

The regions

190. The ILO is at work around the world through the activities of its field units. Many of the projected activities to take place in the regions are described under each of the four strategic objectives set out previously in this document. As well, field and regional units will continue to play an important liaison role between constituents in member States and sectors at headquarters or services such as the Turin Centre.

191. Strategic planning at the regional level for 2002-03 is influenced by three major factors:

- regional and field units are increasingly taking strategic objectives and indicators into account in their planning;
- much of their work will continue to respond to the needs and priorities identified by member States and constituents on an ongoing basis throughout the biennium; and
- their work to address the decent work agenda will often help achieve goals across multiple strategic objectives.

192. These Programme and Budget proposals are based on the Strategic Policy Framework. As noted in that document, a number of changes will be introduced in the regions, which will be consistent with the 1999 Conference conclusion supporting the need to improve regional services and to better integrate work at headquarters and in the field. They will help to achieve goals such as increasing service delivery rates, ensuring critical mass in technical fields, enabling regional and country-level impacts for the decent work agenda, and increasing extra-budgetary resources for technical cooperation. The Governing Body will be kept informed of the developments in the regions in a timely manner. It is foreseen that some of the changes and other goals will be accomplished through the establishment of decent work teams encompassing the four strategic objectives. In addition five child labour advisers will be assigned to the regions – one in the Americas and two each in Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

Africa

193. Many African countries have been undergoing severe economic, social and political crises often exacerbated by civil conflicts, poor respect of human rights and the rising number of HIV/AIDS infected and/or affected populations. Among the impacts of these and other factors are high formal sector unemployment and burgeoning informal sector employment with little or no social protection, as well as widespread child labour. Even in countries experiencing economic growth, it has not been accompanied by a similar trend in employment creation.

194. These factors present serious challenges to the many emerging democracies and increasingly open market economies. They put a strain on national institutions, and trade unions and employers' organizations, which in many cases need strengthening, and most importantly, ordinary people trying to make a decent living for themselves and their families.

195. Representatives of governments, employers' associations and workers' organizations have identified how the ILO strategic objectives designed to implement the decent work agenda might best be translated into the African environment and how African priorities might best inform those strategic objectives. The conclusions of the Ninth African Regional Meeting highlight the importance of increasing employment of acceptable quality and incomes and the need for specific attention to the impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, consistent with the ILO's mandate.

Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

196. The system of norms is a challenge in the African context. Member States recognize that ratification of fundamental Conventions has to be followed by application in practice and participation in the supervisory process. However, the limited financial and human resources available to governments and the many priorities competing for those resources mean that member States may not follow through on commitments under standards or respond to requests for reports. Given the wide range of national situations, ILO efforts in the region under this strategic objective will focus on priorities in which the greatest impact can be achieved.

197. One priority will be child labour as about 80 million children are working under dangerous conditions and in extreme forms of exploitation across the continent. Therefore, work in Africa to better understand child labour and demonstrate how best to reduce it will be an essential part of the worldwide strategy. In addition, work under the Declaration will assist member States to implement and to respond to observations on compliance with standards.

Create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income

198. The twin problem of high unemployment and pervasive poverty still constitute a key development challenge in Africa, with more than half the sub-Saharan population living in absolute poverty. The recent pattern of economic growth in some countries on the continent has not been sufficient to prevent the continued spread of urban and rural unemployment and underemployment.

199. The ILO agenda in Africa will continue to support efforts to close the gap between the existing skills of the labour force and those skills which are demanded in the global economy. The ILO will continue to pursue specific activities that are expected to help strengthen the reach and impact of employment policies in member States where those are most likely to produce results. Employment promotion and training and human resource development strategies will take into account the environment of low literacy levels, inadequate training systems and the large number of countries affected by armed conflicts. Those actions will increasingly focus attention on the employment needs of women, including through an extended Jobs for Africa programme, small enterprise development and employment intensive approaches in public infrastructure investments, particularly in post-crisis situations.

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

200. ILO attention under this strategic objective in Africa will increasingly be focused on the problem of HIV/AIDS. Africa is the continent most affected by this pandemic. People infected by HIV are often victims of all kinds of discrimination, particularly in the workplace and in trying to access employment opportunities. Moreover, the overwhelming consequences of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa have made action a priority for governments and workers' and employers' organizations.

201. Still, work will continue to address the other ILO priorities under this strategic objective. That will take place in the context of an environment in which working conditions, and the situation of the health and safety of workers are precarious in most African countries, particularly in the rural and urban informal sector. Most labour ministries lack the capacity to fulfil their basic functions in the field of labour inspection and the application of labour standards related to working and employment conditions. Furthermore, social security systems are limited to a minority of the total labour force, sometimes less than 10 per cent. Many of the necessary frameworks for large-scale, institutional systems, such as high rates of employment in the formal economy, are not in place in much of Africa. The ILO will therefore continue with initiatives that seek to find ways to increase the range of social security systems that are relevant to the African realities and that extend the reach of existing schemes.

