliment the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General for their remarks contained in this year's Reports, touching on all the salient elements of the ILO's broad Decent Work Agenda.

As the United Nations lead agency in policy development for employment, the ILO this year appropriately chose *Youth: Pathways to decent work* as the major theme for the Conference. We support the Director-General's view that having a fair chance of finding and keeping a decent job is the most practical way of fighting poverty and is in accordance with the Organization's strategic objective on decent employment and income.

We have noted that the programme and budget proposals tabled before this august assembly focus on the regions where technical assistance programmes are given priority notwithstanding resource constraints. We commend these proposals.

It is encouraging to see attention and priority activities shifting to youth employment, which has become a matter of global concern, particularly for us in the African continent.

There is no doubt that that unemployment remains the most pressing development challenge in Kenya, where about half a million young men and women enter the labour market annually, while approximately 3 million young persons are out of the school system.

A majority of these young people cannot access decent employment, the reason being that 94 per cent of the jobs being generated are within the unattractive informal sector, where issues of social protection, living wage, health and safety and other aspects of decent work do not exist.

This situation is complicated by limited expansion of the formal sector, job selectivity among young people and inadequate labour market information.

In response to these challenges, the Kenyan Government, in collaboration with the ILO Subregional Office for East Africa and social partners, has designed various strategies through the development of policies and programmes. These include a youth policy, an employment policy and the National Plan on Poverty Reduction and Wealth Creation. These policies integrate all issues affecting young persons. We, however, require technical assistance to enable us to actualize these initiatives.

In applying our minds to major challenges in Africa, such as rising unemployment and poverty, we must bear in mind that the underlying causes are numerous and quite complex. It has become clear that certain macroeconomic and social policies experimented upon in the past 20 years have caused a serious onslaught on gains made in the 1960s and 1970s.

Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) strangled the once thriving economies, leaving vast destitution across the African continent. African nations had no choice but to accept the stiff conditions imposed upon them to get the funds they sorely needed. The result has been further impoverishment of those meant to benefit.

The view that unemployment is caused by labour institutions and rigidities associated with them, and that deregulation would automatically halt it, has no empirical evidence to back it up in a number of countries. There is no credible evidence, at least from the African countries, to suggest that decent employment increased or that poverty levels went down in the last two decades, while deregulation policies have been in place. On the contrary, more decent jobs have been lost and poverty has reached unprecedented levels.

These are the reasons that lead us to conclude that we need to develop sound macroeconomic policies focusing on critical issues such as an enabling investment environment, real interest rates and their impact on consumer goods and services as well as exports.

Kenya strongly believes that there is an urgent need for fair trade rules and policies which can encourage job creation and open opportunities to access external markets for value-added exports. It is worth noting that most developing countries depend on agriculture as the main economic activity for generating exports. Regrettably, adverse weather conditions and uncontrolled globalization has led to declining growth in the sector, leading to loss of jobs and declining exports.

The unique features and cultures of Africa can help us develop creative products that are capable of warding off competition in a global economy. These require accessibility to credit facilities for starting and sustaining enterprises and more investment in technical education for creativity and other employable skills in the labour market.

In conclusion, Kenya believes that creating the necessary environment and developing a creative culture require substantial expenditure, as opposed to massive budgetary reductions. We cannot develop or even attract investments, whether indigenous or foreign, with dilapidated roads, collapsed railways and inadequate health-care facilities. These are some of the problems that require addressing and the drawing up of recommendations during this Conference.

Original Spanish: Mr. CHIRIBOGA (Minister for Labour and Employment, Ecuador)

In reference to the Director-General's Report, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, I have the following comments. I welcome this extremely factual Report which sums up so effectively what has been done and the way forward. We also support the Director-General's management, and, of course, assistance in the efforts which the ILO is making in seeking social justice. It is of fundamental importance to continue with the tasks to overcome poverty, and to work for a globalization which will be inclusive and not exclusive, and which will benefit all and not only some. Furthermore, we supported the budget proposed by the administration, since requests for assistance, at this time of deteriorating labour conditions throughout the world, are on the increase, and some response must of course be given to those requests for assistance in the best way possible.

Ecuador hopes to be able to continue counting on support from the ILO for programmes which started a number of years ago. My own position, as Minister for Labour and Employment, is that I will not change anything with regard to programmes which were agreed with previous governments, because I consider that continuity is of fundamental importance if we wish to achieve our objectives. I would like to emphasize my conviction that jobs are not created by ministries of labour, but by national and international economic policies. If the globalization of economic policy continues, along the same lines as over the last 20 years, then whatever efforts we make will not allow us to achieve the objectives which we have set ourselves.

Policies applied to the world have only produced job losses, worsening poverty, and negative effects on economic, social and cultural rights for a great number of the people of the world. The same effects have occurred in many developing countries and even in developed countries. We believe that another world is possible and, consequently, as the Director-General has said, we have to consolidate the progress which has been achieved to date in order to be able to move forward.

In Ecuador, we have a constitutional President, Mr. Alfredo Palacio Gonzalez, who wishes to promote tripartite dialogue and promote employment with a view to gender equality, and we are asking to be included in the Youth Employment Network. The Director-General relies on support from the international community in his pro-employment efforts, which is the best social policy. I can only

hope that the other organizations in the international community will support your proposals unreservedly.

Ecuador requires support from the ILO to promote its National Labour Council and its Youth Employment Programme to improve the labour inspection system, to develop our agencies which work against child labour, and to support work for women, protection systems and occupational health systems for all. On behalf of the President of Ecuador, I venture to express the wish that we will be able to count on ILO support.

Finally, I would like to highlight something which is not in the Report of the Director-General, and that is how welcome were the invitations to the Presidents of Algeria and Nigeria who have given us such valuable advice on the basis of their long experience.

(Mr. Finlay takes the Chair.)

Ms. TOTH MUCCIACCIARO (*Worker, Croatia*)

On behalf of the Croatian Workers' delegation let me extend our special greetings and our encouragement to all the young delegates taking part in the Conference.

We highly appreciate this year's priority focus on youth. We warmly welcome the major social policy report entitled *Youth: Pathways to decent work*, which highlights the multifaceted and complex problems of the young workforce.

Young people, as the makers of tomorrow's world, deserve much greater visibility. Governments, employers and trade unions need to give them representation and recognition and take them on board because of their great creativity, their energy, their ideas and their dreams. Their time starts now. Let us not be killers of dreams, let us give youth a chance. We are certainly looking forward to seeing many more young people, especially young women, at next year's International Labour Conference.

Croatia is a young democratic country in transition and is facing lots of challenges. Transition in conditions of globalization equals high unemployment, loss of industries, liberalization and deregulation of the labour market, broken social security networks, deterioration of living and working conditions, increase of atypical forms of work and growth of the informal economy.

Competition on the world market and the imperative of reducing the costs of business operation – including labour costs – impose new business policies which are evident in more flexible working hours, flexible employment arrangements and flexible salaries.

In Croatia, the main obstacle towards the achievement of decent work is a very high unemployment rate, especially among young people, where it is double that of adults.

Over 80 per cent of newly employed work on fixed-term contracts, facing job insecurity that often deprives them of personal and professional fulfilment. Many workers find themselves trapped in precarious and underpaid jobs, accepting long working hours, unpaid overtime and little or no social protection. For fear of losing their jobs, they do not raise issues regarding their working conditions and their labour and social rights. Employers benefit from the situation which has become more disadvantageous due to insufficiently developed labour

market institutions, inefficient labour administration and labour inspection, and inadequate judicial protection of labour rights because of the long duration of labour disputes.

There is a strong correlation between unemployment and lack of decent work. Employment must be at the centre of economic and social policies. Decent work should be a guiding principle of the future Croatian national development strategy.

Workers are entitled to dignity throughout their working lives and their dignity must be guaranteed by an appropriate set of standards and rights, which should be implemented and respected.

The establishment of national employment policy must be based on tripartism, and all the stakeholders should be given a fair chance to play a constructive role. Institutionally, the Government and social partners in Croatia participate in the work of the national tripartite body, the Economic and Social Council, as well as in other decision-making and consultative bodies.

The fact that, formally, there are mechanisms of social dialogue does not automatically mean that they function properly and successfully.

Sometimes trade unions get the impression that social dialogue is reduced to a form with little substance. In developing a Croatian model of tripartism, major efforts and improvements are needed for us to achieve genuine social dialogue and meaningful and timely tripartite consultations on the economic, social and education policies that directly affect our workers. In the light of Croatia's integration with the European Union and its striving for the European social model, the role of social partners must be strengthened. When evaluating the situation of social dialogue, we cannot disregard the fragmentation of the Croatian trade union movement. However, for more than a year now, we have noted major positive developments reversing the trend. In 2004 in their efforts to meet organizational and policy challenges to avoid duplication and overlap of work, four out of six national trade union confederations formally launched negotiations to merge. The planned unification process will result in the shaping of a new trade union umbrella organization, encompassing around 70 per cent of all unionized workers in Croatia. This will give them a stronger voice and stronger representation in the process of implementing far-reaching reforms linked to Croatia's accession to the European Union. This new strategic approach is a positive echo of the parallel process of unification of the ICFTU and WCL on a global level.

Finally, Croatian trade unions recognize the leading international expertise of the ILO and its unique mandate to promote the creation of opportunities for decent work for all people as our global and our national goal. Trade unions will keep promoting ratification and implementation of the relevant ILO Conventions in Croatia. The ILO should guide all three sides to ensure that all the international discussions held at different levels result in concrete actions on the national level. We hope that the ILO will be given the strong support needed for these efforts to succeed.

Original Lao: Mr. KAKANYA (Deputy Minister of Labour, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

The Report presented by the Director-General of the International Labour Organization covers important issues and new steps forward, aimed at de-

veloping the role of management in protecting workers' fundamental rights and improving the mechanisms and measures adjusting the interest and social justice that may be the effects of globalization and under conditions of rapid scientific and technological developments.

The international labour Conventions and Recommendations for the protection of workers' fundamental rights hold the highest importance and significance for us, and for other friendly member States of the International Labour Organization.

In 2005, around 51 per cent of the 5.8 million Lao people compose its labour force. About four-fifths of employed people are mainly farmers who have undergone an initial reorientation from subsistence farming to commercial production. Thirty-six per cent of all households in the country are classified as poor. The economic infrastructure remains fragile, the education and health systems underdeveloped, but multiple potentials that could be tapped for socio-economic development include a wealth of resources and the country's central location in the heart of the subregion.

To provide employment for the youth and unemployed, short-, medium- and long-term socio-economic development programmes were outlined. These programmes include plans for creating employment for youth and unemployed in isolated areas. Furthermore, the poverty eradication programme, one of the eight priority programmes, is also being implemented. We, however, must face certain challenges, such as seasonal unemployment in rural areas and an increasing number of young people graduating from schools. These challenges stem from the fact that new jobs fail to meet the number of new entrants into the labour market. Some of these new jobs require highly skilled labour, which remains scarce at this stage due to limited funding and an underdeveloped skills development infrastructure.

Such conditions have caused labour migration within the country from rural to urban areas, while a number of labourers have moved to neighbouring countries, thus giving rise to negative social issues. To remedy this situation, we have emphasized investment in public and private vocational training centres, in conjunction with the improvement of employment service mechanisms, by setting up a systematic mechanism with wide outreach.

In the past year we have started to expand social protection services in the public sector, and small-scale enterprises at the country level.

We have continued to implement the child labour elimination project and the women and children anti-trafficking project, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, and have expanded the areas targeted by the projects to cover two additional provinces. At the same time, different activities such as vocational training, community training and releasing credit to target groups for agricultural and handicraft production, were carried out to generate sedentary occupations and restrict labour migration. The project received good cooperation from the local authorities.

Simultaneously, with the implementation of these projects, and realizing the importance of the eight fundamental ILO Conventions, our Government ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) in April 2005.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic being a developing country, 97 per cent of its population live in isolated rural areas and are engaged in agricultural activities. Therefore, a sound employment strategy and plan remain important for the rural and human resources development that are enshrined in the Lao Government's priority programmes.

In this era of globalization, when rapid technical, scientific, technological and information development represent both facilities and challenges for developing countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, cooperation and assistance are necessities for national development.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic would like to take this opportunity to extend its appreciation for the support and assistance provided to us by friendly countries and international organizations.

I would also like to extend our appreciation to the International Labour Organization for its technical assistance in developing the past annual cooperation plan, and hope that such assistance will again be provided in the future.

Original Farsi: Mr. OTAREDIAN (Employer, Islamic Republic of Iran)

On behalf of the Iran Confederation of Employers' Associations, I am delighted to express our support for the Report submitted by the Director-General and further emphasize the importance of its implementation. I would also like to touch upon the following points.

Our Confederation has taken appropriate steps toward achieving decent work and has, therefore, developed a definition which reflects our national capacity. Decent work is a type of work which, in the long run, fulfils the following objectives: workers can provide for the well-being of their families, both now and in the future, and can keep them safe from any physical and psychological harm; employers can provide for the well-being of their families, both now and in the future, and can keep them safe from any physical and psychological harm; sustainable development and economic prosperity can be attained; the environment can be protected against man-made destruction and manipulation.

It is clear that this kind of work may not be available, or may be hard to find; nevertheless, we must take this approach, based on achieving the above four principles in every industry, profession and service. We believe this can be achieved through constant tripartite dialogue between the government, employers and workers within the context of each particular industry, profession and service.

Given the changing nature of technology, experience and working conditions, we believe that just as work is constant in nature, so dialogue should also be constant. Tripartite dialogue remains the only effective way to achieve decent work under any conditions.

We believe that the fundamental principles and rights at work, based on internationally recognized Conventions, have to be fully observed at the national level. In our country, we have no fundamental problems in observing such rights and principles; however, one must bear in mind that in countries like the Islamic Republic of Iran where bureaucracy has a record going back almost three millennia and privatization is on the national agenda, resistance arising from bureaucracy is inevitable.

As a result of inappropriate macroeconomic policy, an eight-year imposed war and also the emer-

gence of privatization, more than 10 per cent of qualified men and women are unemployed. The unemployment rate among university graduates is over 30 per cent. This rate includes both those who are absolutely unemployed and those who have accepted jobs for which they are overqualified while they pursue a better one.

To overcome this problem, the Confederation has developed and proposed a plan which we hope, through negotiations with other parties concerned, can become a national comprehensive plan of action.

Tripartite dialogue is currently being widely used as an effective instrument to promote social dialogue in the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, the Government, employers and workers do not have a meaningful understanding of the culture prevailing in this context and therefore, in most cases, this type of dialogue turns out to be of an imposed nature or even superficial. This Confederation is making its best efforts to help develop the necessary culture conducive to the establishment of constructive tripartite dialogue in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of a problem which has severely impacted the lives of employers and workers in the fishing sector in northern Iran. A type of fish known as Ctenophore-comb jelly has come into the Caspian Sea through the Volga-Don canal, eating the food of rare and other highly valuable fish. It reproduces easily, therefore endangering the lives of a large number of fish. As a result of this, more than 20,000 workers and small employers and their families, almost about 100,000 people, have lost their income or become totally bankrupt.

I believe that tackling this problem requires an international cooperation and convergence at regional level supported by our northern neighbours. I therefore felt it was essential to raise this issue here and seek your assistance in safeguarding the lives and well-being of the people concerned, as well as the protection of the environment.

Original Spanish: Mr. SERVAT PEREIRA DE SOUSA
(Government, Peru)

It is an honour for me to represent Peru at the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference and I would like to convey the greetings of the Ministry of Labour to all the delegations present.

Our countries are certainly experiencing big economic and social changes whose effects do not necessarily square with equitable social justice. Hence, the Conference is thinking about making decent work a global goal. The significant and growing precariousness of the global labour market is, perhaps, a reflection of this mismatch and, as such, has recently prompted efforts by the ILO to implement corrective programmes and measures contributing to and facilitating substantial improvements in the protection of fundamental rights and a gradual lessening of job insecurity. To this end and in pursuit of the objective of making decent work a global goal, the ILO has promoted the creation of high-quality jobs and the full enjoyment of labour rights and human dignity which, coupled with member States efforts', has made it possible to spur on and encourage action aimed at achieving this purpose.

