



FOURTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues**Contents**

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1. The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues met on 20 March 2000 and was chaired by Mr. Navikas (Government, Lithuania). The Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons were Mr. Jeetun and Mr. Zellhoefer respectively.

Introduction

2. The representative of the Director-General (Ms. Hagen, Executive Director for Social Dialogue) welcomed the members of the Committee. She explained that the first item on the agenda, concerning a review of the Sectoral Activities Programme, should be viewed in the context of the ongoing efforts of reform and improvement. The Sectoral Activities Programme was based on the importance of information exchange, consultation and negotiation at the sectoral level, and was instrumental to the ILO's work in promoting social dialogue and strengthening tripartism. The opportunity to integrate the Sectoral Activities Programme more effectively into the overall programme of the Office was enhanced by the strategic budgeting approach, requiring a longer term plan, a strategic policy framework and a more focused and results-based management system. An assessment of outcomes and of progress in meeting objectives had to take into account external expectations and the internal capacities of the Office.
3. Although reform had been an ongoing feature of the Sectoral Activities Programme, the 1995 review provided for more substantive changes than any previous reform effort. The report provided an assessment of these changes, and noted how they had been carried out. Shorter meetings were well established, but the scope for variety in the types of meeting might not have been fully realized. The selection of subjects for meetings was decided well in advance of any possibility of addressing emerging issues rapidly. Different types of meetings would be considered in view of the dramatic changes in communications technology.
4. Resources for follow-up activities had not been freed as foreseen in the 1995 review. Links with other Office programmes were a challenge, and follow-up arrangements at the national level were no longer systematic. However, the new structure at headquarters and strengthened coordination with field offices would benefit the Sectoral Activities Programme. Some form of national tripartite delegations might stimulate the networking needed to achieve impact with measurable effect, and the report also suggested some other ways that participants in sectoral meetings might be involved in follow-up activities. Adaptations of continuous networking needed to be found. She stressed that there was great potential for building on innovative and cooperative programmes of regularized social dialogue, as the reports of the various types of meetings on the agenda illustrated. The ILO would encourage and facilitate the strengthening of the capacity of the social partners for sectoral-level dialogue.

I. Review of the Sectoral Activities Programme

5. The Committee had before it a paper prepared by the Office¹ that reviewed the Sectoral Activities Programme in the light of the operational objectives under Strategic Objective No. 4 and the need to ensure more efficient servicing of sectoral activities in the context of all four strategic objectives.

¹ GB.277/STM/1.

6. Mr. Jeetun (Employer Vice-Chairperson) felt that the paper had attempted to call into question the validity and importance of sectoral meetings, but had in fact failed to do so. Whenever meetings were mentioned they had been well prepared, well regarded, relevant and timely. Moreover, the preparatory work, dissemination of information and organization of the meetings ensured both their timeliness and impact. The Employers' group considered that the current model, which arose from the 1995 review, remained appropriate, was highly satisfactory according to the post-meeting questionnaires and therefore should continue to be followed. Sectoral meetings gave more credibility to the work of the ILO, brought it closer to its constituents and enhanced its image. The Employers' group had a strong preference for highly focused sectoral meetings rather than ones that treated broad issues. Focused meetings were an important means for participants from countries in different regions, particularly developing countries, to learn about new developments and best practices. As such, they were a useful form of training. Employers had always participated actively in sectoral meetings and wanted them to continue largely as they were, since none of the alternatives proposed, such as multi-sectoral meetings, were superior to the current system. It would probably be very difficult to find a single participant who was an expert in several sectors who could take part in such meetings. Less focused meetings could also be more complex to manage and have an uncertain outcome with less impact than existing meetings. Moreover, there was nothing in the current system to prevent major issues of relevance being considered, such as privatization or globalization. Thus, the existing rules and practices concerning the selection of topics and participants should continue to be used. While full tripartite delegations might be desirable from some points of view, they were not always feasible and could lead to national issues overshadowing an international approach. Maintaining existing selection procedures would ensure that the important international dimension was retained. Sectoral meetings should not be dominated by NGOs. The proliferation of different types of NGOs made it difficult to identify those that were relevant to a sector or topic.
7. The Employers' group considered sectoral meetings an important and unique means of bringing sectoral participants together to undertake meaningful social dialogue on specific issues in a tripartite format, something that was not always possible at the national level. The meetings were also one of the few opportunities for the ILO to be in touch with real workplace issues, and provided significant input to ILO programmes. Recent meetings had clearly demonstrated their unique opportunity for networking. The Employers' group did not deny that there was room for improvement, and they were willing to help achieve it. They saw merit in regional sectoral meetings as part of follow-up activities. The paper contained valuable suggestions for improving the Sectoral Activities Programme and the Employers' group looked forward to further tripartite consultations in this regard.
8. Mr. Zellhoefer (Worker Vice-Chairperson) recalled the comment by the Executive Director that much of the work of the Sectoral Activities Programme was directly concerned with social dialogue, that this work needed to be strengthened, and that the Committee had an opportunity to do so. The Workers' group welcomed the opportunity to review the programme five years after it had changed substantially, and the Office paper provided considerable food for thought. Sectoral activities – not just meetings – provided the best opportunity to demonstrate the ILO's relevance to working people. The closer it got to them, the more effective it became. The outcome of the 1995 review – specifically the call for greater flexibility and follow-up activities – had been diluted because resources had declined and personnel policy had been neglected. It was time to give sectoral activities the prominence they deserved. There was a need for greater coordination and cooperation between the four sectors, and the Sectoral Activities Programme should be able to rely on input from other sectors and benefit from the InFocus Programmes. There was also a need for greater cooperation within the Social Dialogue Sector and for constituents to have quicker access to its different units. There should be improved