Peru is also affected by this trend and, as a democratic State governed by the rule of law, it has shouldered the responsibility of ensuring that decent work is one of the elements of its social agenda and

of giving labour authorities powers designed to secure that aim. The challenge in our country, where the main problem as far as employment is concerned is the high level of underemployment and the creation of more jobs, is of seeing to it that the latter are of better quality. For that, it is necessary to raise the standard of education and of the technical and vocational training of our workers so as to boost productivity and competitiveness, especially in a global economy. The reduction and reorganization of the public sector as part of the democratization process has transferred the main responsibility for creating new jobs to the private sector and, as result, the State must show greater commitment to establishing an enabling environment by encouraging investment, improving the productive infrastructure and heightening legal security without prejudice to respect for labour rights.

We cannot fail to mention our agreement with the Director-General when he says that encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit and business set-ups is vital for increasing employment, in particular youth employment. It is the joint mission of the Government, workers and employers to provide decent work. It behoves us to point out that, within the process of modernizing the State, the current reform of employment in the public sector will make it possible to rely on general standards, principles, rights and obligations which will obviate situations of inequality between workers and a lack of protection of their rights.

Accordingly, and given that social dialogue and tripartism are among the pillars of decent work, the National Council of Labour and the Promotion of Employment, with the assistance of the ILO, recently approved its rules of procedure. This standing tripartite body, which has been in existence for more than four years and whose purpose is to discuss and arrive at labour policies and policies to promote employment and social protection with a view to national and regional development, is one of the most important forums for social dialogue in Peru. It offers a framework within which trade unions and employers are more able to discuss various topical issues connected with labour, employment, vocational training, informal work, competitiveness, productivity, etc. This is something which certainly augurs well for the laying down of truly consensual and well-balanced labour standards and guidelines.

At a time when new labour standards are being debated in the form of a preliminary draft general labour law, we must mention a large group of workers, those in the informal sector of the economy, who are not protected by existing labour laws, since they are far removed from the formal labour market. Any labour reform will pass them by unless we make a joint effort to extract workers from this job insecurity. Within this group of informal workers, some may be distinguished as micro-enterprises or self-employed workers who, while being part of the formal labour market, consider that their insecurity is such that they cannot be called employers and who more and more require similar State protection.

Similarly, within the concept of decent work, we must refer to the Peruvian Government's commitment to seek to eliminate all forms of forced labour. That is why we have acceded to two ILO Conventions: the Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery (Agriculture) Convention, 1951 (No. 99), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). In doing so, we are endeavouring to put an end to

this abuse, which is often to be found in the spheres of domestic work, mining and the “informal economy”, especially when workers are isolated from the community, when there is no government presence and when there is ignorance of citizens’ rights.

We therefore agree with the view expressed by the Director-General in his latest Report, *A global alliance against forced labour*, that this situation is no longer solely a problem for governments, but now involve all social partners. This is why, rather than just legislation, a plan of action is needed that involves the whole of society. We are working on raising awareness of forced labour in Peru among the general population and expanding our policies of investigation. To this end, a high-level committee has been set up to eliminate forced labour.

Nothing can justify the existence of forced labour while progress is being made in both development and human rights, which are mutually strengthening each other and increasing the capacity of the population.

In the Ministry of Labour, within the framework of the decent work objectives, we are strengthening our efforts to educate, raise awareness and comply with the labour regulations on occupational safety and health, as well as to prevent labour disputes and promote direct solutions. To this end, we are working with the ILO through the Programme to Strengthen the Civil Service, where we are assessing the labour inspection system in order to have more efficient inspections, legal security and guaranteed rights. We are continuing to implement programmes aimed at education and vocational training, as well as adequate labour reinsertion, particularly for those in vulnerable groups.

Lastly, allow me to reiterate the Peruvian Government’s commitment to respect and uphold the International Labour Conventions that we have ratified, as well as our domestic labour legislation, with a view to making decent and productive work an effective strategy for achieving economic development and reducing poverty.

Mr. HOSKINS (*representative, International Social Security Association*)

I bring you the greetings, this morning, of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), its President and officers, and its members, who represent 350 organizations around the world in some 151 countries that administer social security. Special greetings this morning go to the representative of the ILO, Mr. Kari Tapiola, who has taken a very active interest in the activities of the ISSA.

As many of you know in this room, the relationship between the ILO and the ISSA goes back over 75 years to the founding of the ISSA in 1927. In fact, it was the ILO that brought the ISSA into being. Its motivation was to promote the development of social security protection and also to gain support for the ratification of the growing number of ILO Conventions which deal with social security. During the many decades that have passed since then, the ISSA and the ILO have, of course, undergone enormous changes. The ISSA has grown from an Association which was primarily European, grouping together institutions administering sickness insurance, to an organization which today counts nearly 400 members that administer all branches of social security around the world.

In the light of these many changes that the ILO and ISSA have experienced, it is only natural that

the relationship between them has also changed and evolved. However, one thing has remained very constant, and that is that both the ISSA and the ILO are committed to achieving a common objective, and that common objective is the extension of social security protection around the world and the strengthening of the capacity of the institutions that are responsible for administering these social security programmes.

There are, therefore, very high expectations around the world about ISSA-ILO cooperation: expectations on the part of the many people in the world who have no social security protection; and expectations on the part of people who see their social security benefits being reduced, or even eliminated, in many parts of the world. We therefore have to take every available opportunity to make sure that the ISSA/ILO cooperation is really working and will be improved in the future.

We have many challenges facing us, as you have heard previous speakers say today. One of the biggest challenges is, of course, the informalization of the labour market. More and more people in the world are working today without adequate social security protection. That protection has been threatened not only in terms of the number of people covered but also the level of benefits provided, and most of the people who are living today without adequate protection are living in the developing countries. This is indeed an alarming situation, an unacceptable situation; it is a threat from the economic standpoint, from the humanitarian standpoint, and from the security standpoint. The reason, of course, is the increasing informalization of our economies. The Director-General has said in his Report that this situation puts security, development, open economies and open societies at risk.

How can we change this? One of the things that we have to do, I think, is to make sure that everyone has a stake in their own social security protection, and these questions were at the centre of the debate of the ISSA when it held its General Assembly last year in Beijing at the invitation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the People’s Republic of China.

A clear message came out of Beijing and that message was, as the Director-General’s Report also says, that social stability cannot be achieved without social justice. Social justice is not only about fighting poverty, it is also about providing decent health care, providing decent pensions, and investing in each country’s important assets; and the most important asset is, of course, its working population.

A declaration was adopted in Beijing, and that declaration is going to provide the basis for the work of the ISSA for many years to come. The declaration states that social security is indispensable for social and economic development, and that social security coverage must be extended in order to reduce poverty and social exclusion.

The most important partner of the ISSA is, of course, the ILO, and we will continue to develop our working relationship. I am pleased to say that we welcome very much the fact that the Director-General has created a Task Force to strengthen ILO/ISSA cooperation. We have an agenda, and that agenda is to work for the betterment of social security around the world.

The workers of the world expect a great deal from the ISSA and from the ILO. We owe it to them to

exploit this cooperation. The good will is present on both sides. Now we just need to get to work.

Mr. AWIRA (*Government, Kiribati*)

Our gratitude goes to the Director-General for initiating and promoting the Decent Work Agenda, which seeks to provide women and men with decent jobs in freedom, equality and human dignity.

It also seeks to strengthen the fundamental principles and rights at work, enhance social security protection and, last but not least, strengthen the dialogue between social partners.

It is designed to assist wage earners and non-wage-earners who have inadequate access to the benefits of development. The Decent Work Agenda is an ideal response to globalization, which marginalizes a rapidly increasing number of people and, at the same time, places some at the forefront of development.

Placing few at the centre of development is not the objective of globalization; it happened that way, however, because globalization has been governed poorly. The Decent Work Agenda is consistent with the objectives of the National Development Strategies of Kiribati, which seek to ensure growth based on good governance and an equitable distribution of the national cake to its entire people.

Moreover, the Decent Work Agenda has been the focus of the World Commission on the Social-Dimension of Globalization, which advocates the fundamental principles and rights at work, job creation, social security and social dialogue.

By addressing these issues, the World Commission has convinced Kiribati more than ever that the Decent Work Agenda is a worthwhile response to the existing social, economic and political problems confronting our country.

Given the aforementioned, the ILO deserves the appreciation of governments, employers and workers for initiating this vital programme, which clearly represents a way forward for all.

Let me share with you some important developments that have occurred in Kiribati since the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

Kiribati has a population of over 90,000. However, over 40,000 economically active young men and women are unemployed. Only 9,200 are fortunate enough to be employed, mostly with the public sector in urban areas.

During the meeting of the Kiribati Government with its development partners in 2004, youth employment was addressed as one of the priority areas. The Asian Development Bank and the ILO have shown interest in examining the best way in which to address these issues. In this respect, I call upon the ILO and the Asian Development Bank to expedite identification of job creating options so that the youth of Kiribati, in due course, will take its rightful place in the formal economy as employers or citizens capable of generating their own income.

Kiribati labour laws have been reviewed to align them with international labour standards. The Manila and Suva Offices of the ILO have been assisting Kiribati in this important exercise. We hope that the new labour bills will be given their first parliamentary reading in the December 2005 session of the Kiribati Parliament.

Approximately 10,000 Kiribati citizens – out of over 90,000 – have direct access to limited social security protection in the form of lump-sum payments of long-term savings upon retirement and

old-age allowances as of the age of 70. Kiribati needs to identify ways to enhance social security protection in due course.

The ILO is now fully engaged in this exercise in the form of consultation with stakeholders, which commenced just a few weeks ago. This will be followed, very shortly, by the identification of more appropriate social security provisions for Kiribati and relevant funding.

We have initiated, monthly tripartite meetings in the form of a Decent Work Agenda steering committee. It comprises key government advisers on labour, the economy and public services, on the one hand, and top leaders of both employer and worker organizations, on the other.

The committee, among others, promotes the principles of the Decent Work Agenda in the private and public sectors and advises the Minister of Labour on all Decent Work Agenda-related matters.

Furthermore, the committee has requested stakeholders to start a debate on the choice of appropriate industrial relations for Kiribati. This paves the way for an effective social dialogue in Kiribati in the very near future. I call upon the ILO to provide appropriate technical assistance in determining our future industrial relations.

Allow me to express our sincere gratitude to the Manila and Suva ILO Offices for their continuous support to Kiribati. The assistance in undertaking our labour review and in the debate on appropriate social security provisions for Kiribati were some of the important milestones of this constant support. Kiribati hopes this help will continue in the future.

Mr. ZHARIKOV (*representative, World Federation of Trade Unions*)

This session of the Conference is meeting in a year which commemorates the anniversary of our organization, WFTU, founded at the end of the Second World War, 60 years ago, just after the creation of the United Nations.

It is only logical that we recall the fact that it was on the initiative of the WFTU that 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), were adopted.

Towards the end of this year, the WFTU is convening its 15th World Trade Union Congress to discuss how trade unions and workers can be mobilized and united in the struggle against neo-liberal globalization, war and exploitation, for social justice, full employment, solidarity and peace.

Similar issues were discussed late last year at the Beijing international forum of trade unions. For us, it is time not only for reflection, but for action. The WFTU strongly deplores the fact that big employers, like the transnationals, pay very little or no attention to the ILO Declaration. Even in the industrial countries, the percentage of workers enrolled in trade unions remains low and many employers do not recognize trade unions. The biggest industrial power – the United States – still does not ratify the core Conventions of the ILO and thus continues to be one of the major violators of trade union rights and human rights. It is in this context that the WFTU continues to call upon the ILO to compile a trade union development index to factually record the actual implementation of ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 in member States and to ensure that all of

them assume their obligations under these core Conventions.

It is now widely admitted that the social situation of workers in all parts of the world continues to worsen because of the policies of neo-liberal globalization. Poverty is growing constantly and employment is the highest in modern history. Workers' incomes and living standards are declining and labour standards and conditions of work deteriorating, while exploitation of workers is increasing drastically and profits are unprecedented and soaring.

Both the Copenhagen agreements and United Nations Millennium Summits remain unimplemented. That is why we have to change this negative situation in development.

The upcoming reform and summit of the United Nations this year should lead also to a real strengthening of the social dimension of globalization and stresses the role of the ILO itself.

It is necessary to cancel the colossal external debt of developing countries – the huge barriers which block their development. Resources for development should be found through cuts in arms budgets and by ending ongoing aggressive wars.

Working people and trade unions are deeply concerned about the situation of workers who are gravely affected by these ongoing wars, by foreign occupation, illegal blockades and sanctions, confrontations and threats, gross violation of international law, the sectarian conflicts, double standards and brutal interference in internal affairs of sovereign States and by attempts to dominate and to police the world by the restriction of basic rights under different pretexts as witnessed today in occupied Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, parts of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, the blockades against such countries, like Cuba and others. We are concerned also about the attempts to utilize the ILO for some of these purposes and practices.

The world and the ILO, at the beginning of a new century, are again at the crossroads. We are all again forced to make vital choices because we believe in the noble principles upheld by the ILO that peace and justice are irreplaceable and inseparable and are the cornerstones of human values.

Original French: Mr. JOUEN (representative, Education International)

On behalf of the international community of teachers' associations and unions that are united under the banner of Education International, and which together represent 30 million teachers from kindergarten to university level, we would like to make the following three main points in response to the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Firstly, to emphasize the need for the ILO to continue with its contribution to strengthening recognition of the role of trade unions and of social dialogue in the education, training and research sector.

In spite of all the efforts deployed by our international association and our colleagues in schools, the existence of independent trade unions is a problem still, in several regions, in particular in the Middle East, and even in Europe. In one candidate country for accession to the European Union, the national High Court of Justice has just banned a teachers' union with 250,000 members under the pretext that the union, in its statutes, promotes recognition of the rights of the children of minorities to access education in their mother tongue.

Recognition of the right to organize in the education sector is a prerequisite for the crucial social dialogue which must be established more widely among partners. With the globalization of the economy and of services, the education profession, like many professions, must take on board this new context by calling on all actors, governments, trade unions and employers to come up with the necessary compromises to ensure that the necessary reforms are carried out in a spirit of mutual understanding. The more serious the problems, the more indispensable social dialogue becomes.

Our second comment follows logically from what I have just said about the need for social dialogue in the education sector. We regret that the sectoral activities which have always been carried out by the ILO have been drastically reduced as a result of the budgetary decisions adopted by the Organization. The priority given over the last few years to the study of important macroeconomic issues, which are no doubt indispensable, should not lead to the ILO abandoning specific issues facing the different professional sectors, especially that of education. This situation sometimes gives the impression that the ILO is demonstrating a certain detachment from the specific problems faced by workers in their day-to-day professional lives and it is our responsibility to emphasize this failing.

Thirdly, we should like to express our satisfaction with having been involved this year, as in previous years, in the preparation of the World Day against Child Labour on 12 June. As an international association of teachers' unions, we are working with others to promote education for all and for the achievement of this Millennium Development Goal. Child labour remains in many countries a major obstacle to the achievement of this goal and we will certainly have to be more dynamic and proactive on this issue if we are to implement the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Finally, we should like to emphasize our satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Youth Employment. The recommendations which will emerge from the work of this Committee must be widely disseminated and implemented by governments and social partners. Youth unemployment leads to instability in our societies, at the political as well as the economic and social levels. Everything must be done to ensure that every young person finds his or her place in the world of work through decent work. We all have a moral obligation to meet their expectations.

Original Portuguese: Mr. ABRANTES (Employer, Portugal)

Contemporary societies are living in difficult times – there is anxiety, high expectations, mistrust of institutions and uncertainty about the future. There is unemployment, grave poverty, serious economic disparities, high costs, and limits on corporate development. In such a situation security, stability, development, perhaps even the basis of democracy itself are threatened.

We agree that the eradication of forced labour and the consolidation of decent work are of great importance in containing these threats. However, the best remedy lies in the provision of decent work for all, together with economic and social development.

In a world which demands ever more ethical and principled behaviour, direct or concealed forms of slavery and human exploitation are intolerable and cannot be allowed to persist.

The maintenance of such practices as a way of consolidating competitiveness is also unacceptable.

Macro, micro and social policies and other national and international public policies should converge, so as to transform decent work into an objective for all societies and all countries.

Portuguese employers are aware of the problems. Our understanding is that it is necessary for policies which conciliate and integrate economic perspectives and social requirements through social dialogue and the sustained responsible effective application of tripartism to converge. The businessman or woman is a citizen committed to the development of his/her society, aware of his/her role and convinced of the importance of economic activity for the development of human and social well-being. The corporate world is one of the places where these aims can be achieved. The economic activities, agents and organizations represented by employer confederations are today, and will be in the future, essential factors in territorial, economic, social, cultural cohesion in the societies of any country.

For two decades, we have worked to such ends on the basis of frank and open social dialogue.

Recently, confederations representing the employers and workers of Portugal signed an agreement to reinvigorate collective bargaining. They are committed to concluding agreements and developing contractual content in order to enhance workers' skills, productivity and improve conditions in the workplace. We also feel there is a need to include rules governing the resolution of disputes on the basis of mediation and voluntary arbitration in collective agreements.

As I speak, we are beginning, on a tripartite basis, a process of identifying and ranking the factors which are necessary for the development of our country. Among these I wish to highlight the creation of better and improved work, particularly for the young; education and vocational training on the basis of lifelong learning; safety and health in the workplace, and improved competitiveness and productivity.

We are convinced that the commitments obtained on a basis of social dialogue, will ensure the success of those reforms necessary if we are to face the challenges of competitiveness and the promotion of employment and social equity which the current demographic, social and economic situation requires. We are also convinced that the best way of solving the problems in the world of work is to create an enabling environment for the development of companies which are competitive. Our companies need to improve productivity, adapt and have access to a qualified workforce. On such a basis it would be possible to achieve a fairer and more sustainable distribution of wealth and better employability.

The world has changed very quickly over the last 25 years, with significant changes in policies, in competition, conditions and societies. The theoretical bases and structures which supported a given strategic and political balance have altered greatly. The participation of workers and employers has also necessarily evolved, as has the nature of the challenges they face.

Here the question of how we can strengthen the ILO as an instrument for the development of the business world, geared to enhanced value for decent work, has become more acute.

Finally, with regard to the reform of the sessions of this Conference, we believe that these sessions would gain by being more specific, more focused. They should be of a more appropriate duration, making the ILO more efficient and effective and allowing for a better use of time.

However, this should not lead to any weakening of the role of the ILO. We continue to believe that this Organization plays such an important role in consolidating tripartism and social dialogue; in technical support and the creation of an enabling, fair and decent framework for the development of labour markets, geared towards increasing employment, and the proper application of labour standards on the ground.

We, the employers of Portugal, stand ready to make whatever contribution we can to the elaboration of the strategic options required by our times.

Mr. LEATHER (*representative, Public Services International*)

On behalf of Public Services International's 20 million members worldwide, I have the privilege to address the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference.

Last year, the World Commission report recommended, in no uncertain terms, that governments and social partners deal with the social implications of globalization.

In practice, these include China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the expiry of the Multi-Fibre Agreement, which together have had a dramatic impact on the jobs of millions of textile workers, many of them very low-paid women.

The WTO has failed to take appropriate action to deal with this human tragedy with preventative and ameliorative social, economic and trade policies. Similarly, the World Bank, which, according to the incoming WTO Director-General, is, along with the International Monetary Fund, responsible for setting 80 per cent of world trade policies, has shown itself to be extremely slow in supporting and promoting core labour standards. PSI hopes that, in the spirit of the World Commission's recommendations, the ILO will make it a matter of urgency to call for meetings with the new leaders of the WTO and the World Bank, to urge them to commit themselves to delivering the kind of policy coherence that the World Commission called for, and to work with the ILO in achieving this.

For PSI, the campaign for quality public services remains a top priority. Through this campaign, PSI and affiliated unions are engaging with communities, governments and international organizations on the vital role of quality public services in building strong and inclusive societies and economies. In undertaking this work, we have found many best practice examples of successful public services that provide positive alternatives to those which only promote privatization as a solution.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty, a huge global coalition, is focusing on policy changes in 2005 to tackle poverty and its consequences. While the focus of the campaign is on more and better aid, debt cancellation and trade justice, PSI is also calling for a commitment to funding and building quality public services.

The strength of most developed countries was built on a programme of compulsory public education, health and welfare systems, and accessible and affordable water, sanitation and energy. Yet these

same opportunities are denied to many developing countries through loan conditionality and trade policies. Even if aid is significantly increased and debt cancelled, sustainable changes will not be possible unless countries urgently put in place programmes to build up their public service capacity to address poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and disease.

As the World Health Organization has recognized, it is not possible to distribute life-saving antiretroviral drugs to AIDS sufferers unless there is a public health service in place. Tens of thousands of people are dying unnecessarily because imposed cuts on public expenditure have left health services in crisis.

We urge all people and organizations to play their part in 2005 to make poverty history.

Rather than a time for reflection, as called for by the Director-General, the trade unions and their civil society partners are calling for a time for action.

PSI notes, with disappointment, that the number of women Workers at the International Labour Conference has fallen to 15 per cent of the total, compared to 19 per cent last year. We therefore urge the Workers' group to act on the recommendation of the Director-General last year to consider implementing special affirmative-action measures to ensure a representative proportion of women in the delegations.

PSI welcomes the ILO's focus on strengthening the capacity of trade unions to address discrimination in employment. PSI is promoting programmes with public sector trade unions to address discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, national identity, sexual orientation and disability, and looks forward to continued cooperation with the ILO on these issues. We will continue to work with the relevant departments of the ILO and the global unions on the implementation of the International Labour Conference 2004 resolution concerning the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection.

PSI encourages its affiliated organizations to use the supervisory mechanisms of the ILO in order to promote freedom of association and collective bargaining in the public sector. These rights continue to be flouted or ignored in too many countries.

PSI wishes to draw the attention of the Conference to the following cases in the hope that the respective governments will respond in a more constructive manner in the future.

Mozambique – the Government, despite its promises here at the Conference to restrict interested stakeholders, has failed over the last few years to pass the necessary legislation to provide full recognition and bargaining rights to public employees. PSI has written, urging the Government to permit the union to recruit members without intimidation and calling for necessary legislation.

Brazil – trade union rights violations continue to occur in the public sector, particularly at the municipal government level. PSI has called for the Government to guarantee freedom of association in the public sector, including the regulation of the right to strike and negotiate collectively.

Colombia – the Government has ratified the ILO Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), but has failed to transpose them into national legislation. In the meantime, it is extremely difficult for public employees, particularly at the municipal level, to gain recogni-

tion and bargaining rights. The human rights and trade union rights situation in Colombia continues to be of critical concern to the PSI, and our organization urges the ILO to adopt additional supervisory mechanisms, not only technical cooperation programmes, in the case of Colombia. We fully endorse the proposal of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards to organize high-level visits to Colombia in the coming months and request that the ILO ensures that all necessary financial and technical resources are made available.

Japan – for many years we have expressed our concern about the restrictions on fundamental trade union rights for public sector employees, on the basis of which the Committee on Freedom of Association has twice provided recommendations for reform, including legislative reform. Once again, we call on the Government of Japan to honour its obligation as an ILO member to ratify and implement all of the core Conventions.

Mr. EDSTRÖM (*Worker, Sweden*)

The Swedish trade unions strongly endorse the set of actions outlined in the Introduction to the 93rd Session of the Conference by the Director-General to make decent work a global goal. To make decent work an overriding goal for all economic, social and environmental strategies, at both national and international levels, requires an understanding among decision-makers that policy coherence is needed – as stressed by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. When governments give their full support here in the ILO to this noble goal, accordingly that policy commitment should be reflected in their actions nationally and in other international forums, like the Bretton Woods institutions or the World Trade Organization. The ILO's mandate in this respect is reflected both in the Constitution, and specifically in the Declaration of Philadelphia, and the globalization of our economies makes this task more urgent than ever. We cannot afford to be inactive.

The Director-General rightly points to the key area of strengthening tripartism at the national and global level – out of the simple truth that if decent work is to be accomplished, the relevant actors need to be fully involved. Workers and their trade unions have a recognized place in the ILO, but in other international forums we have to rely on governments – and if they have established a coherent policy across ministries and are able to reflect the goals of this Organization. And we will hold them accountable for any failure in this respect. But the strength of the voice of the ILO is regrettably undermined by the fact that in a number of member States free and independent trade unions are not allowed to exercise their fundamental human rights, despite the fact that the ILO was created in 1919 based on the assumption of three independent constituents. The Director-General recognized this urgent need when he introduced last year Report I(B) *Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* and established the goal of this Organization of achieving universal 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) by 2015.

The question whether the ILO will be successful or not is, of course, primarily a matter of if a politi-

cal will exist among governments. But to a certain extent, it is also a question of ILO resources. The Swedish trade unions very much welcome the proposal for an increase in the budget of the ILO – even if being too moderate compared to needs. We know that technical assistance by the ILO concerning freedom of association has to be financed mainly through the regular budget as there are practically no donor governments that volunteer in this area – a most surprising and regrettable fact. Therefore, I urge the Director-General to increase his efforts in contacts with donor governments to secure the funding needed.

During this Conference, we have discussed the evils of forced labour and I thank the Director-General for the second Global Report of this cycle, *A global alliance against forced labour*. I hope that by raising the awareness of forced labour, we can secure political commitment to eradicate this disgusting phenomenon. In this respect, I would like to strongly welcome the decision taken during this Conference on Burma and article 33. Here we are dealing with a totalitarian military regime where normal diplomatic contacts and pressure do not function, as shown by the many years of efforts made by the ILO against that member State.

All of us have now again been given the task to take practical action against the regime to secure that the Burmese people should no longer have to be victims of forced labour. The minimal actions taken after 2000 have, unfortunately, not been enough and need to be strengthened. If policy coherence exists among governments, I trust that relevant international organizations will take the necessary measures and understand that they cannot continue with a policy of business-as-usual, disregarding the existence of forced labour in Burma and the request made by the ILO.

I look forward to the report that we will discuss in the Governing Body in November on measures taken.

Despite the political progress, the situation in the occupied Arab territories continues to be very worrying. In the Appendix of the Director-General's Report there is clear evidence of how the restrictions limit the mobility of persons, goods and services both within Palestine and between the occupied Arab territories and its negative repercussion to achieving decent work for the workers. An important factor for progress is establishing a sustainable trade policy for Palestine with Israel and the rest of the world. The Swedish trade unions remain committed to promoting sound relations between the Palestinian and Israeli trade unions.

Original French: Ms. ALMEUS (Worker, Haiti)

The workers of Haiti send you greetings and their best wishes for the success of this 93rd Session of this International Labour Conference.

Whereas no obvious effort has been made by the international community to help Haiti to get out of the abyss into which the country has slid, it is clear that the social and economic situation in Haiti has registered a lamentable deterioration. Systematic violations of human rights continue to become worse. There have been major violations in spite of the presence of foreign forces (MINUSTAH, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) which are there to defend respect for human rights in Haiti.

Everyone knows that, in spite of the presence of military forces, there is worsening security, while the standard of living of the population in general, and the workers in particular, has deteriorated seriously over the last year.

Any investment seems impossible in Haiti and the employment situation, which was already bad, has become worse in all sectors of activity. There is worsening unemployment. Indeed, as a result of the alarming situation in which the people of Haiti live, street demonstrations, armed robbery, rape, kidnapping and assassination are common. How is it possible even to talk about peace and respect for human dignity in a society where there is no work? For us, the workers of Haiti, the achievement of human dignity and respect depends upon a certain number of factors, including, most importantly, good governance, guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms, political stability and work.

On behalf of the Haitian workers, we wish to take this opportunity to denounce the worst working conditions which dehumanize those few men and women in our country who have a job. Certain employers use joblessness to impose their will, to exploit their workers and to deny them the right to organize in their companies.

We denounce also the existence of child labour and the phenomenon of domestic labour, which resemble a sort of modern slavery in Haiti. These children, who are brought from the country and placed in town, often carry out exhausting duties. Most of these children are ill-treated and do not go to school. The Constitution of Haiti, 1987, which is still in force, condemns all such violations of law. There are some who are opposed to its application and wish to replace these provisions with misleading concepts such as "social contract", "national conference", "national dialogue" and so on.

In fact, these concepts are simply a way of stripping the masses of the workers of the rights which they have under the Constitution. The international community refuses to consider Haiti a normal country and does not wish to apply the international standards which consist of ensuring that there be respect for the prescriptions of the Constitution. This is why the international community has failed in Haiti.

The International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has already explained the close relationship which exists between human dignity and the right to work. Each country is committed to ensuring that there is respect and compliance with such rights, but in the case of Haiti, these rights seem to exist only on paper. We, the workers of Haiti, will continue to speak about this until the rate of unemployment is considerably reduced, until there is social security, until the day comes when each Haitian, particularly in the lower strata of society, and particularly in the rural population, has the right to food, to health, to education, to clothing and accommodation, and when all families have protection.

On the occasion of this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, we would like to express our gratitude to all our partners who have worked with our country on behalf of the Haitian people. We hope that they will continue to help us to defend universal values of labour law, for the defence of labour laws is a daily and constant struggle.

The workers of Haiti call for trade union solidarity – national, regional and global – to determine and solve the various difficulties in the world of work in Haiti, without losing sight of the migrant workers in all friendly countries, particularly the Dominican Republic.

In conclusion, on behalf of the workers of Haiti, we request that the Office of the Director-General and the Governing Body of the ILO might address the United Nations Security Council, in all international and regional bodies and in all member States, as soon as possible, to demand that the Haitian Constitution be respected, so that order can be restored in Haiti, to the benefit of the workers and the entire nation. This is a *sine qua non* for Haiti to find, once again, an honourable place in the community of nations.

Mr. VONGDARA (*Worker, Lao People's Democratic Republic*)

The LAO Federation of Trade Unions would like to make the following points. The ILO has an important role to play in promoting tripartism, which is a key factor of ensuring the harmonious socio-economic development of our nation.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has formulated an occupational health and safety programme in cooperation and coordination with the Government and employers' organizations. Safety and health standards in the workplace have been upgraded and working conditions have improved in many workplaces.

In January 2000 the Lao Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO related to the ILO/IPEC programme and has prepared ratification of Conventions Nos. 138 and 182. To implement the Memorandum, the Tripartite National Steering Committee has been established at the central and provincial levels. A committee to monitor trafficking in women and children and to provide assistance to the victims has been set up in some provinces. We consider that the issue of labour migration should be of particular concern to the ILO.

Let me take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to our Government, which has ratified ILO Conventions Nos. 182 and 138, and taken measures to implement their provisions.

We are now expanding the social security scheme for employees of private enterprises at the national and provincial levels. At the same time, we are improving the social security system in the public sector. We are conducting educational programmes and awareness campaigns to inform workers of their rights. We are also strengthening the collective bargaining capacity of trade unions by fostering solidarity among workers of the same industry; and by

raising awareness of labour legislation and the core ILO Conventions.

The Lao Federation of Trade Unions mobilizes, organizes, educates and trains workers and labourers. It seeks to enhance capacities for the effective protection of the legitimate rights and interests of workers, and to monitor and promote the implementation of government policies, the Constitution and labour legislation.