cooperation with other organizations at the global and regional levels to create better synergies, promote ILO policies and develop cost-sharing activities. The Workers' group felt strongly that sectoral activities, including meetings, should focus on the promotion of ILO instruments (Conventions, codes of practice, conclusions) in the widest sense, with technical assistance being provided to all constituents. For example, meetings of experts had proved an effective means to develop precise guidelines. In the body of the paper the Office had raised problems and suggested solutions, but most collective bargaining now took place at the sectoral or enterprise level. As far as the 22 sectors were concerned, the distribution of employment was not taken into account. For example, it was difficult for one person to cover the public service sector, which employed some 200 million people. He also questioned the wisdom of transforming the Sectoral Activities Department into one with a flat structure, rather than one with distinct branches, and the separation of maritime and non-maritime transport despite the wishes of the Workers' group. He was disturbed to see that the Department seemed to have been more affected than others at times of budgetary problems. It was through the Department and its activities that trade unions and employers' associations had direct and continuous access to the ILO. The paper had been dismissive of decisions to select similar topics for meetings in different sectors, whereas the role of meetings was to encourage sector-specific social dialogue. The reason why conclusions had often proved of limited value was the lack of follow-up activity. It was essential to maintain a sectoral approach, since different sectors reacted differently to similar issues, and there could be a need for greater separation. For example, it was becoming increasingly difficult to formulate common policies for the postal and telecommunications sectors. Overcoming resource constraints was a key to addressing such problems, and the Workers' group generally supported the proposals in the paper, provided that emphasis was placed on freeing up resources for additional activities, and not on forgoing meetings to realize them. The Programme's resources should be increased, and it should manage all resources for sectoral activities. So far in 2000 some \$10,000 had not been spent as a result of three participants not coming to meetings. Apparently the Programme had underspent by about \$1 million in the previous biennium. If it fully controlled all the resources associated with sectoral activities, substantial additional activity could be considered. The Workers' group proposed that the Sectoral Activities Programme use for sectoral activities any money earmarked for the travel and DSA for participants in sectoral meetings that was not spent for this purpose. Moreover, since meaningful follow up required the involvement of field offices and MDTs, they too should be asked to earmark funds for sector-specific action. Such budgetary control should, however, be accompanied by greater accountability of the Department to constituents in the process of planning meetings and other activities. Workers' and employers' organizations should be involved in the development of projects to be proposed to donors for funding.

9. Mr. Zellhoefer considered that the paper had been too quick to dismiss the value of tripartite sectoral meetings, since there were intrinsic benefits in bringing participants together from far and wide and developing conclusions that could be used worldwide. It was premature to give up this structure, especially in the light of the failure of the Office to organize follow-up meetings. However, there was no straightforward answer to the question of forgoing global meetings in favour of regional: much depended on the nature and impact of follow-up activities. While regional or national meetings could be useful in promoting ILO instruments, they were not an appropriate forum for the elaboration of policy guidance. The Office should propose a mix of different types of meetings in each biennium, including multi-sectoral meetings, and the Committee could make its recommendations on a case-by-case basis. However, the Workers' group was not in favour of symposia in the light of their negative experience to date, and felt that meetings without objectives, dialogue and negotiations were not an appropriate use of ILO resources.