At the national level, we actively participate in the formulation of the programme for national social economic development and in the drafting of a collective bargaining agreement between employers and workers. These activities are undertaken in the framework of the social development programme and related policies formulated by the Government and our federation. The aim is to improve the living conditions of workers and to eradicate poverty. To this effect, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has established the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP).

Mass organizations play a crucial role in the implementation of the Programme. Their organizational structure spans from the central to the grass-root levels. Monitoring and evaluation of mass organization can also fulfil monitoring and evaluation functions.

At the present time, we cooperate with the Government, employers and the ILO/IPEC programme to reduce and eliminate the worst forms of child labour. Special attention is placed on preventing the engagement of children in hazardous employment and ensuring occupational safety and health. The protection of workers from occupational injuries and illness is one of the key issues of concern for our organization and is addressed in our operational strategy.

Some of our ongoing activities are the implementation of the ILO/IPEC programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and ILO/IPEC and the conducting of workshops on collective bargaining and social security at the national and local levels. We will promote the implementation of a number of programmes as a follow-up to our action plan on fundamental principles and rights at work. We will also engage in close cooperation with the social partners, the Government and employers, in order to resolve these priority issues through tripartite consultation.

I believe that ILO support has contributed to increasing the participation of the Lao Federation of Trade Unions in the formulation of policies and legislation, thus promoting solidarity, education, training and mobilization of workers.

(*The Conference adjourned at 12.50 p.m.*)

Fifteenth sitting

Monday, 13 June 2005, 3.15 p.m.

Presidents: Mr. Chiriboga, Ms. Anderson

SECOND REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES: SUBMISSION, DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

We will open this afternoon's sitting with the submission of the second report of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives, which was published in *Provisional Record* No. 5-2.

I give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference to announce a slight amendment to the report.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

I would like to make the following announcement: The following sentence has been omitted from paragraph 81 of the Report: "The targets for rebalancing the grade structure would be part of the wider discussions of the Human Resources Strategy during the November 2005 Governing Body." This sentence will be reinserted in the paragraph.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to Mr. Elmiger, Chairperson and Reporter of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives, who will present the report.

Original French: Mr. ELMIGER (*Government, Switzerland; Chairperson and Reporter of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives*)

I have the honour of submitting to you the second report of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives. You will find a copy of it in *Provisional Record* No. 5-2. It contains the recommendations of the Finance Committee on the matters before it. The resolutions proposed by the Committee for adoption by the Conference appear at the end of the report, along with a number of information appendices.

The Finance Committee examined requests for permission to vote at the Conference received from the Governments of Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Togo, Iraq and Georgia. The Committee recommended that the right to vote be granted to the Governments of the abovementioned countries. Proposals concerning the membership of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization, the scale of assessments of contributions to the budget for 2006, based on the scale adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2003, were also adopted by the Committee, and it recommends that you agree to those resolutions.

The Committee examined, in particular, proposals from the Director-General with regard to the Programme and Budget proposals for 2006-07. A preliminary discussion on these proposals was held three months ago, at the 292nd Session of the Governing Body. After a lengthy discussion, the Governing Body decided to recommend that the Conference adopt a programme and budget with a real growth rate of 1.1 per cent compared to the 2004-05 period, and, a cost increase of some US\$33 million, based on the 2004-05 exchange rate.

Our Committee worked in a spirit of openness, seeking consensus wherever possible. The report before you sets out the opinions expressed in the course of our discussion. We heard a number of statements calling for decent work as a global objective, through decent work country programme in particular. The Committee took note of the detailed explanations provided by the Director-General. Unanimous support was expressed for the various programmes. However, a consensus was not reached on the amount of the budget. An overwhelming majority of Members stated their preference for the Governing Body's proposals, while some member States were opposed to the recommended budget. A vote was held and the outcome was very clear – 80 governments came out in favour of the level of the budget, two spoke against and one country abstained.

In view of what I have just said, I appeal to all of you here representing governments, employers and workers; to support the resolution concerning the Programme and Budget for 2006-07.

I would also like to thank the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, His Excellency Mr. Burayzat, Ambassador of Jordan, as well as all the members of the Committee, and the secretariat, which gave me valuable assistance in my task as Chairperson.

To conclude, I would be grateful if you would approve the report of the Finance Committee by consensus.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

As there are no further speakers, I propose that we proceed with the approval of the report.

You will note that paragraphs 2-16 of the report contain the requests by the Governments of three countries, namely Togo, Georgia and Iraq, for permission to vote.

The resolutions concerning these votes appear at the end of the report and will be submitted to the Conference for voting on Wednesday afternoon.

Before moving on, I give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference of an announcement.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the report, with its appendices, is approved?

(The report – paragraphs 1-95 and Appendices I to VI – is approved.)

**RATIFICATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR
CONVENTION BY THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC**

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

I am pleased to announce the ratification by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on 13 June 2005, of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), to which is appended a declaration specifying a minimum age of 14 years.

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

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

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

Original French: Mr. LEDOUBLE (*representative, International Christian Union of Business Executives*)

Employment creation and income generation constitute one of the four pillars of decent work. In his report to the General Assembly on the Millennium +5, the United Nations Secretary-General emphasizes that creating productive employment plays a key role in poverty reduction, not only by providing income, but also by empowering the poor. Enterprises therefore have a responsibility to contribute to this wealth creation in poor countries. This is in line with one of the key principles of the social teaching of the Church, namely preferential consideration for the poor. This principle means that one of the criteria for assessing economic activities is their impact on the poorest members of society.

Consequently, The International Christian Union of Business Executives (UNIAPAC) considers the battle against poverty to be one of the elements of the social responsibility of business leaders. What exactly can they do? They can take action at two levels – as individuals and as managers. As individuals there is one field above all, that of philanthropic activity, volunteer work, charitable work, which can show the depth of their commitment. Then, through their professional organizations and their personal contacts, they can advise national governments and international institutions on ways of combating poverty. These institutions need the experience of business leaders, and that is particularly true in developing countries. The aim is to devise relevant macroeconomic policies which will really get to grips with the causes of poverty. These policies should, for instance, cover agricultural production, and in particular the issue of export subsidies operated in most developed countries which make it difficult for developing countries to hold their own.

But business leaders can also make a contribution through the functioning of their companies. First of all, they can provide financial support to help provide microcredit for small businesspeople and craftsmen, especially for women in the poor countries. Experience has shown that microcredit can

help to encourage local production and reduce poverty.

Entrepreneurs can also give support to the local communities in which workers and their families live, both in poor countries and in the poorer regions of rich countries. This may involve supporting school projects, hospitals, sports facilities and so forth.

At a more global level, foreign direct investment by multinational businesses in poor countries can have a major impact, but there is something that is often even more important than financial flows and that is the transfer of knowledge – technical, managerial and administrative knowledge – through the subsidiaries and local offices of multinational companies. This can occur as a result of the setting up of a local headquarters, establishing local schools and providing grants or fellowships.

Well-trained workers not only derive a personal benefit from their training, but through their work will also be able to contribute to employment development and growth in their own countries, making them master of their own development. Exercising social responsibility means taking into account the impact of investments not only in terms of workings of the enterprise but also in terms of employment creation in the poorest regions.

Finally, business leaders have found by that acting in this way, not only can they improve living conditions and reduce poverty in developing countries, they can also give a deeper meaning to economic activity and improve the functioning of their companies by stimulating the productivity and motivation of their staff. So it is a duty for all business leaders, in both their personal and business decisions, to take into account the poverty reduction dimension.

Original Spanish: Mr. FLORES FLORES (*representative, Trade Unions International of Workers of Energy, Metal, Chemical, Oil and Allied Industries*)

The result of the neo-liberal period for the peoples of the world has been negative and criminal from every angle. Hunger, poverty and unemployment are what have come of the last 23 years under an economic model which was meant to increase the well-being of everyone on the planet. The cornerstone of this inhumane model has been the privatization of public services, promoted by big, multinational financial corporations, such as the World Bank, and benefiting only a handful of large, transnational companies. This has been the real face of the globalization of public services, fuelled and headed by the great imperial powers as an expression of the dominance and hegemony that they want to impose on all the nations and peoples of the world.

However, in the face of this sort of capitalist and imperialist globalization, which sees human beings and the peoples of the world as mere figures its profit calculations, the last few years have seen ever-growing support for the idea that energy is an asset of such magnitude and global importance that it cannot be used or considered as simply a commodity, to be subjected to the caprices and considerations of the stock-market and capitalist trading. At the start of this new millennium, energy is, and must be recognized as, a fundamental human right to guarantee the well-being of the peoples and nations of the world. This is all the more true given the proven evidence that we are at the beginning of

an energy collapse, brought about by exhaustion of known oil reserves and the irrational consumption of this non-renewable resource in recent decades.

The results of the privatization of public services, particularly electricity on a global scale, have been negative and disastrous at every level. From the middle of the 1980s, when electricity privatization began throughout the world, it has been argued that electricity supplies would be made more reliable, that electricity costs would fall, that energy would reach every corner of the world, and that electricity development would respect and improve environmental conditions. None of these privatizers' promises has come to fruition. On the contrary, in various regions of the world where public electricity services have been privatized, power-cuts and electricity supply failures have become more common. The price of electricity is now subject to the whims and calculations of private electricity companies. And considerable sectors of the world's population are still without this most basic asset for human well-being.

For this reason alone, the Trade Union of Mexican Electrical Workers, an affiliate of the Trade Unions International of Workers of Energy, Metal, Chemical, Oil and Allied Industries, and of the World Federation of Trade Unions, comes before this august assembly to reiterate its rejection of the criminal neo-liberal model, to state its intention to prevent and reverse the process of privatizing public services, and to reiterate that energy resources should be the exclusive property of the nations and peoples of the world, regulated by public enterprise and rejecting any form of involvement of private capital. Furthermore, we vehemently wish to urge the delegates present at this session of the International Labour Conference to reflect on energy as a social asset and a fundamental human right for the peoples of the Earth; to recognize that energy should be a resource used for integration, development and peace among all peoples; and to respect and guarantee sovereignty over and ownership of energy resources for our peoples.

These are the considerations and views which have become more widely recognized in various international forums, particularly at the First Latin American and Caribbean Forum of Energy Workers, recently held in Caracas, Venezuela. The second forum will take place in May 2006 in Mexico City to express the views of the energy workers and peoples of the world who are fighting against imperialist models of globalization and making advances in building alternatives, bringing together freedom, justice and democracy.

Original French: Ms. KANDA (Minister of Public Services and Labour, Niger)

The International Labour Conference, which is the supreme body of the ILO, presents an opportunity to all constituents to take stock of our efforts to date and define new priorities for the Organization's future activities.

In this connection, I would like to highlight the Reports prepared by the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General of the ILO that have been submitted to our assembly for discussion. I would like to congratulate them on their excellent work.

Allow me to draw your attention in particular to the Report of the Director-General, which high-

lights the crucial role our Organization plays in the struggle to bring about a better world.

The actions of the ILO focus on a number of areas, including the creation of opportunities for employment and income generation; the implementation of the principles of fundamental rights as enshrined in the 1998 Declaration; social protection; social dialogue; and tripartism.

While the progress made through these pillars of decent work is remarkable, much remains to be done to meet the many challenges ahead. Poverty and unemployment have multiple causes, including natural factors resulting from geographical isolation or drought, and the constraints imposed on poor countries by globalization in its current form and, not least, issues related to governance jeopardize the survival of a large part of the world population on a daily basis.

My country, Niger, is one of these poor countries; it is, in fact, one of the poorest countries in the world. However, we have formulated a national strategy for poverty reduction that will hopefully enable us to reverse the trend and guarantee better living conditions for the population.

Among the measures taken in this framework is a special programme of the President of the Republic that provides, among others, for the development of educational infrastructures; promotes highly labour-intensive public works; facilitates the granting of microcredits for women to enable them to undertake income-generating activities; provides for the training of young people in entrepreneurship and business to integrate them into the economy; and envisaged the development of other opportunities for job creation.

We have also strengthened social dialogue by setting up the Tripartite National Labour Council to support existing structures, especially the National Committee for Social Dialogue, the Advisory Committee for Labour and the Inter-Ministerial Negotiation Committee.

Furthermore, we recently established the Committee for the Development of Anti-corruption Strategies, in order to ensure the success of the various programmes, as well as that of all the efforts being made in the fight against poverty.

Despite these considerable measures, our people's living standards continue to worsen, owing to a rapidly increasing population and hostile climatic conditions, made worse this year by a plague of locusts that ravaged our latest harvest.

This being the case, it is particularly difficult to effectively implement certain standards.

Such is the case with regard to Conventions Nos. 29 and 182, on which subject my country has been called before the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards within the past few years. The truth is that the situation, as laid out in the reports of the Committee of Experts, has been exaggerated.

The reality of the situation regarding child and forced labour has been deliberately manipulated by certain people who are taking advantage of the circumstances for purely financial reasons.

The truth is that the question is entirely economic in nature.

At this point, whilst recognizing the interest that the abovementioned bodies within our institution have devoted to my country in sparking off this discussion, I must point out that it is time to put an end to such discussions in order to confront the real

challenges that we face: the eradication of poverty, unemployment and under-employment.

Given the current scale of these scourges and the negative consequences that they have from a social point of view, there is a greater need than ever for international solidarity to be translated into action.

The task before the ILO, an international organization par excellence when dealing with social issues, is therefore an enormous one.

That is why we must give very serious consideration to our Organization's place in the greater scheme of things.

In the face of the challenges posed by globalization, the ILO requires that its constituents work together more closely in order to achieve its mission.

One of the most essential forms of such support is ensuring that the Organization has access to the necessary resources.

We therefore recommend that the budget presented to us by the Governing Body be adopted in order to permit the implementation of the ILO programme for the 2006-07 biennium.

Finally, I should like to reaffirm that my country, which believes in the ILO and fully shares its objectives, will spare no effort in offering the Organization its full support. Long live international cooperation!

Ms. VALKONEN (*Worker, Finland*)

In his Report, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, the Director-General emphasizes vital issues. The Finnish trade unions fully support the views pointed out in the Report. In order to reduce poverty, to increase social justice and to strengthen security, we need to have decent work for all. Decent work must become our common global goal. As underlined in the Report, this requires action at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Decent Work Agenda has received strong support, but the measures taken have been modest ones.

The Report poses a clear set of actions for the ILO. The ILO must work more effectively to strengthen tripartism at different levels. It is most important to strengthen tripartism at the national level. In reality, tripartite cooperation is often a mere formality. Labour market organizations need practical support and capacity building. The work and capacity of the ministries of employment, labour and social affairs should also be supported.

I want to point out that member States must ratify the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), and implement it effectively. Naturally, this is not the only prerequisite for well-functioning tripartite cooperation. As a result of long development, we have a solid tradition of tripartism in Finland. Tripartite cooperation has been an essential component in building the Finnish welfare state and in strengthening Finnish competitiveness. In Finland, tripartism is based on the labour market organizations' ability to negotiate and settle, and on constructive cooperation with the Government. I would like to emphasize that free and independent trade unions are an essential basis for real tripartism. All over the world workers must have the right to organize and to conclude collective agreements.

Last year, the Conference discussed the World Commission's report. The discussions have continued in several international meetings and in different countries. Also last year, the Conference demonstrated wide mutual understanding and will to

promote social justice. The implementation of the report's recommendations requires multilateral cooperation and the ILO should play an active role in it.

Finally, I would like to address the women's position in working life and in decision-making. In the recent past, the ILO has actively promoted gender equality. Last year the Conference adopted the resolution concerning the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection. The implementation of these common objectives requires extensive commitment from governments, employers, trade unions and the ILO. At this point, I want to mention that a programme to promote equal pay was prepared in tripartite cooperation in Finland and was approved in May 2005. This programme poses specific objectives for equality in working life.

In working life women are often in a vulnerable position. Women work in the informal sector and at temporary jobs without protective legislation or agreements. The Global Report entitled *A global alliance against forced labour* shows that women are often trapped in forced labour. According to the Report, the direct bondage of women appears to be on the increase. Women and girls are often victims of human trafficking and women often suffer from different forms of exploitation. The action plans should concentrate on improving the position of women and girls.

Women's voices are not easily heard at the negotiating table and in decision-making bodies. This is also the case in the ILO. The number of women delegates to the Conference is very modest, and even smaller this year. In his speech on 6 June 2005, the Director-General paid attention to the representation of women in the Conference. Appeals seem to be ineffective so we must set clear objectives for strengthening women's position in the ILO's decision-making body.

Original Spanish: Mr. FERNANDEZ (*Worker, Uruguay*)

We agree with the Director-General with regard to the strategy of taking time to look at the situation outlined in his previous Reports and the need to bring together the changing patterns in the world of work and their impact on the Organization's role and capabilities.

Year after year we have seen an increasing decline in the quality of life of workers across the world owing to the imposition of neo-liberal policies whose sole aim is clearly to concentrate wealth in the hands of the multinationals, leaving in their wake a damaged environment and populations impoverished, marginalized and sometimes even destroyed by national industries and enterprises.

Latin America was the testing ground for such concepts. The results are clear for all to see.

We are surprised to see that, right now, in Europe a majority of countries are implementing this perverse project – a project that goes against the past and present message of the ILO.

We agree with the Director-General in that, the ILO, owing to its activities that are focused on the efforts of the people to earn a living, is the organization best placed to take the pulse of our societies.

This being the case, we reiterate our rejection of such policies, which continue to have a negative effect on the living and working conditions of the people of Uruguay.

The current international order is unfair. It attempts to impose identical conditions in entirely dissimilar situations. This means that the efforts of poor countries to develop depend on declarations made by others, as a result, making them subject to the ebb and flow of transnational capital which bypasses issues related to the social dimension of globalization and forcing them into a situation of foreign debt which erodes the concept of sovereignty.

We agree with the Director-General that the effort to encourage the fight against poverty will have positive results in that the concepts of democracy and freedom will be strengthened.

However, despite all of this, the results are insufficient.

This Conference bears witness to the adoption of standards contained in the draft Convention on the fishing sector, which set the minimum age for a hazardous occupation at 16, even allowing it to be lowered to 15 under certain circumstances.

As we can see, certain mechanisms which imply the revision or adoption of new Conventions, as is the case above, constitute, in practice, a step backwards, a weakening of the ILO and of the working conditions for youth and adults, beyond the willingness to examine the phenomenon of youth employment at this Conference.

Mr. President, in order to combat these unfair policies of globalization, we must continue to painstakingly seek out other paths.

Our trade union confederation, the Inter-Union Assembly of Workers National Convention of Workers (PIT-CNT), has put forward the idea of true regional integration that would allow us to progress towards Latin American integration.

Through coordination between trade union confederations of the Southern Cone, we were able to encourage the adoption of measures giving force to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work by the governments belonging to MERCOSUR.

So far, the results have been disappointing. At a national level, after years of complaints and protests against the various governments which ruled our country, we have achieved one important goal, that of change.

Since March of this year, we have had a progressive Government. Mechanisms promoting and encouraging our rights, such as collective bargaining and freedom of association, were immediately brought back into force. After more than a decade of non-compliance in Uruguay on the part of the Government and complacency amongst most employers, we are currently in a situation where our rights are being respected.

We should also stress that, for the first time in our history, the employers and workers of the rural sector have also been called on to negotiate.

We cannot hide our joy at this. This process of maturation owes much, no doubt, to the commitment made by the political coalition that today governs us, but it also came about thanks to the consistent stubbornness displayed by our trade union movement, which, together with other sectors of society, has fought to put our country on the right path, avoiding the social and economic pitfalls of the past which brought our country to ruin.

We are not newcomers to the idea of tripartite negotiations.

Whilst maintaining our principles of independence, we continued to point out the need to encourage social dialogue, in order to permit the country to move forward.

We know that the road will be a hard one. There will be complications along the way and it is for that reason that, more than ever, we need the help and cooperation of the ILO in all its forms.

We are sure we will not let ourselves down because our people are determined to build a future in a society where there is true social justice and full human integration.

Mr. VAN VUUREN (*Employer, South Africa*)

South African employers welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the Report of the Director-General. The Report concisely and clearly articulates the key policy choices and challenges that face us, and in particular, the challenge of translating democracy and freedom into a better quality of life for all.

This challenge resonates with all South Africans who, a decade after the transition from apartheid to democracy, must confront the daily reality of joblessness and poverty in our society and on our continent. As employers we are especially conscious of the demands for a better quality of life at work for all people and the risks that a failure to deliver on that demand may pose.

Both prior to, and since, our transition to democracy, tripartism has played a key role in effecting political, social and economic transformation. For more than a decade, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) has provided the vehicle for social dialogue on a broad range of social and political issues. However, as the Report suggests, the existence of structures is not in itself a guarantee of meaningful dialogue. Tripartism is as much a commitment as it is an institution. If the roles and capacities of the social partners are devalued, it will become increasingly difficult to sustain the voice and influence of tripartism. The challenge presented by the Report, within the context of making decent work a global goal, is to invigorate tripartism. South African employers remain committed to meeting this challenge, at a national level and within existing structures, and so to provide the basis for the development of appropriate approaches and interventions to our single most immediate and critical challenge – that is the one of alleviating poverty through the creation of employment.

But we must recognize too that crises and challenges, whatever their magnitude, are not resolved solely by social dialogue or the formulation of policy through that process. Policies and programmes that flow from social dialogue require the assessment of regulatory impact, implementation, continuous monitoring and, if necessary, refinement. Policies adopted for the sake of adopting policy or some other untenable expedient pose the risk of constraining any potential growth in decent work opportunities, and compromise sound investment and macroeconomic strategies.

In short, effective and sustainable policy is best formulated through tripartism, but policy not translated into concrete action is neither effective nor sustainable.

In this context, South African employers welcome the debate, recently resurrected at national level, on labour market flexibility. The debate on youth em-

ployment being conducted during the current session of the Conference highlights the importance of this issue and the urgent need to find appropriate solutions. The rate of unemployment in South Africa has remained unacceptably high for many years, and as is the case in many developing economies, youth constitute more than 50 per cent of the unemployed. The rate of unemployment is racially skewed, and disproportionately high amongst young women and those living in rural areas. Initiatives aimed at providing vocational training appear to have been met with limited success and have seldom addressed the bridge between formal education and training for the world of work. Statutory authorities mandated to facilitate skills development through learnership and skill programmes have failed to live up to expectations.

It is universally acknowledged that small and medium enterprises are best placed to create jobs, yet South African young people are not adequately advised on entrepreneurship, nor are they provided with basic business skills. There is a preoccupation with employment rather than a focus on self-employment. Promotion of self-employment would foster the prospect of decent work not only for entrepreneurs but for others whom they in due course might acquire the capacity to employ.

Policy and programme deficiencies, cooperation and integration in the design and implementation of youth programmes and policies, and importantly, the appropriate standards and levels of legislative protection for youth workers are all matters that require urgent discussion and resolution. Existing resources need to be better utilized and coordinated to ensure that every young South African is given "a fair chance at a decent job".

The reference in the Report to alternative possibilities for the "form and style of the Conference" are to be welcomed. Advances in technology appear to have left the Conference largely unaffected. The working methods of the various committees remain largely as they were decades ago, and the predictable set-piece engagements that play themselves out each year stand at odds with the demands for greater efficiencies in the way in which our work at the Conference is accomplished. Too often, the platform provided by the Conference is used to air debates which belong at home and not in the international forum. There appears to be a sense by some that the quantity rather than the quality of interventions determine the strength of arguments. Our time at the Conference is limited and, over the years, our workload has become more onerous. We would support a review of the form and style of the Conference to ensure that our work is carried out within constitutional constraints but with a greater degree of efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, we welcome efforts to encourage the inclusion of more women in the delegations of the Conference. South African employers are proud to have responded to these efforts and are pleased this year to have met the suggested target.

Original French: Mr. KANE (Worker, Mauritania)

I would like to congratulate the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General for all their efforts in drafting this Report, in which they describe the most inhuman forms of forced labour and trafficking in human beings throughout the world.

We should remember that forced labour is a crime; the introduction of legislation on the subject represents only on the first and, in most cases, easy step, as offenders will always get round the law. Apart from a few exceptions, most countries have legislation aimed at cracking down on forced labour and slavery, but the existence of these laws is not enough; what counts is their enforcement at all levels. For this, there has to be a national legal framework based on democracy, the rule of law, independent and effective courts, an absence of corruption and respect for liberty. In the twenty-first century, such practices must no longer be permitted in a civilized world. I believe that, even though the Mauritanian Government has issued edicts, decrees and laws in order to curb such practices, nevertheless in the interior of the country, above all in villages and encampments, they still exist. I would strongly urge that a direct contacts mission visit Mauritania. Our trade union, the USLM, is ready to lend its full support so as to ensure the success of this mission, in cooperation with the authorities.

I would also like to broach the question of violations 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), since interference in trade union affairs by the State and employers is constant. Workers who wish to join independent trade unions like ours are threatened by the State if they are civil servants and by employers if they work for companies. This absence of trade union freedom and the freedom of association hinders the personal development of workers. Respect for individual and collective liberties, an independent judiciary and good governance are the key factors for the development of a country.

Poverty is a scourge conducive to the existence of forced labour and human trafficking. Today we have to fight for long-term official development assistance. I would like to request the total unconditional cancelling of poor countries' debts and the putting in place of a structure to manage and monitor aid in the future, with the assistance of civil society and trade unions, so as to ensure good governance.

Mr. RAMBHARAT (*Employer, Trinidad and Tobago*)

It may be that I am far too old to speak to you on behalf of young people and far too young to speak to you on behalf of those who are older and much wiser.

On the other hand, it is not difficult for me to reflect upon my own youth – and those memories and recollections are very recent – and the issues which still affect young people across the globe, irrespective of their colour, ethnicity or human condition. I can also speak on behalf of those older persons whose experience in the ILO convinces them that the time has come to consolidate and move ahead.

In his introduction to the Conference, *Consolidating progress and moving ahead*, the Director-General has suggested that there is need for us to bring together the many rapidly changing patterns in the world of work and the way in which they not only affect the ILO's mandate and programmes but also challenge its technical capacity and financial capability.

Reflecting on the past six years, as the Director-General has done in his Report, there has been a lot of debate about globalization. At one time, global-

ization was seen as the best means of balancing scarce resources with growing public and private needs. Globalization was inevitable and invincible and our world moved with great haste to carve-up the global space in the hope that size would bring efficiency, sustained economic growth, prosperity and full employment.

It was said that globalization meant levelling the playing field and creating opportunities for all; removing barriers to trade; removing subsidies and state support for industry and enterprise and growing free market space and free movement of human capital.

Years on, the reality is that the carved-up global economic and political space is a doubled-edged sword, penetrating economic inefficiency and modernizing economies but equally capable of destroying traditional and other industries and forever changing the hundreds of thousands of lives dependent on them.

Today, subsidies are still with us and all that has happened is that governments have become more creative. They make enterprises appear competitive by lending to them at low interest rates, subsidizing inputs indirectly and creating joint venture structures where taxpayers absorb losses so that the venture appears to be competitive.

In the Caribbean region and elsewhere, we have taken the brunt of this global distortion and bananas, sugar, manufacturing, financial services and tourism would be battered only because we are in the minority who believe that free trade is fair trade.

In the face of all of this, our societies – and the Caribbean is no different – are plagued by institutional structures and arrangements that just do not fit. This form of alienation creates restlessness and too much cynicism to realistically discuss revolution and change.

Today we offer young people entrepreneurship but entrepreneurship is not something that can be taught to adults and youths very easily. It is something which has to be cultivated, harnessed and encouraged. Entrepreneurial spirit is as much a product of culture as it is of education. In many of our societies, we have forgotten about invention, innovation and competitiveness and we have abandoned excellence for mediocrity. Among the difficulties facing entrepreneurs, corruption is the most significant in the way it changes the rules of the game and removes every chance of fair opportunity and fair play.

So what do we, as the ILO's constituents, offer? Moving ahead, the fundamental problem for the ILO will be the inability of institutional structures and arrangements to integrate youth into the growth process. We leave too much room in these arrangements for alienation and disillusionment and across the globe many young and even older people feel disenfranchised and left out.

Young people and older persons share something in common in many of our societies. For a long time we struggled for a voice and the right to freedom of speech, but today we find ourselves in another struggle, that is the struggle to get leadership to listen and act.

I therefore agree with the Director-General when he says that, the ILO represents business and a pretty good chunk of civil society. Moving ahead, the social partners must have an institutional role in governance and decision-making at the national and multilateral level if global leaders want to have a

meaningful connection with the organized forces of civil society.

I leave this Conference with three suggestions, that in order to fulfil our purpose we must have among our objectives:

Firstly, we must use the resources of the ILO in an efficient way and work out the future structure of the International Labour Conference. The Conference must be based on annual regional conferences organized by stronger regional and subregional offices with a global conference every two or three years.

Secondly, we must entrench tripartism in national and multilateral structures and oppose the creation of civil society elements which lack permanence, independence and legitimate constituents.

Thirdly, the ILO must provide direct support to social partners in their capacity-building initiatives, especially those which involve: making organizations more democratic; giving access to young persons as part of the institutional growth and progress; strengthening advocacy; and making greater use of technology as a means of making our organizations more modern, flexible and adaptable.

There is no doubt, that the time for consolidation has gone and the time to act is now.

Original Spanish: Mr. MENA QUINTANA (Worker, Panama)

I would like first of all to refer to the Report of the Director-General. I agree with him in his central concerns relating to the changing times which our society is going through, but particularly with regard to the kind of societies that we are building, the values that need to prevail in them, and I share his concerns relating to employment.

The employment crisis is endangering our democratic systems, social security systems, the safety of our citizens and political and social stability. The seriousness of this issue obliges us all to take substantive steps to assure that dignified and decent work become genuine objectives for governments throughout the world.

The most common questions asked by people on the street are: What is the point of democracy if it does not offer me what I need to live in dignity with my family? What is the point of a market if I do not have enough money to buy what I need to live? And, can I believe in the future if I do not have a secure retirement?

In most countries in the world, capitalist globalization is not solving the problem of unemployment in the places people live and want to stay, which is why there is massive and frequent migration.

Without secure, dignified and decent work, the future of our societies is precarious. We cannot continue with the grotesque accumulation of wealth throughout the world and a worsening of poverty and marginalization mainly in developing countries which are carrying the constant burden of foreign debt which continues to strangle our economies and our countries. Are we destined to pay all our lines and still die in debt?

Society and its leaders cannot ignore the calls of the people, the protests of our workers, who are worried about the security of their jobs. People protest during elections, looking for leaders who can provide them with more secure work. But over time, our hopes are dashed.

Last year, the global economy grew by 5 per cent, while global employment grew by only 1.7 per cent, which shows that economic growth is not sufficient

if it does not provide solutions to society's fundamental problems. In other words, wealth grew but unemployment stayed at the same level.

I also feel bound to mention what has been happening recently in my own country. Panama is going through a period of crisis and collective violence due to the changes in the social security legislation. This has meant substantial cuts in workers' rights in terms of economic benefits and social rights, as well as an increase in the age of retirement.

We cannot accept that the National Assembly approved Law No. 17 like a thief in the night, changing our social security system; for the last 18 days, there has been a national strike in various sectors in the social and economic life of the country – teachers, health workers, builders and others, without any clear signs that the Government is prepared to undo the measures it has taken.

From this platform then, I would call on the Director-General to arrange for the immediate release of the workers who have been arrested while protesting against the approval of the regressive social security legislation. I would also call on our Government to fully respect human and civilian rights, to ensure that workers from the various sectors who are exercising their right to strike, are allowed to do so freely, in line with the constitution and the national law.

We condemn the abuse of detained workers that has taken place, something that has been denounced by union leaders in my country and the protesters in general. It is not acceptable for protestors to be repressed when they are defending their right to social security and their hope to be able to live out their old age with dignity.