- 10.** The Workers' group felt that an important constraint affecting the impact of sectoral activities was the lack of staff, both in terms of numbers and sector-specific experience. Even when the Department was fully staffed, one-third of the Professional staff were responsible for 55 per cent of the sectors, and two of these had additional supervisory responsibilities. Moreover, there were long-standing vacancies that needed to be filled. If the ILO was to become a centre of expertise within the UN system it needed real expertise at the sectoral level. Field staff should also be trained so that they could provide a sectoral dimension to activities, such as follow-up on the Declaration, which was likely to be quite different in different sectors. The Workers' group welcomed the sectoral activities in the InFocus programmes, but did not support those programmes funding additional participants to meetings.
- 11.** The Office paper was in his view only lukewarm on the benefits of establishing standing sectoral groups to guide the ILO's work. It correctly identified the incidence of successful social dialogue where sectoral employers' and workers' groups existed, but failed to make the link that the strengthening of sectoral employers' and workers' organizations should be an objective of the Programme. Small sectoral groups could be involved in supervising the implementation of conclusions and resolutions and could make a practical contribution to the Office's work in each sector, including the type of meeting and other forms of action. Electronic discussions, both videoconferences and on the Internet, had their place, but should not be a substitute for meetings or other forms of action. Indeed, the proposal to review points for discussion on-line was similar to the proposal for a strategy group.
- 12.** The section of the paper that dealt with participation in meetings placed great emphasis on the benefits of national tripartite delegations. However, even though national delegations might be perceived to encourage greater government participation, they seriously damaged the overall quality of participation. Moreover, the often disappointingly low and passive government participation in meetings was partly due to the topics and the format of the meetings; they awaited with interest the reactions from government representatives to the Office proposals. What would happen in cases where trade unions did not exist or were severely restricted? It was hard enough to select high-quality participants without having national restrictions imposed. He agreed with the Employers' group that responsibility for selecting participants should remain with the two groups. He recognized, however, that, depending on topics and formats, there could be a convergence towards national delegations, notably when the sectors were highly concentrated. He did not support the proposal for unlimited government participation, even by observers. As for NGOs, the current pragmatic approach to their participation as observers should continue. The idea of tripartite steering groups could be instrumental in identifying appropriate NGOs.
- 13.** As regards the reports prepared for sectoral meetings, the Workers' group was positive about their utility both as meeting documents and as a longer term reference for the sector concerned. They were widely distributed by the international trade secretariats, since information that appeared under the logo of the ILO carried considerable weight. That was not to say that the reports could not be improved. For example, more resources could be devoted to obtaining contributions from external experts. Reports for meetings should always contain a minimum of systematic references to ILO standards and their application in the sector concerned; examples of recent developments and good practice; sector-specific information from or about employers' and workers' organizations and governments; and points for discussion. Such reports would draw on the ILO's unique strengths and would therefore be different from and add value to other forms of information. Proposals for different types of reports could be made each biennium and agreed on a case-by-case basis, but reports limited to points for discussion were not acceptable. In any case the reports should be sent to participants well before each meeting. Post-meeting reports should also be renamed to state precisely what they were.

Unfortunately, the Workers' group's experience with panel discussions had been less exciting than that reported in the Office paper: panels had been non-committal since there was no commitment. The shorter sectoral meetings meant that the passage from the report to the conclusions via the points for discussion was truncated. An examination of the issues by a small group before a meeting could improve the process of negotiation and its outcome. He acknowledged the importance of meetings of experts that negotiated codes of practice or guidelines on the basis of Office research and proposals. The Workers' group considered that the Standing Orders for sectoral meetings, which were now on the Internet, could be simplified, and recommended the inclusion of links to local websites from the sectoral activities page on local transport and hotels. Every effort should be made to avoid having sectoral meetings when there were other major events taking place in Geneva, for example, because of the impact on hotel prices for participants.

14. The representative of the Government of the United States, speaking on behalf of the IMEC Government members, commended the Office on a realistic, clear and concise document and recalled the importance of the Sectoral Activities Programme, as highlighted in the introductory statement by the Executive Director. The paper confirmed the feelings of many governments that sectoral meetings were somewhat repetitive. Instead of a broad, multi-sectoral approach he recommended focusing on sector-specific issues leading to targeted follow-up activities that had a measurable impact. With a limited budget, too many meetings detracted from other sectoral activities. He agreed that the issues should be identified early, and welcomed the current practice of including the draft points for discussion with the letters of invitation, which would assist in the nomination of appropriate participants. There was no need to have tripartite standing forums, since both employers and workers had organizations providing input to reports and other activities. Governments set great store by tripartite delegations, which better served social dialogue, but they realized that some flexibility was required. The paper made some useful suggestions in this regard and in respect of the participation of NGOs, whose different perspective often enriched debate. It was important that the existing resources were used efficiently and effectively and, provided the focus remained sector-specific, he believed that current resource levels would be sufficient. The IMEC countries were excited about the ideas suggested at the end of the paper, and looked forward to a paper from the Office in November that took them into account when planning for the next biennium.
15. A number of IMEC Government representatives (Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, France, Japan, Canada, United Kingdom) endorsed the previous statement and highlighted specific issues of importance to them. They praised the document and appreciated the Executive Director's clear statement of the importance of sectoral activities in the Organization's strategic planning framework. They preferred national delegations, but recognized the need for flexibility. They did not favour the setting up of small standing groups, but there was some support for identifying contacts for follow-up activity. They sought as much information as possible on each meeting so that appropriate participants could be identified in good time or alternates invited; they did not want additional participants to be sponsored by InFocus programmes; and they agreed that new technologies could provide a useful means to expand dialogue and the exchange of information. The proposals at the end of the paper were thought innovative and creative and a good basis for the Office to develop proposals for sectoral meetings in 2002-03, for consideration by the Committee in November.
16. The representative of the Government of Germany felt that many meetings had topics that were too diverse as a result of the pattern of compromising between the topics proposed by workers and employers by merely combining them, which made it difficult for governments to nominate an appropriate expert. This had been compounded in the past by