Original Portuguese: Mr. DINIS (representative, Trades Union International of Workers in the Building, Wood, Building Materials and Allied Industries)

The topics under debate at the 93rd Session of the Conference are extremely important for the lives of workers, and, in particular, for those represented by our Union, namely occupational safety, occupational health and employment for young people.

The building and public works sector is one of those most affected at world level by occupational accidents which lead to death, multiple disabilities and absenteeism and have consequences on the economy and family life.

This phenomenon is not confined to developing countries, and exists also in more developed countries.

It is important that labour standards be changed, but what is more important for the immediate future is that existing legislation be ratified and respected, whether it be that of the ILO, the European Union or national authorities.

In the field of occupational health too, a great deal still has to be done. It is important that the list of occupational diseases be reviewed, as this list is inadequate in the face of technological developments and existing building materials. This situation has to be changed. With regard to doctors in occupational medicine, they have to be able to work totally independently in order to do their job correctly.

The Trades Union International of Workers in the Building, Wood, Building Materials and Allied Industries (UITBB) would like to add two other fac-

tors to this situation: the precariousness of employment and subcontracting.

The precarious nature of employment helps to increase the accident rate. Low wages, in turn, lead to an increase in working hours and undeclared immigration. Undeclared immigrants cannot demand better working or safety conditions, because this would lead to their immediate dismissal.

Subcontracting obliges the subcontractor to do the job for half the price stated in the contract awarded to the contractor. The workers employed by the subcontractor suffer the consequences of this in the form of low wages, poor quality work and an increase in occupational diseases and accidents.

Any new standards that are approved have to carry with them penalties, and when safety conditions are not respected and death results, those responsible should be charged with homicide.

The UITBB, and all of us, have noted that young people, at present, are unable to find decent jobs. Many of them have university degrees yet have to accept unskilled work to be able to survive.

Governments in all countries have to take the necessary measures urgently in order to create jobs with rights, and in order to ensure that there is no discrimination between young people and older workers.

Ms. PONCINI (representative, International Federation of University Women)

We applaud the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for underscoring the continuing very low level of participation by women in the International Labour Conference, and his perseverance in pushing the envelope of gender equality as a fundamental concept in the ILO's programme on decent work and of the poverty-reduction strategies of the Millennium Development Goals. We are gratified to hear – and we welcome it – the affirmative action move towards a specific target of 40 per cent of Conference delegates being women. We suggest a transparent approach to this would be for the Credentials Committee to compile a systematic head count, disaggregated by sex of the respective delegations from Governments, employers' and workers' organizations and others participating in the Conference.

Year after year since Beijing, the Working Group on Women in Employment and Economic Development of the Geneva-based NGO Committee on the Status of Women of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), together with the IFUW, has used this platform to call attention to article 3, paragraph 2, of the ILO Constitution, which stipulates that, "when questions especially affecting women are to be considered by the Conference, one at least of the advisers should be a woman". Since, when the Constitution was promulgated 86 years ago, women were traditionally found in a limited number of activities such as agriculture, nursing and teaching, and had a participation rate below 20 per cent. This paragraph provided a small window of opportunity for women to voice their opinion. Today, according to the ILO's *Global employment trends for women, 2004*, the proportion of women to men in the labour force has dramatically increased: 91 per cent in transition economies, 83 per cent in East Asia and in all other regions up to 80 per cent, except in South Asia, where 40 per cent were economically active. Women are now present in all economic activities, be they in the formal or

informal sector. Therefore, *stricto sensu*, women should be included in all items under discussion by the Conference. However, there is a danger that this provision could restrict women's participation to an advisory role rather than a decision-making one, unless considered alongside the provision of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, under operative paragraph 2(d), which requires the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

We heartily congratulate the ILO for its excellent Global Report, *A global alliance against forced labour* which provides, inter alia, overwhelming evidence that women – and also children – tend to be most vulnerable to the forced labour outcomes of human trafficking, and that new forms of coercion are being applied by the traffickers, leading to sexual exploitation and the infliction of physical violence against women. We urge the ILO to continue more rigorously its investigation on the demand aspects of human trafficking and forced labour. We also congratulate the ILO for the item on working time discussed in the Committee on the Application of Standards and in the excellent panel discussion, "Working time around the world", which revealed, inter alia, that globalization of the economy has critically changed the parameters in employment relationships, work organization and working time arrangements, bringing with it the need for greater flexibility and coherence in ILO Conventions within the equation of work, family needs and gender equality.

We suggest a change from the paradigm of the male breadwinner, even in double-income households, which gives priority to men's employment. This present paradigm, together with a patriarchal society, has caused cumulative discrimination over the life course of women: from discrimination in the educational attainment of girl children resulting in a race to the bottom of the pay scale by young, unskilled women workers – to the constraints to career development of the double burden of childbearing and income-earning borne by women in their prime and, finally, the continuing overload of older women as substitute caregivers to orphaned children of HIV/AIDS victims or to children of mothers who are single heads of households.

In order to shift the paradigm, a systematic gender impact assessment and analysis are essential processes in removing policy biases against gender equality and women's empowerment. It is critical, as a preliminary step, to have national statistical indicators and benchmarks to identify gender gaps. However, sadly lacking – particularly in most developing countries – are data disaggregated by sex and age. We recommend that the ILO provide the appropriate technical assistance to these countries and that quantitative and qualitative measurements should include, among others, violence against women in the household and sexual harassment at work, gender budgeting with a rights-based approach to women's reproductive role as a core concept in macroeconomic planning, employment in the informal and public sectors and unpaid domestic and household work.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that the most effective approach to gender equality is to ensure a systematic gender balance, especially in decision- and policy-making processes and bodies as an added value to the cross-fertilization of ideas from the perspective of the role of men and boys in the

sharing of work and family responsibilities called for in Convention No. 156 and in creating a favourable environment for social dialogue among the partners.

Mr. YOVEL (*representative, International Young Christian Workers*)

Today, more than 88 million young people around the world struggle to survive the challenge of unemployment. Economic-centred globalization drives young people, young workers – both men and women – to the edge. Liberalization of labour destroys the social protection that was achieved by long struggle. The economy and capital are given more importance than human beings. As a consequence of the unethical policies of globalization, steered by multinational corporations, the WTO and Bretton Woods institutions, millions of workers are losing jobs and are pushed into poverty.

Labour flexibility, temporary contract, and insecure jobs are becoming more and more the reality today and run contrary to the objective of the International Labour Organization to promote decent work. Millions of workers are pushed into forced overtime work whereas millions of others do not even have a first job. Lack of labour protection, social protection, work agreements and work regulations make more and more jobs informal and precarious. Women, especially young women, become the commodity of the labour market in the free trade zones. They have inhuman conditions, such as no right to maternity, no freedom of association or collective bargaining. This is against fundamental principles and rights at work.

More than ever before, young people today are highly competent and skilled – yet unemployed. In many countries, young workers in the informal economy who are highly productive, contribute a major proportion of the GDP. Multinational corporations exploit, plunder and control the whole world with inhuman globalization. We, the young workers, believe the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of our world should serve to transform existing inequalities.

The International Young Christian Workers is an organization of young workers, both men and women, taking action in 50 countries to change the living and working conditions of young workers and unemployed young people. We demand, on behalf of the millions of young people around the world who are victims of economic policies, that: governments abolish forced overtime work and fix a maximum of eight hours' work and redistribute the work to the unemployed and underemployed; fix and implement a statutory wage – a wage that covers basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, healthcare, childcare, etc. as the minimum wage; create jobs for young people facing unemployment by reducing working hours without a reduction of salary, benefits and the rights of workers; fix a maximum wage control for the elite and professionals in order to have a balance in society and invest more on social protection; protect the existing social protection from privatization and extend social protection to young workers working in the informal economy, temporary and precarious jobs, and to those who are affected by unemployment. Young people need a professional education to be able to respond to labour demands with the right education and training. Governments need to invest

more on the professional training of young people through vocational training centres.

We ask the International Labour Organization that it should have an active mechanism to make countries implement the ILO Conventions and to ensure that the policies of international institutions comply with the decent work objectives of the ILO; ensure that the free trade zones/export processing zones implement the fundamental principles and rights at work and labour laws in countries to promote decent working and living conditions for all; and that it create a space to increase the participation of the organizations of young workers in the discussions, conferences and activities of the ILO.

We need action, not speeches, not promises!

Original Arabic: Mr. GHANDOUR (*Worker, Sudan*)

The Governing Body's report on its activities since the last session of the Conference contains a number of resolutions and recommendations. The most important ones relate to the financial report which provides for an increase in the ILO budget for the next two years, an increase which the Organization does need, considering its unique tripartite structure.

Choosing the elimination of forced labour as the subject of the Global Report strengthens the position of our Organization, which established the foundations of the promotion of human dignity. Putting the question of youth employment on the agenda of the Conference was particularly welcome, at a time when unemployment is growing among young people and university graduates in developing countries, particularly in Africa. This is due to the unfair labour relations established in the world by certain States, large enterprises and international financial institutions which imposed inhuman conditions on the poorest countries of the world. We therefore take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of cancelling the debts of the poorest countries, especially as they have already paid back more than the original sum.

The question of youth employment was discussed at the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, and we feel that the Ouagadougou Declaration represents an excellent solution for African countries who want to break the vicious circle of poverty.

I would like to express my thanks to the Director-General, the Regional Director for Africa, and the ACTRAV Director, who have helped the social partners to attend this important Conference and to present their views on the issues of employment and the fight against poverty.

In the Confederation of Trade Unions of Sudan, and thanks to the atmosphere of dialogue between the workers, the employers and governments, we have succeeded through the Supreme Council of Wages, in obtaining wage increases which represent 15 increases over a 16-year period. The new wage scale, which has been applied since last April, represents an increase for workers in education and health amounting to more than 100 per cent. This is the largest wage increase in Sudan at a time when inflation has remained constant since 1998.

We expect further improvements next year following the signing of the Peace Treaty in Nairobi in January of this year which put an end to the longest-running civil war in Africa. From this platform, we call on the International Labour Organization and all people of goodwill to help us in the forthcoming

period of reconstructions in order to train up trade union officials, especially in the areas stricken by war, and hence to prepare for the post-war era. We would like to thank the International Labour Organization as well as ACTRAV and the trade union organizations in Africa who have organized three training sessions regarding gender equality in the workplace. We would also like to express our thanks to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for organizing a training seminar in cooperation with the All-African Trade Union Federation in Khartoum, at the meeting of its General Assembly last May.

I also wish to mention the Appendix to the Director-General's Report, on *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. The tragic conditions of these workers, the destruction of their homes, the levelling of their land, the killing of innocent women, children and civilians by the Israeli occupation pushes us to reaffirm our support for the Palestinian people in their fight to establish an independent State with Al-Quds as its Capital. We would like to reaffirm our calls for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Lebanon and Golan. We further reaffirm our support for the Syrian Arab Republic which is facing unjust international pressure. We call for immediate withdrawal of the forces of the American-led coalition from Iraq, to put an end to the occupation of a member country of the United Nations. The Iraqi people must be allowed to determine their own fate. Finally, we hope that we shall all be able to work together to re-establish a fair and just international order.

Original Spanish: Mr. GONZÁLEZ GONZÁLEZ (*Worker, Cuba*)

I do not think that, as the Director-General said in his introduction to the discussions at this 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, the commitment undertaken at the Copenhagen Summit to alleviate poverty has had a significant impact on the Bretton Woods institutions or on the rich countries that control them. If that were the case, there would be more sustainable development programmes, more real transfer of capital and technology to poor countries; there would be agreements on fair trade, programmes to eradicate HIV/AIDS, and many other possible activities. However, none of that is happening; quite the opposite. We are seeing more wars, more growth in military expenditure, more restrictions on access to medicines, less direct investment, more privatization of social security and fewer funds allocated to development aid.

The recent decision adopted by the G8 to cancel the foreign debt of 18 of the poorest countries in the world might at first sight appear encouraging. But, as President Obasanjo of Nigeria said on this very rostrum only a few hours ago, these countries will need decades to embark on the long road to recovery after the debt cancellation. If what we are pursuing here is charity; if the debt is cancelled but at the same time these countries' hands and feet are tied by the conditionalities of structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and IMF that oblige them to further cut social expenditure and investment in development; if we continue to see their rich and plentiful resources being plundered and no rules of fair trade applied that would enable them to sell their products, which mainly consist of dramatically underpriced commodities, in global markets; if no funds are allocated to health and education, if we continue to see the application of pro-

tectionist barriers within a few years through new loans with conditionalities attached, their level of indebtedness and dependence will increase further and they will continue to be called poor or developing countries. I refuse to call them poor; they are rich countries, by virtue of their natural resources, their cultural diversity, their traditions, their peoples which have been impoverished by centuries of exploitation and plundering.

The desire of the Director-General, which has become the *raison d'être* of the ILO, to achieve decent work for all, is laudable, but it will not be possible without changing the rules of today's world order. The world today is crying out for more solidarity and less charity.

My country, which has been the victim for more than four decades of a cruel blockade and various other kinds of aggression and the attending severe financial restrictions, has shown how much can be done for humanity. The far-reaching programmes for social development we promote; access to full employment; social security for all; sustainable growth of the standard of living of my people; and my country's increasing contribution to the development of extensive health, education and sports programmes in over 60 sister nations, show that another world can be possible. This is not today's world of wars, terrorism, blackmail, exploitation, abject poverty and social exclusion, but instead a world of cooperation, a commonwealth of peoples and genuine solidarity.

(Ms. Anderson takes the Chair.)

Mr. KUPPAN (*Worker, Mauritius*)

It is with great pleasure that I take the floor at the 93rd Session of the ILO Conference on behalf of my organization, the National Trade Union Confederation, and of all workers of Mauritius.

First and foremost, I would like to commend the good work done by the ILO under the able leadership of its Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, in the course of the past year. Special mention should be made of the follow-up programme that has been established concerning the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which has led to ratification of the ILO core Conventions by many countries, including Mauritius. I am happy to note that this year the Global Report focuses on the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, both in member States that have, and in those that have not, ratified the relevant fundamental ILO Conventions, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). These are problems that have been addressed with success by the Government of Mauritius, but which need to be tackled by many other developing countries.

I am pleased to inform this Conference that the Government of Mauritius has decided to ratify the only remaining core Convention, namely the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), following continuous requests made by the trade union movement over the years. With this firm commitment, Mauritius has proudly joined the group of progressive countries that have already ratified all the eight ILO core Conventions.

However, I also wish to stress that the Government of Mauritius needs to make special efforts to translate the essence of all ratified Conventions into

local labour legislation, which is not the case regarding the replacement of the notorious and repressive 33 year old law, the Industrial Relations Act. This is a labour law that has not only been denounced by the trade union movement, but also by all political parties which have one time or another formed part of successive governments. It is also worth noting that our current Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour have been victims of this repressive law, when they were trade unionists, fighting for the interests of the workers.

I take this opportunity to denounce the constant reference made to the ILO by the Government to justify the inclusion in the Employment and Labour Relations Bill of some sections which we feel are not really ILO compliant. For example, the extremely cumbersome procedural requirements regarding the right to strike, etc. In addition to the replacement of the Industrial Relations Act, we believe that in order to regulate and improve labour management relations and to meet the demands and exigencies of modern socio-economic environment, there is an urgent need for the Government to undertake a complete overhaul of all outdated legislation, namely the Labour Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act, etc., and more specifically, at this stage, look at legislating in emerging sectors like information and communication technology, which is occupying an important place in our country.

Another major area of concern for trade unions in Mauritius is the situation in the export processing zones, particularly with regard to working conditions, the closure of factories and laying off of thousands of workers, and problems of migrant labour. Despite the numerous incentives granted by the Government time and time again, there is a general feeling among the trade unions that the private sector is not making enough effort regarding restructuring, job creation, and improving working conditions. The terms and conditions of employment in the export processing zone sector are still being governed by the Remuneration Order of 1987.