having only insufficient information at the time a nomination was requested. Governments should perhaps be more involved in topic selection.

17. The representative of the Government of Denmark referred to the high cost of government participation and wondered if it could be reduced. Although sectoral meetings had not been a priority for her Government, she recognized their importance for the social partners and for social dialogue, since they brought people together to learn about new developments and the means to address them.
18. The representative of the Government of Slovakia was in favour of regional meetings on selected topics. Shorter documents could be useful, provided full information continued to be published on the Internet.
19. The representative of the Government of France felt that continuity in addressing sectoral issues was valuable by basing the topics of meetings on work previously conducted. It was important to motivate governments to select the best people for dialogue and subsequent follow-up, based on full information in advance of a meeting. Each meeting could select a small group which could be instrumental in assisting follow-up activities. This innovation should be introduced without delay.
20. The representative of the Government of Japan said that the decline in government participation in sectoral meetings was not entirely due to cost. While electronic meetings might be useful, their cost and availability in developing countries should be examined.
21. The representative of the Government of Canada supported other speakers' preferences for national delegations, which would stimulate national follow-up, the missing element in the Programme.
22. The representative of the Government of the United Kingdom supported the preparation of shorter reports and looked forward to assessing the issues paper that was to be the basis for discussion at a meeting in September 2000.
23. The representative of the Government of Ghana, speaking on behalf of the African Government members, endorsed the paper, agreed with the proposals and pledged the support of his group in improving sectoral activities so that they contributed fully to the promotion of social dialogue and social justice, especially throughout Africa. He highlighted the need for adequate information so that participants could be identified, and for the sectoral skills of ILO field staff to be enhanced so that follow-up was more effective. The key issues of globalization, deregulation and structural adjustment often had an adverse impact in Africa. It was therefore vital for the ILO and other organizations to assist the countries concerned, including at the sectoral level. The commerce and transport sectors particularly merited attention if those concerned were to benefit from global improvements in these sectors.
24. The representative of the Government of China agreed that sectoral activities were important for the realization of the ILO's strategic objectives and that there was a need to place greater emphasis on follow-up activities, more of which could be held in member States. Meetings were an effective means of increasing social dialogue. Member States should inform the Office without delay if they could not be represented at a meeting, so that a substitute could be invited in good time. There should be sufficient time in the plenary sittings for a full treatment of the issues before the end of the meeting, at the expense of other activities if necessary. He agreed with other speakers' preference for national delegations, but was not in favour of small steering groups, although he supported ad hoc forums, for example on follow-up.