In order to better address the problems related to migrant labour as a whole, we strongly urge the Government to initiate a full-fledged enquiry into migrant workers in Mauritius, covering every aspect of recruitment procedures, contracts, working conditions, accommodation, health and safety, compliance with ILO Conventions, etc. This is another area where we would need the assistance and the expertise of the ILO.

As regards the sugar industry, we regard the biggest challenge facing our sugar industry to be the European Union reform proposals presented early last year, which prescribe a price cut of 37-40 per cent; this will seriously affect not only our sugar industry but the Mauritius economy as a whole, notwithstanding the fact that it will seriously affect the employment of some 25,000 workers in the sugar sector and the 30,000 small planters who depend directly on this industry. About 12,000 workers have already been made to go, due to the sugar sector strategic plan, under what is known as the voluntary retirement scheme. About one-third of those who have left are below the age of 50 years in the case of female employees and below the age of 55 years in the case of male employees, with no particular redeployment scheme. Most of the sugar workers who have opted for the voluntary retirement scheme are working as seasonal workers in the same industry but under different conditions of

work to the permanent workers. The seasonal workers are being exploited by the employers of the sugar industry. This has resulted in grave social, family and health (alcohol) problems. The trade unions have requested the Government to carry out a survey on this particular issue, but in vain. On the other hand, the extension of the five-day week during the crop season is still being awaited by the workers of the sugar industry.

I wish to reaffirm the commitments of the trade union movement to the principles of human and trade union rights, democracy and social justice and ultimately to achieve the overall objective of improving the standard of living of the workers in general.

We still believe in social dialogue between the social partners, but this should be done in good faith. However, we feel that the social dialogue and good relations are not the only factors which contribute to industrial peace, nor does it mean that the employer, whether private or public, can turn deaf ears to the aspirations of workers. We want the Government to respect the trade union movement as a privileged social partner and consequently to create the necessary environment that will enable trade unions to operate freely and without any hindrance.

To conclude, I will also say that our objective is to continue our struggle against the imposition of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. We also want to see that Mauritius becomes truly compliant with ILO standards. We hope to succeed in our struggle, with the help and guidance of the ILO.

Mr. MATHEYS (*representative, Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations*)

It is an honour to address this session the International Labour Conference because the ILO has a long and successful history of advocating and protecting workers' rights and can be commended for the advances it has brought and continuously brings in fair and equitable labour relations. It is also a privilege to address this session of the Conference as the representative of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), representing thousands of international civil servants, mainly employees of the United Nations common system, but also other international organizations.

On this occasion, the Federation wishes to highlight three issues which are directly relevant to the work of this session of the Conference. Two derive from the fact that international civil servants are denied basic workers' rights, as enshrined in ILO Conventions concerning the right to unionize and collective bargaining; and the right to a work environment in which their physical and moral integrity, as well as dignity, are respected and preserved. The third issue is the aspiration of international civil servants to see the functioning of their supreme labour-relations tribunal, the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization, improved.

First, the right to unionize and collective bargaining. The Declaration of Philadelphia proclaims that "labour is not a commodity"; that "freedom of expression and association are essential to sustained progress". Yet, in some organizations within and outside the United Nations common system, the right of association is only barely recognized and hardly tolerated. All too often, staff representatives in international organizations are not allowed any time to pursue the defence of their colleagues'

rights or to promote their aspirations, or denied the right to address staff at large. What kind of right of expression is that? What kind of right of association is this?

The Declaration of Philadelphia also proclaims that "the effective recognition of the right of collective bargaining" is "fully applicable to all peoples everywhere". Yet, international civil servants, the very people you come across in the corridors just outside this very room, do not have the right of collective bargaining. Only at the ILO does collective bargaining exist, but it does not cover that essential element of employment conditions – the salaries!

Right of collective bargaining for all people everywhere? No. Not here. Not for the people in the corridors just out there. Not in this Organization. Not for us international civil servants.

The right to physical and moral integrity and dignity at work. Well, too many of our colleagues, friends, have been hijacked, detained, raped or killed in the course of duty.

Harassment, moral or sexual, is not adequately handled in too many international organizations. Too often, the organizations turn a blind eye to even severe cases of misconduct which deprive colleagues of their dignity. Again, our employers, the member States, do not do enough to change this.

Such unacceptable violations of workers' rights are especially prevalent in the field, but this is also where, all too often, I am sorry to say, staff representatives are intimidated, harassed, or forced to resign in all but neglect or ignorance of their rights. Is it too much to ask for dignity at work? Is it too much to ask for one's safety and security in the course of duty?

Finally, I come to the last issue we would like to raise. Improved functioning of the ILO Administrative Tribunal. The ILO Administrative Tribunal is, for many international civil servants, the supreme labour law tribunal. In many respects, this Tribunal is one of the best such tribunals, if not the best. Yet, there are improvements which could be made to further improve its functioning. For the sake of conciseness, only one is mentioned here.

It relates to the fact that staff in precarious employment conditions, and there are many of those in international organizations, staff in precarious employment too often do not take their cases to the Tribunal for fear that their contract will not be renewed. In such cases, where the rights of a number of staff are at stake, it would be most useful if the staff association or union could introduce an appeal to the ILO Administrative Tribunal in the name of the affected staff. This is what is called *locus standi*. For years now, FICSA, and other staff representative organs, including the ILO Staff Union, have been asking for *locus standi*. It should be noted here that the Tribunal itself is also in favour of *locus standi* being granted to associations and unions. Alas, the proposals which were put to the ILO Governing Body last March did not include granting staff representative bodies *locus standi*, and thus fell far short of the aspirations of international civil servants.

This is the end of my speech. I know I have been too long – sorry for that. The Federation of International Civil Servants would like to invite this session of the Conference to address the three above-mentioned issues.

This session of the Conference could decide to call upon the Office to study mechanisms by which

the basic rights of association and collective bargaining could be afforded to international civil servants. This session of the Conference could decide to call upon the Office to study the extent to which international civil servants are not granted physical and moral integrity and dignity at work, such that measures to address this could be taken.

This session of the Conference could decide to call upon the Office to come forth with proposals arrived at in consultation with the staff associations and unions concerned to improve the functioning of the ILO Administrative Tribunal.

FICSA hopes this session of the Conference will act to ensure that international civil servants are not left without the rights afforded to other workers.

Mr. GIUSEPPI (*Worker, Trinidad and Tobago*)

Ordinary working people in many developing countries have seen that the policies and programmes of the practitioners of global capitalism have caused chaos, suffering and disorder. In many cases these nations have suffered irreparable damage to their social, economic and political order.

The past 25 years have seen the ever-increasing trends of discrimination in all its forms, in inequality and corruption – all of which are the negative by-products of a failed developmental approach by the disciples of the global order.

The unfair distribution of income, growth, development, power and authority have contributed in no small way to the social diseases that have infected and crippled our communities and societies. The figures are there, and all delegates are quite aware and concerned with the alarming growth in crime, poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Education, health and security, and most of our public services are all in need of intensive care. The political regimes seem unable to prescribe and administer the proper and appropriate treatment. Several have fallen prey, in one way or the other, to an alien order – one which they had not, and still do not have, any means of influencing, or achieving any measure of control. They appear to the majority of the people to be just going with the flow – and being toppled over by it.

The Director-General's Report seeks to encourage us to look forward to the future. He also rightly suggests that we should move ahead, but we have to do so in a world that has reintroduced slavery, twenty-first century style, and is now being defined in modern terminology as "forced labour". We have to move ahead in a place where the rule of the mighty is right. War is being threatened, and declared on countries on a regular basis. The mighty have described those countries as "evil". Children are being robbed of their parents by the hour because of these "holy wars". How are we to have a secure future and create a world that is envisaged by the ILO when social justice and democracy seems to be on the wane?

Democracy becomes meaningless in the absence of order and good governance. Trade unions are facing horrifying times with the fast-growing changes in employment relationships, the disorganized growth of the informal sector and the refusal of the ruling class to implement and ratify Conventions and proclaim laws that protect the rights and interests of working people.

What has become of full employment and labour's representation at all levels of decision-making? Where are the institutions and laws that

guarantee these principles? Workers are now being given a choice, either to be retrenched or volunteer to dismiss themselves. This new governmental employer principle of voluntary separation has cost tens of thousands of jobs. Public service workers are a vanishing breed as governments continue to contract out more and more public employees' jobs and functions to the private sector.

The debt burden that several of the developing countries are saddled with is the result of unrealistic repayment guarantees and reprehensible conditionalities. We know that the social ills mentioned above bear direct relationship to the debt problem. The ILO must seriously address this frightening situation. The Organization must commit itself to the diffusion of this threat. It is one of the greatest catastrophes threatening the Director-General's vision for a better future. Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean nations are strangled by this yoke. Money that is urgently needed to ensure the procurement of quality life, human rights and freedom is being dumped into a bottomless pit that we will never be able to fill. It seems that many nations are being condemned to a state of dependence, rather than independence; to a state of servitude, rather than freedom. Many are now saying: "We will not pay because we just cannot pay." Quite recently, we had a Blair initiative, but experts described this as just a drop in the bucket.

The ILO must do all in its power to eliminate the debt threat. It has caused too much suffering, enough indignation and disorder.

Let me conclude by quoting two great leaders of the past. First, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote: "I place the economy among the first and most important of Republican virtues, and public debt as the greatest of the dangers to be feared." And secondly, Simón Bolívar who said: "I despise debt more than I do the Spanish. It threatens the independence that has cost so much in blood."

This reality still remains.

Original Spanish: Mr. LUCAS GÓMEZ (*Worker, Guatemala*)

I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his Report in which apart from the four basic pillars, he raises three essential issues: how to confront the social crisis of employment, of which Guatemala also is a victim; the search for solutions to ensure that everyone has decent work; and how to ensure that decent work becomes a worldwide objective. Decent work for decent wages is the engine of development. It eliminates poverty, balances the economy and guarantees a more just and peaceful world which allows people to live in conditions of social security. It guarantees health, education and, finally, the full development of the human individual.

Even though Guatemala is a signatory to 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), it has continued to destroy and/or weaken the trade union movement. It has prevented the establishment of new trade unions, both in the public sector and in the private sector. This is borne out by the fact that, prior to the peace agreement, the percentage of trade union affiliation at a national level, as an overall proportion the number of workers employed by others, was 5 per cent. This percentage has now decreased as a proportion of the active population, which means that it

is no longer possible to find decent work. Therefore, workers have had to organize as unions of independent workers in order to defend their right to work. Nevertheless, workers are still victims of repression, as was borne out by the violent events of August 2004, when the police used teargas and brutally beat the demonstrators. Finally, 11 persons were arrested, including two women, of whom one was pregnant, and these are facts which give us the participants at this meeting, food for thought regarding this tragic situation.

As to the law courts, there are tears to be shed here as well. Class actions last for exceedingly long periods of time, indeed there are collective trials that have gone on for over eight years and where it would seem that the strategy is to force workers to give up some of their rights through exhaustion and necessity. One of the new forms of repressing the activities of workers is to accuse trade union demonstrators of having committed terrorist acts and to imprison or publicly threaten trade union leaders.

This year, as on other occasions, Guatemala was discussed by the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards and the Government will yet again have to provide a detailed and objective report on the trade union violations that have continued for many years and still continue in our country. The Government must respect freedom of association and we hope that the verbal commitments made to the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards will be translated into tangible, viable and objective practices.

The recent signing of the Free Trade Agreement violates ILO Convention No. 169 which Guatemala has ratified. It was adopted without consulting the people and will bring hunger, poverty, suffering and death to thousands of Guatemalans and many others worldwide. It thus runs counter to the development we all wish for and need to promote.

Therefore, the issues of decent work and poverty reduction require urgent attention. The majority of the population is caught between poverty and destitution. They, dependent on precarious jobs, and wages which do not allow them to satisfy their minimum needs, because the average wage covers less than half of the basic consumer basket, according to the National Statistics Office. Therefore, thousands of young boys and girls are forced to work in order to complement the family income. We must ask ourselves if this does not constitute forced labour. Thus deprived of their right to study, to acquire skills and to prepare for the future, they turn into adults without any technical training. Thus a considerable percentage of youth is at risk of entering the vicious cycle of drugs and violence by joining organized gangs.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm that the efforts made by the ILO, through its direct contacts mission has, on repeated occasions, made efforts to ensure that Guatemala is complying with the Conventions it has ratified. In its latest report, the direct contacts mission urges the Government to make efforts to guarantee the free exercise of the rights of workers which indicates that this important right has been repeatedly violated. It is therefore vital for workers that the ILO and the international community strictly hold the Government to its commitment to respect labour rights and that they assist trade union movements in our struggles against violence and impunity.

Original Spanish: Mr. ARCINIEGA (Worker, Ecuador)

I would like to begin by saying, on behalf of the Ecuadorian workers, what a pleasure it is to be able to refer to the Report of the Director-General, which highlights the efforts which have been carried out by the ILO in a changing world.

Promoting reduction of the decent work deficit in order to overcome poverty by promoting employment, and promoting the social dimension of globalization for a fair globalization, have in our view attracted the world's interest and become one of the first stages in achieving this worthy goal. Tripartism is vitally important as a fundamental mechanism for promoting social dialogue and agreements directed at eradicating poverty. And we recognize the effort that has been made by the Director-General to promote such activities and agreements.

Making the objective of decent work our guiding principle, from the grass roots to the international level, and linking international economic policies to social development in order to achieve the well-being of society by improving opportunities for workers – this is something that we believe needs emphasizing.

However, 26 years after the return of democracy in Ecuador, when the people of Ecuador celebrated the prospect of the rule of law, we cannot say this is a reality, and we view with apprehension of the collapse of the dream of democracy so cherished by Ecuadorians.

The protests of the people have led to the removal of three constitutional presidents. The political situation continues to deteriorate and favour individual party or other group interests. The former cradle of democracy, the National Congress, has become a forum today of expressions which were previously unimaginable.

We cannot say that this is true of everybody involved, but unfortunately honourable exceptions are few and far between. The new Government and the National Congress should authorize the President of the congressional Labour and Social Affairs Commission, to enhance work based on social dialogue, as advocated by the ILO, aimed at eradicating poverty. Despite many disappointments in the area of politics in my country, we cherish the hope that the new Government will establish a foundation of respect for institutions, democracy, and the rule of law.

We welcome it when our brother countries pursue the implementation and observation of labour rights on a daily basis, through social dialogue. However, in my country the political system has so far failed our people. Every time an election comes around, we talk about new leadership, we talk about patriotic governments who are committed to the welfare of our people, they say that they are going to eradicate corruption, that they are going to pay off the social debt, that they will generate development of the country by focusing on employment and reducing poverty, and that their priorities will be health, education, and so forth. This ultimately has led to a new wave of frustration and popular discontent, and, once again, political instability. I do not think the blame lies with us, the people who elected these governments. I think instead that we have been deceived and used. We are seeing new laws which are illegal and unconstitutional, for example the Organic Law concerning the Civil Service and Administrative Careers, the outsourcing standards, the

regulations relating to hourly contracts, reduction of wages and creation of a micro-enterprise council without the full agreement of the National Council of Labour. This obviously leads to disillusionment with the dialogue process, although we are willing to try to overcome this.

Inspectorates have been created to monitor child labour, without adequate budgets and without the necessary staff, so they cannot be effective. Budgetary resources have been allocated to training for workers who were not told of this. We believe that the world was lied to when told that help was available to workers in this area.

Finally, we believe that the new Government, along with the appointment of the new Minister of Labour of Ecuador, offers hope that we might return to the rule of law, that the mistakes of previous governments might be rectified, and that we might see the emergence of a climate of respect and trust, so that the rights become an everyday culture and the law is not flouted on a daily basis.

Finally, we would like to express our deep gratitude for the election of our Ecuador Minister of Labour to participate as Vice-President of the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference. We reaffirm our commitment to and our faith in this indispensable international organization.