25. Mr. Jeetun agreed with Mr. Zellhoefer on the prevalence of enterprise-level collective bargaining. Sectoral meetings were not intended to be a forum for the promotion of standards; the idea was to foster a broader understanding of specific issues. There were financial and other reasons for the lack of follow-up activities, and other departments in the Social Dialogue Sector could usefully include follow-up in their own activities. He did not agree that general conclusions and resolutions made it difficult to identify specific courses of action; such an idea was too simplistic. If there was some difficulty with the existing 22 sectors, there was scope for including new issues, such as new technology. He had been reassured by the apparent consensus that sectoral meetings should remain and be strengthened. He reiterated the Employers' group's strong preference for selecting their own participants and their satisfaction with symposia. It was not surprising that similar issues had been selected for different meetings, but the effects varied from sector to sector and the topics should be treated separately. Meetings in Geneva should not be forgone in favour of regional or national meetings; if required, these should be part of follow-up activities. He agreed with the Workers' group's spokesman that field offices might not have the expertise or capacity to hold sectoral meetings. He repeated his group's concerns about the participation of NGOs in meetings and their opposition to the formation of standing sectoral consultative groups. He agreed with other speakers that new technologies should complement participation and discussion, not replace them. The Employers' group recognized the need for a gender balance of participants in meetings, but cautioned against trying to meet unrealistic expectations. His group supported the efforts of the Office to encourage government participation, but did not want an "open house", which would reduce a meeting's impact. Reports for meetings were a very useful social and labour history of each sector and should be maintained. Panel discussions were time-consuming, should be clearly defined and should not be held at the expense of group meetings, nor in a single language. He recalled the words of the Executive Director, that what was striking about the different proposals to reform sectoral activities was the reiteration of their worth and the desire to improve them.
26. Mr. Zellhoefer stressed the unique and integral role of the Sectoral Activities Programme in achieving the strategic objectives, which include the promotion of labour standards. There was a clear need to strengthen follow-up, including in the field, which could require special attention. He supported the provision by the Office of information on meetings so that issues could be discussed in advance. He reiterated his group's concern about the adequacy of resources and sectoral expertise, particularly in the field where follow-up on the Declaration and the effects of structural adjustment programmes were quite different in different sectors. The Workers' group stood by their poor opinion of symposia and, referring to other speakers' stated opposition to standing tripartite forums, particularly on follow-up activities, recalled that the last three sectoral meetings had unanimously adopted texts that called for them to be established.
27. The representative of the Director-General (Ms. Hagen) thanked the Committee for a very fruitful discussion that had taken the Office's proposals into account and brought forward additional considerations and opinions. She recognized that there were changes within sectors and in the sectoral distribution of work, but felt that there was sufficient flexibility with the existing categorization of sectors to take these into account in the medium term. If a multi-sectoral approach to a particular issue was to be appropriate, it would have to take into account the range of impacts of the issue on each sector and how to deal with them. The Office noted the need for governments to have adequate information on a timely basis to nominate appropriate delegates and of their preference for focused topics for the preparation of reports. The Office was already preparing to provide points for discussion with the letters of invitation. The Office also recognized the need for a more effective way of inviting countries on the reserve lists. There had been much debate on the selection of participants, and she noted that, although there had been a move away from national

delegations, they were not precluded. Having three delegates from each country could stimulate interest in social dialogue and follow-up at the national level. It was understood, however, that the Employers' and Workers' groups should make the selections in each case. The Committee had focused on how to increase and improve follow-up action. Since additional resources were most unlikely, improvements had to come from within the programme and by outreach to other programmes, both inside the Social Dialogue Sector and outside, including in the field, as part of the development of the Office's strategic policy framework. This framework was intended to help integrate all the strategic objectives – standards, the Declaration, employment and social protection – into the work of the Sectoral Activities Programme, not just social dialogue. There was a clear need for greater involvement of constituents in developing follow-up, and recent meetings had made recommendations in this regard. Prioritized conclusions would make the initial identification of action quicker and clearer. In reply to the representative of the Government of Ghana, she acknowledged the need for a broader outreach of technical assistance in different sectors, with the Sectoral Activities Programme providing the link. These would be taken into account in the preparation of proposals for sectoral meetings for the next biennium, which would be discussed in November.

28. In summarizing what he described as an extensive and fruitful dialogue, the Chairperson noted that there was a broad consensus on a number of issues. These included the continuing importance of sectoral activities and of meetings; the need to strengthen the amount of follow-up activity and its impact; the need to motivate constituents to nominate expert participants to meetings, including the provision of sufficient information in advance to enable them to do so. Ad hoc post-meeting consultations could be useful to stimulate and guide follow-up activity. The use of new technology to disseminate information and allow additional dialogue should be pursued. Regional or other meetings outside Geneva could be considered as part of the follow-up on regular meetings, together with different types of reports. The current pragmatic approach to NGO participation should continue. He looked forward to a paper from the Office in November that built on this dialogue in presenting proposals for meetings for 2002-03.
29. The Committee took note of the paper and the discussions on the issues it raised, and asked the Office to take these views into account in the preparation of a revised version of the paper and of the programme of sectoral meetings for 2002-03 for consideration by the Committee at its sitting in November.

II. Follow-up activities on sectoral meetings held in 1998-99²

30. Mr. Zellhoefer considered that the Office paper proved once more the value of the discussion on the previous agenda item. The information in the report seemed somewhat limited, and cases of positive cooperation and synergy with the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) should have been given. One example cited was the follow-up activities on structural adjustment problems carried out by Education International, in cooperation with the World Bank and with technical input from ACTRAV. Another example was ACTRAV's supportive role in the health services and public services sectors. The allocation of resources needed to be discussed further: for example, the Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forest Work had been translated into Russian, Czech, Latvian and Swedish by the trade unions in those countries at their expense.

² GB.277/STM/2.