Original French: Mr. BOTI (Minister of Civil Service, Labour, Social Security and Occupational Integration, Central African Republic)

It is with great pleasure that I speak to you from this rostrum to outline the contribution of the Central African Republic to this great assembly of nations, at a time of globalization, when social issues in general, and sustainable employment in particular, constitute huge challenges for the world of labour.

But first, allow me to congratulate the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Mr. Juan Somavia, upon his excellent choice of topics for his Report, and also for the high standard and relevance of these Reports.

From this very rostrum, one year ago, I described the difficult situation in the Central African Republic, prior to the surge of patriotism on 15 March 2003, under His Excellency General François Bozizé of the armed forces, and the efforts developed by our Government since that time to return to a state of constitutional legality. This has now been achieved. A new Constitution for the Central African Republic was adopted by an overwhelming majority in December 2004. The President of the Republic and members of Parliament were elected on 13 March and 8 May 2005, equipping the country with a President elected by the people and a Parliament which replaces the National Transitional Council.

The Central African Republic will continue, as in the past, to spare no effort in living up to the commitments it has entered into with respect to the social partners, with which it is glad to enjoy excellent relations, and also the commitments it has made to the international organizations with which it cooperates, with a view to national reconstruction.

The new authorities of the Central African Republic realize that the challenges they have to face are multidimensional and multisectoral and they cannot overcome them without international support. I also really appreciate the choice of subjects, namely *Consolidating progress and moving ahead; A global*

alliance against forced labour; and the promotion of youth employment.

The new authorities of the Central African Republic undertake to do everything in their power to incorporate the four pillars of decent work into their development programme, given that these pillars together form a set of principles and policies that are essential for improving living and working conditions in the Central African Republic.

In the context of decent work, the Central African Republic has taken on board the conclusions from the Extraordinary African Union Heads of State and Government Summit which took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with a prime ministerial decree establishing a national intersectoral committee entrusted with the task of drafting a national plan to promote employment and to fight poverty. However, this programme can only operate in a specific context, with a significant reduction of internal and external debt; where good governance exists at all levels of state business; and where social dialogue is promoted, since it is indispensable to social peace and stability.

In the standards field, the Central African Republic has ratified and incorporated into its national legislation the eight ILO core Conventions, and ten others are before Parliament pending ratification.

In the field of social dialogue, a standing national labour council, a tripartite body, has been set up to regulate working conditions between Government, employers and workers.

The Central African Republic is actively involved in setting up a tripartite body for coordinating social dialogue in its subregion of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC).

With regard to our battle to combat HIV/AIDS in the workplace, the Government continues to do everything it can to eradicate this scourge and to do end stigmatization and discrimination against people who live with HIV/AIDS at the workplace.

In the field of our battle against poverty, my Government has decided to organize, together with a number of other partners, a forum on employment and vocational training, so as to give us an opportunity to determine our policy for this field.

Before I conclude, may I pay a warm tribute to the Director-General of the ILO for the tremendous assistance he has always unstintingly given to the Central African Republic. I hope that, since we have returned to constitutional legality, the Central African Republic can now look forward to receiving substantial assistance from its development partners towards the reconstruction of our Central African world of labour.

Long live the International Labour Organization, the International Labour Office and international cooperation!

Ms. BASTOS DUARTE (representative, World Organization Against Torture)

The World Organization Against Torture, also known as the OMCT, is a network of over 280 non-governmental organizations fighting torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The OMCT is concerned that, due to ultraliberal policies and the undermining of the safety net of organized workers, States are failing to comply with their obligations under the ILO Constitution and 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).

These obligations include the requirement that not only should national legislation guarantee the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, but also that the repression of workers and trade union leaders must not go unpunished, let alone be tolerated or carried out by state officials.

Even in a country such as the Republic of Korea, where economic development has been accompanied by the recognition of most civil and political rights, trade unionists are under constant threat. Mr Kim Yong-Gil, President of the unrecognized Korean Government Employees' Union, is one of the Union's most prominent members currently in detention, as is the President of the Migrant Workers' Trade Union, Mr Anwar Hossein. According to the ICFTU, in April 2005, 825 unionists were arrested during a demonstration outside Ulsan city hall and on 23 May, 600 others were arrested during a peaceful strike.

In China, where high economic growth is being achieved at the expense of workers, trade unionists face severe problems. In September 2004, two persons who advocated the establishment of trade unions on the Internet were sentenced to 15-and 12-year prison terms respectively. Members of the Workers' Autonomous Federations arrested in the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989 are still imprisoned. The Chinese Government is also stepping up its crackdown on those defending the rights of farmers. On 20 April 2005, five representatives of landless peasants from Zigong City, Sichuan Province, were assaulted and detained while petitioning the city's new mayor for redress.

In Guatemala, one of the countries in Latin America where economic growth has failed, fighting for social justice is extremely dangerous. In 2005, 68 cases of violations of trade unionists' rights have already been registered. Moreover, virtually all such violations and acts of violence remain unpunished such as the case, for instance, of the murder of Mr. Julio Rolando Raquéc, in November 2004, and the physical attack on Mr. Lionel García Acuña, in January 2005. The OMCT is also concerned about the case of Mr. Rigoberto Dueñas Morales, Deputy Secretary-General of the workers' federation, CGTG. Despite his release, Mr. Dueñas is currently on probation and is not allowed to leave the country. More recently, the ICFTU reported the killing of two demonstrators owing to the disproportionate use of force by the police during protests organized by Guatemalan trade unions against the CAFTA, the free-trade agreement ratified by the Guatemalan Congress without consulting the population.

In countries where armed conflict and political unrest prevail, the situation of trade unionists is particularly difficult. In Zimbabwe, in the context of the general repression and suppression of liberties, trade union leaders often face reprisals, judicial harassment and attacks due to their activities. In early May 2005, the Republican Police raided the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions' offices and took about 50 files, documents and correspondence and four of its members have been detained since 2004 for allegedly inciting riots, disorder and intolerance.

In Nepal, since the declaration of a state of emergency on 1 February this year, the OMCT has been gravely concerned by continued arrests of trade union leaders and the suspension of trade union activities and other fundamental liberties. On 8 April this

year, two senior members of the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions were arrested during a demonstration.

In Iraq, trade unionists still operate under anti-union legislation which dates back to the Saddam era. In the last few months, several trade unionists have been kidnapped, tortured and murdered while carrying out their activities in Iraq. Mr. Ali Hassan Abd was murdered on his way home on 18 February this year.

The OMCT is particularly concerned about the situation of trade union leaders and their families in Colombia where the fight for workers' and peasants' rights is often associated with subversive organization – the existence of leftist guerrilla groups being used as a pretext for such a claim. In 2004 alone, the OMCT registered about 25 killings of trade unionists and only one conviction. Trade union leaders in Colombia are increasingly subjected to death threats by paramilitary groups (often resulting in killings) and increasingly arbitrarily arrested by the Administrative Security Department. In the past weeks, the OMCT was informed of the arrest of two trade union leaders, Mr. Hernando Hernández of the Human Rights Department of FENSUAGRO on 1 June, and that of Mr. Javier Dorado, affiliated to SIMANA on 26 May. Both are accused of insurgency. In a report issued on the occasion of this session of the Conference, three Colombian trade union federations revealed the existence of a plan for the liquidation of the workers' movement with the complicity of the State. The existence of such a plan in Colombia targeting political opponents has already been denounced in the past. Despite well-documented warnings, no mobilization of the international community took place at the time in order to prevent the murder and enforced disappearance of political opponents.

The OMCT hopes that the ILO's decision to send a high-level delegation to Colombia is a sign of a renewed political will on the part of the international community to put an end to the ongoing harassment of trade union leaders in Colombia and to prevent the worst-case scenario occurring.

The OMCT joins the aforementioned federations in their hope for a joint comprehensive approach between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the ILO in the future in order to achieve this goal.

Mr. CHIKUNI (*Government, Malawi*)

The Malawi delegation hopes that this Conference will not be just another gathering but will mark the beginning of a new chapter in the value and meaning of work across the world, owing to the soul-searching agenda which has been put before us.

The delegation of Malawi has carefully read both the report of the Chairman of the Governing Body and of the Reports of the Director-General. We get the impression that, while there is a great demand for the ILO decision-making bodies to reform, this is also the year for looking back into our past – the past of our value-based organization, in order for us to fashion the shape of our future. We have noted that the Director-General's Report, *Consolidating progress and moving forward*, this year is more of a concept paper than the usual flowery stuff. It is probably correct to take such an approach at this point in time. Our Organization is standard-based and we must always uphold this principle.

Since reform and improvement is a continuous process, my delegation believes that the reforms being suggested now should continue to be reflected upon, until such time as efficiency and quality can be achieved at the same time.

We also want to ensure that the Office exercises caution in adopting some of the reforms proposed, since the ILO is a mixed bag of developing countries and developed nations. My delegation does not wish to believe that the current movement for reforms in the ILO decision-making bodies is an attempt by the developed world to "kill" the Organization in order to desert the developing countries, who see the ILO as the best forum for their voices to be heard. In all fairness, we need the ILO today, just as we needed it in 1919, in order to give the people of this planet much-needed justice and peace. There is no justification for any section of the international community to try to run away from truth and equity.

The Malawi delegation wishes sincerely to thank the ILO Director-General for ensuring that Africa receives priority in the 2006-07 biennium budget. We believe that this is not an accident, since the majority of problems facing the world today are in Africa – not by design but perhaps by misfortune.

Malawi is also quite satisfied to see that more resources in the 2006-07 budget have been allocated to field services. This is commendable, because such resources will make the ILO come closer and make itself more visible to its constituents. The delegation of Malawi registers its gratitude to the Director-General for the inclusion of Malawi in a number of projects, among them the Declaration, HIV/AIDS at the workplace and child labour. These are indeed commendable achievements.

Mr. EYTLE (*Employer, Jamaica*)

We have received and reviewed with much interest the concise, yet incisive, Report of the Director-General. This Report effectively covers a wide range of issues and describes some of the initiatives and programmes through which the ILO has continued on its journey towards realizing its goals and objectives at global, regional and national levels.

Also highlighted was the significant impact of globalization on all of our countries, in terms of the rapid changes and the requirement for innovation and creativity in order to overcome the associated challenges, as well as to create opportunities. The competitiveness of our business community in Jamaica continues to be hampered by major social and economic realities, such as a high crime rate, high capital costs and unemployment, especially among our youth. As such, of particular interest to us in Jamaica was the emphasis in the Report on the critical area of youth unemployment and the urgent need for job creation.

We noted the emphasis on this area and the commitment to address this issue through such initiatives as support for the growth and development of small and medium enterprises. In this regard, the Jamaican Employers' Federation is fully committed to promoting the adoption, at national level, of the International Labour Organization Global Employment Agenda through national employment policies which support the needs of the SME sector and youth employment. The Jamaican Employers' Federation is coordinating the Youth Employment Network for the Caribbean and, in addition, has entered into partnerships with various agencies en-

gaged in a range of relevant programmes, including training for employment throughout the education sector the conducting of an employment needs survey, representation on various bodies and the promotion of entrepreneurship and business development.

We are also supportive of the other initiatives which you have outlined, such as those related to the setting, promotion and application of standards, as in the area of occupational safety and health. This process would, however, have to be more promotional and facilitative, rather than prescriptive and restrictive. The time has come for the ILO to look critically at the context, content and relevance of current instruments in this rapidly changing environment.

It would, however, be imperative for the success of such programmes, that there continues to be an integrated approach at all levels at which tripartite social dialogue plays a major role in promoting an environment which would ensure sustainability. We are indeed happy to note that these requirements are consistent with the four pillars of the Strategic Policy Framework.

We fully support the need to look at new initiatives and a *modus operandi* which would move the work of the ILO towards more action and result-oriented programmes. The focus should be on measuring deliverables in terms of behaviour for the required cultural shift, which should, in turn, inform resource allocation in an objective and transparent manner.

A number of JEF programmes and activities are conducted in a national and global business environment which is not conducive to generating the levels of economic and social growth required. We, therefore, face increasing difficulties in securing the financial support necessary for effective implementation from all partners, including multilateral agencies such as the ILO.

We welcome the proposal to look at the form and style of the Conference. One key area, which we hope will be addressed, is to increase significantly the integration of information and communications technology in the ILO's *modus operandi*, especially with respect to areas such as the dissemination of information and documents, and video-conferencing. This would enhance participation by Members both quantitatively and qualitatively.

We consider this initiative pivotal in terms of its positive impact on the image of the ILO and we feel that there is a need for rebranding and recreating the image of the ILO as a unique organization with a capacity for strategic leadership in workplace issues at global, regional and national levels. The Organization must continue to be seen by its diverse membership as relevant within this environment of rapid change and globalization.

While we recognize that global initiatives are important and necessary, we feel that there needs to be greater focus on the local level. We are indeed concerned that, if this is not carefully managed, a shift in support and resources away from critical programmes in some regions could affect expected outcomes in the longer term. We also need to look at capacity building to strengthen employers' organizations. Despite these and other challenges, we would like to acknowledge the support given to our programmes and activities by the ILO over the years, and look forward to participating in the proc-

ess as outlined by the Director-General as the way forward, and to continued support from the ILO.

Original Spanish: Mr. JIMÉNEZ (Worker, Nicaragua)

Today, we are facing structural changes, the onward march of globalization, and the signing of free trade agreements which lack social clauses protecting workers. In this context, I have no doubt whatsoever that many delegates such as myself will, in this forum and in the various working committees, talk about the enormous challenges we are confronted by when carrying out our union work.

In our particular case, in the area of freedom of association, there has been significant progress which has been pursued by the Government. However, I am sure that there is still a lot to be done in this area. However, we are making our own contribution to strengthening the right of freedom of association in my country. My organization, together with other significant trade union organizations, such as the Sandanista Workers' Confederation, the Nicaraguan Workers' Confederation, the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions, the National Confederation of Schoolteachers of Nicaragua, the Nicaraguan Democratic Trade Union Movement and the Confederation of Trade Union Action and Unity, has begun a programme of cooperation to build a strategic alliance to help us better defend the social rights of Nicaraguan workers. This unity will help workers by providing them with a strong, sound organization, but also by creating a common strategy to tackle problems such as ensuring decent wages, quality jobs, occupational health, the right to collective bargaining and freedom of association, the right to strike and the abolition of child labour.

To meet the challenges of globalization we must ensure the enforcement of workers' rights. It is therefore necessary to strengthen labour inspection programmes in order that our rights can be enforced through effective monitoring.

In the area of occupational safety and health, my country has seen real improvement in recent times.

There have been real drops in accident and mortality rates; this is an area in which the union movement has been playing a very active role. We are also interested in the technical training and education of workers in general. In this field, the National Technological Institute (INATEC) which is a Government-run institution, has played a fundamental role. In the last year alone, it has trained 80,000 workers.

We are also pursuing an educational campaign to ensure that workers understand the scope of labour legislation.

Given that our struggle is focused on these highly relevant aspects, we are backing the campaign against corruption which has been initiated by the Government, since we realize that only by combating this scourge can we effectively establish democracy in our country, a scourge from which a considerable number of trade unionists have not escaped, since they have been involved in acts of corruption and this is the reason why we denounce them in this forum.

The concerns of the Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, were expressed in his message to trade unionists attending the recent continental congress organized by the ICFTU/ORIT in Brasilia. We share his concerns. We fully support the appeal of our brother, Juan Somavia and we are certainly complying with it as regards training, discipline and employing the best means of fighting for our rights.

In closing, I wish to state clearly that even though the government institutions have made an effort to change their ways, we shall strive ceaselessly to improve those aspects that will benefit the working people of Nicaragua.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

I would like to make a small announcement concerning this sitting: Today, 13 June, at the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference, 49 speakers took the floor: 40 men and nine women.

(The Conference adjourned at 5.50 p.m.)

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