31. Referring to the conclusions adopted by the tripartite meeting on the impact of flexible labour market arrangements in the machinery, electrical and electronic industries, held in October 1998, he recalled the establishment of a database for the sector concerned involving several actors, including SECTOR, STAT, KILM, the OECD database, Eurostat, UNIDO and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Such a project called for the establishment of a task force on databases internally in the ILO, in order not only to elaborate guidelines for drafting the report, but also to promote easier access to external sources of information. Adequate financial resources should be allocated for this purpose.
32. The ILO-UPU regional seminar on postal and communications services to be held in Bangkok should be seen as the first in a series, and preparations were already under way for a second such seminar in Latin America in 2001. There were growing differences between the postal sector and telecommunication and other communication services in terms of the underlying economic structures and social and labour conditions. The two sectors should therefore have their own separate sectoral meetings, but such a separation should not reduce the frequency of meetings.
33. Mr. Jeetun noted that the document gave concrete examples of follow-up on meetings that had taken place and the creation of international networking possibilities. The Office needed to pay more attention to the promotion of work already done.
34. The representative of the Government of Germany noted that the papers on the first two agenda items were complementary, and provided a comprehensive inventory of sectoral activities. He expressed his appreciation for the number of activities developed with modest resources, both funds and staff – a situation unlikely to change in the near future. Some experts covered more than one sector, causing considerable pressure on the officials, and some sectors received better treatment than others. He stressed the importance of developing cooperation with other international agencies, in particular regarding cost-sharing, and the need for better cooperation with ILO field offices and other sectors of the ILO at headquarters. More needed to be done for the employers, as they gave considerable support but were modest about their requirements and requests. He stressed that in fact all three groups needed strengthening in order to achieve true social dialogue.
35. The representative of the Government of Slovakia found the document very useful, but it should also have included the ILO tripartite meeting in Slovakia held in July 1999 concerning civil service reform, which had greatly assisted the preparatory work on new legislation in the country.
36. A representative of the Director-General (Mr. de Vries Reilingh, Director of the Sectoral Activities Department), replying to the comments by Mr. Zellhoefer, expressed his appreciation for the cooperation of other ILO departments and the work of ACTRAV. Regarding the translation of the Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forest Work into Russian, Czech, Latvian and Swedish by the trade unions in those countries at their expense, he observed that the unions had not requested ILO assistance. Confirming the intention to prepare a meeting in 2001 in Latin America on postal services, he also mentioned that a similar meeting was to be planned in the Caribbean at the subregional level. He supported the need to explore separate meetings for the postal and telecommunication sectors. Thanking the representative of the Government of Slovakia, he explained that the meeting described had in fact been organized through the CEET in Budapest, and was a good example of the need to improve communication and consultation between the field and headquarters.
37. The Committee took note of the Office paper and of the comments made.

III. Effect to be given to the recommendations of sectoral meetings

(a) **Symposium on the Social and Labour Consequences of Technological Developments, Deregulation and Privatization of Transport**
(Geneva, 20-24 September 1999)

38. The Committee had before it the *Final Report*³ of the Symposium.
39. Mr. Jeetun drew attention to the positive evaluation of the meeting and endorsed the points for decision in paragraphs 5 and 6.
40. Mr. Zellhoefer pointed out that this was the second time that the symposium formula – about which the Workers’ group had strong reservations – had been used under the new system. Nevertheless the Symposium had resulted in conclusions on future ILO action, foreseeing the possibility of holding specific meetings dealing either with the transport sector as a whole or by subsector (rail, road, air); promoting social dialogue regionally and nationally; collecting and comparing examples of changes in the sector (not only best practices, but all kind of practices); expanding collaboration with multilateral financial institutions; revising standards considered obsolete; importantly, establishing a small standing tripartite strategy forum to oversee its activities in the transport sector; and positioning itself as an international centre of expertise in the transport sector. The Workers’ group looked forward with interest to the Office’s proposals for meaningful follow-up, and supported the points for decision.
41. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –*
- (a) *authorize the Director-General to communicate the report:*
- (i) *to governments, requesting them to communicate the texts to the employers’ and workers’ organizations concerned;*
- (ii) *to the international employers’ and workers’ organizations concerned;*
- (iii) *to the international organizations concerned;*
- (b) *request the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for the future work of the Office, the wishes expressed by the Symposium in paragraphs 1 to 15 of the conclusions.*

³ SDPT/1999/D.7, appended to GB.277/STM/3/1.

(b) Tripartite Meeting on the Human Resource Implications of Globalization and Restructuring in Commerce
(Geneva, 25-29 October 1999)

42. The Committee had before it the *Note on the Proceedings*⁴ of this Meeting.
43. Mr. Arbesser-Rastburg (Employer member), who had chaired the Meeting, commended the secretariat on the quality of the report. The conclusions were very good and work in this important sector should be continued. Mr. Jeetun endorsed this view.
44. Mr. Zellhoefer stated that consideration had to be given to a number of factors, including the emergence of wholesale and retail trade as a global industry dominated by few multinationals, the fact that family-owned companies went public in the quest for further growth and that short-term profit rather than long-term development perspectives guided management decisions. The conclusions adopted on various aspects of employment policies, working conditions and equal opportunities would help promote improvements in the sector. The resolution on the establishment of a small tripartite forum was also very relevant in discussing changes in the industry.
45. The representative of the Government of France endorsed the points for decision. She felt that the Meeting had resulted in better conclusions than the Symposium on the Social and Labour Consequences of Technological Developments, Deregulation and Privatization of Transport, and as such held more promise for follow-up. The Sectoral Activities Programme should strive for high quality for all its meetings and their conclusions.
46. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –*
- (a) authorize the Director-General to communicate the Note on the Proceedings:*
- (i) to governments, requesting them to communicate these texts to the employers' and workers' organizations concerned;*
- (ii) to the international employers' and workers' organizations concerned;*
- (iii) to the international organizations concerned;*
- (b) request the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for the future work of the Office, the wishes expressed by the Meeting in paragraphs 16 and 22 of the conclusions and the relevant part of the resolution.*

⁴ TMC/1999/10, appended to GB.277/STM/3/2.

**(c) Tripartite Meeting on Safety and Health
in the Fishing Industry**

(Geneva, 13-17 December 1999)

47. The Committee had before it the *Note on the Proceedings*⁵ of this Meeting.
48. Mr. Jeetun stated that the Employers' group was pleased with the comprehensive nature of the report and the wide range of conclusions. He singled out the particular need for adequate training on health and safety matters, and endorsed the points for decision.
49. Mr. Zellhoefer congratulated Mr. Edström (Worker member), who had chaired the Meeting, and Mr. de Vries Reilingh, as this had been his first meeting as chief of SECTOR. Addressing the health and safety conditions of small-scale fishers had been considered by all participants as extremely relevant, in view of the fact that 90 per cent of the 15 million fishers worldwide worked on vessels less than 24 metres long, and that fatalities in the industry were very high. He deplored the fact that the sector was a neglected one, with only one meeting in ten years. The Workers' group felt that the conclusions were adequate, including the statement that "fishing is a hazardous occupation" and with its references to flag states, insurance, social dialogue, abandoned fishers and several codes to be updated. There was a need to put funds for this sector in the InFocus Programme on Social Dialogue, with the involvement of ACTRAV and ACT/EMP in developing fishers' organizations. The Workers' group also fully supported the work of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards in this area.
50. The representative of the Government of the United States expressed his appreciation for the Meeting, which had been a good example of specific outcomes resulting from the discussion of specific issues.
51. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –*
- (a) authorize the Director-General to communicate the Note on the Proceedings:*
- (i) to governments, requesting them to communicate these texts to the employers' and workers' organizations concerned;*
- (ii) to the international employers' and workers' organizations concerned;*
- (iii) to the international organizations concerned;*
- (b) request the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for the future work of the Office, the wishes expressed by the Meeting in paragraphs 23 to 27 of the conclusions, paragraph 21 of the report of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards as appended to the conclusions, and the relevant parts of the resolution.*

⁵ TMFI/1999/12, appended to GB.277/STM/3/3.

IV. Report of the Meeting of the Joint IMO/ILO Ad Hoc Expert Working Group on Liability and Compensation regarding Claims for Death, Personal Injury and Abandonment of Seafarers (London, 11-15 October 1999)

52. The Committee had before it a report⁶ of the Joint IMO/ILO Ad Hoc Expert Working Group on Liability and Compensation regarding Claims for Death, Personal Injury and Abandonment of Seafarers.
53. Mr. Zellhoefer expressed concern at the issues of abandonment, personal injury and death of seafarers, and strongly agreed with the IMO/ILO Working Group's conclusions that these issues needed urgent action. None of the international instruments dealt with these problems comprehensively, and a joint ILO/IMO approach was the best way to address them. Compliance with international standards was essential, and nothing should be done that would encourage substandard shipping. The ILO should promote the ratification of the Repatriation of Seafarers Convention (Revised), 1987 (No. 166), and the Working Group should meet again.
54. Mr. Jeetun also supported the results of the Working Group and supported the points for decision.
55. The representative of the Government of the United States asked that the work on the low rates of ratification of relevant existing international instruments be coordinated with the Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards and its Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, so that only one questionnaire was sent to governments on the same set of Conventions.
56. The representative of the Government of France stated that the report of the Joint Working Group had stimulated discussion within her country on the possible ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 166, 178, 179 and 180.
57. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body take note of the report of the Working Group and approve its recommendations.*

V. Report of the International Symposium on Trade Unions and the Informal Sector (Geneva, 18-22 October 1999)

58. The Committee had before it the report⁷ of the Symposium.
59. Mr. Jeetun was pleased that the Workers' group had found the Symposium particularly useful.

⁶ IMO/ILO/WGLCCS 1/11, appended to GB.277/STM/4.

⁷ GB.277/STM/5.

60. Mr. Zellhoefer introduced the report, which concerned a theme of common interest to all three groups. The informal sector was growing rapidly, with ILO estimates of between 40 to 90 per cent of the workforce in developing countries. The majority of its workforce were women, young people and children, lacking all forms of social protection. The meeting had indicated the need for cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation between trade unions, new methods of organization at the government level, the removal of restrictions on trade union organization in the sector and new legislation to cover the informal sector. He praised ACTRAV for the work done in preparation for the meeting, and recommended the document as background to the ILO's work as a whole.
61. The representative of the Government of the United States stated that the report should be included in the discussion in the Committee on Employment and Social Policy on the informal sector, and in the Governing Body itself when it considered the informal sector as a possible item for the Conference agenda in 2002. However, the point for decision in the document was troubling, since it asked governments to accept a set of conclusions on their behaviour discussed only by trade union representatives and without the benefit of tripartite debate or even consultation. There was a need to clarify the role of governments and employers, and he therefore had reservations on the request to the Director-General to take the recommendations into account.
62. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body take note of the report and request the Director-General to take the recommendations into account in implementing future programmes of activity, while noting the reservations expressed.*

VI. Report of the Meeting of Experts on Safety in the Use of Insulation Wools (Geneva, 17-26 January 2000)

63. The Committee had before it the report⁸ of the Meeting of Experts.
64. Mr. Zellhoefer praised the Office for the excellent preparatory work, while regretting that it had taken the ILO ten years to produce the code. Nonetheless, the Workers' group expressed their satisfaction with the final results and recalled the inclusion of suppliers, importers, building clients, designers and specifiers, and thus enlarging the perspective of the code. The emphasis on preventive and protective measures was also well received. Work on new ILO codes needed to be considered, especially on all fibres not covered by existing ILO instruments, such as refractory ceramic fibres. Follow-up activities, such as electronic publishing and regional meetings, needed to be pursued.
65. Mr. Jeetun expressed the satisfaction of the Employers' group with the code, and in particular with the fact that most changes in the text had been agreed upon by consensus.
66. The representative of the Government of Germany offered special thanks to the Office for a well-organized meeting, and expressed his appreciation for the cooperation between all participants, especially the Employers' and Workers' groups. While the initial positions had been far apart, all parties had moved towards a consensus, and this spirit of cooperation was to be commended.

⁸ MESIW/2000/9, appended to GB.277/STM/6.

67. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –*

- (a) *take note of the report of the Meeting of Experts on Safety in the Use of Insulation Wools, and authorize the Director-General to publish and distribute the report and the Code of practice on safety in the use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool, slag wool):***
 - (i) *to governments, employers' and workers' organizations;***
 - (ii) *to the international employers' and workers' organizations concerned;***
 - (iii) *to international organizations;***
 - (iv) *to others as appropriate;***
- (b) *request the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for the future programme and budget, the recommendations made by the Meeting in paragraphs 41 to 43 of its report.***

VII. Other questions

Report of the Second Session of the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Working Group on Fishermen's Training and Certification (London, 18-22 January 1999)

- 68.** The Committee had before it the report⁹ of the Second Session of the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Working Group on Fishermen's Training and Certification.
- 69.** Mr. Jeetun stated that the Employers' group endorsed the report. He stressed the importance of the report in a historical perspective and in the light of the Tripartite Meeting on Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry.
- 70.** Mr. Zellhoefer was pleased to report that the workers' representatives who followed the meeting had found it very productive. The revision of the document based on the IMO's International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel should provide useful guidance. The report should be read in conjunction with the conclusions of the Tripartite Meeting on Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry.
- 71. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –***
- (a) *take note of the report of the Second Session of the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Working Group on Fishermen's Training and Certification;***

⁹ MSC 71/6/2, appended to GB.277/STM/7/1.

- (b) *authorize the Director-General to consult with the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on the publication, as soon as possible, of the revised “Document for Guidance on the Training and Certification of Fishermen” under the new title of “Document for Guidance on the Training and Certification of Fishing Vessel Personnel”.*

Geneva, 24 March 2000.

Points for decision: Paragraph 41; Paragraph 62;
Paragraph 46; Paragraph 67;
Paragraph 51; Paragraph 71.
Paragraph 57;