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

202. Though democratization processes have helped to change matters somewhat, African workers' and employers' organizations are often still fragile and narrowly based. As a result, social partners often lack the capacity to address social and economic issues, and to contribute to the decent work agenda. Another major constraint on social dialogue is the progressive marginalization and fragmentation of the ministries of labour.

203. Accordingly, the ILO will continue to assist workers' and employers' organizations in Africa to develop and extend services to their members. The agenda will also include support to governments for the improvement of their labour administrations, labour laws and legislative frameworks on social dialogue.

The Americas

204. The Fourteenth American Regional Meeting in 1999 adopted the conclusions that *decent work and protection for all* should be a priority in the region. It also drew on the evidence that a “second wave of reforms” and economic integration are under way that involve an explicit awareness of the human impacts of these efforts. This means that the ILO will operate in a dynamic political, economic and social environment with a range of opportunities and partners.

205. ILO efforts during the biennium can build on the social and labour dimensions of MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay plus Bolivia and Chile) and NAFTA (Canada, Mexico and the United States) and the Andean Community of Nations (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) processes. Both processes take into consideration labour instruments related to ILO principles, especially those embedded in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

206. As extensive negotiations are already taking place to reach an Americas Free Trade Agreement by 2005, the ILO has a unique opportunity to ensure the promotion of decent work through any final Agreement. Seizing that opportunity will require the effective impact of social dialogue by strong and independent organizations of employers and workers.

Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

207. The Americas region expects to make an important contribution to overall ILO results on this strategic objective. In particular, given a strong base going into the biennium, the region believes that all ILO core Conventions can be ratified by member States and that national programmes and practices can better reflect those Conventions and the Declaration. Actions will also take account of the cross-cutting issue of gender and the protection of vulnerable groups such as indigenous and tribal peoples and migrant workers.

208. Progressive eradication of child labour will be a core priority in the Americas. Support for the ratification and implementation of national plans will be essential, as will specific projects that address national and sectoral opportunities to generate results.

209. The majority of technical cooperation resources in the region will be spent on implementation of the Declaration and the elimination of child labour.

Create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income

210. The generation of jobs and the creation of quality employment that respects workers' rights and enables productivity improvements will continue to be a major thrust of ILO work in the Americas. Actions will take into account the large numbers of people in vulnerable groups, especially men and women workers in the informal economy and rural areas. That will mean an emphasis on support for more effective employment policies and skills development and training systems.

211. Much of the emphasis during the biennium will continue to be on projects that assist in strengthening the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises, in creating quality jobs. ILO reports and other means of communicating best practices will be used to influence policies and programmes throughout the region.

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

212. One of the challenges of economic integration is how to ensure that people have access to social protection systems that are effective and well managed. At present, a large percentage of working people in the Americas face social and economic insecurity and addressing this is a regional priority. It will draw on traditional ILO efforts directed at improving pension schemes, training labour inspectors and people who deal with occupational safety, health and working condition issues. Adequate social security coverage, especially for excluded groups as well as improvement of working conditions are expected.

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

213. The state of tripartism and the strength of workers' and employers' organizations vary substantially across the Americas region. However, partners in social dialogue are increasingly aware of the importance of playing strong roles in shaping sectoral and national views during a time of growing economic integration. Moreover, strengthening these partners is understood to be part of the process of achieving improved national governance in many cases.

214. ILO efforts during the biennium will continue to support efforts by employers' and workers' organizations to become more representative and provide more services to members. That work will be reinforced by assistance in establishing and strengthening the institutions of social dialogue through legislated improvements and practical processes.

Arab States

215. In the context of the political and socio-economic situation of the Arab States in West Asia, two overarching themes will guide the ILO's work in this region during 2002-03. The first will be to promote the concept of decent work. Building on a regional decent work workshop planned for 2001, work is expected to take place that will define action on decent work in the region. That will be complemented by advocacy, including support for tripartite dialogue and advisory services at the national level.

216. The second theme will be to contribute to the consolidation of the peace process in the Middle East and the social and economic rehabilitation of the countries/regions and groups of population affected by conflicts. This will include participation in the efforts of the international community and the UN system to implement comprehensive programmes of institutional, social and economic rehabilitation in the Palestinian territories, in Lebanon, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. The content, pace and countries will, however, be governed by the extent to which peace obtains in the region.

Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

217. It is recognized that primary challenges in the region under this strategic objective are to enhance public understanding and parliamentary support for the adoption of ILO fundamental standards and to strengthen national capacities for their application. Accordingly, attention in countries that have already ratified most core Conventions will be directed at assisting in the effective application of those Conventions. In others, promotional work will be intensified for wider ratification. In particular, issues related to freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to organize will be emphasized through dialogue, especially in Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) States.

218. It is expected that child labour will increase in the Arab States of West Asia due to deteriorating national economic conditions, coupled with a lack of social safety nets. Priorities will include awareness-raising and IPEC projects that should lead to comprehensive policies, programmes and enhanced national capacities.

219. In addition, special efforts will be required for advocacy on the basic elements of the Declaration.

Create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income

220. Most countries of the Arab region face the challenge of achieving sustainable human development. Policies that promote employment and alleviate poverty are the main priority. The level of unemployment, especially for youth and women, is on the rise; the productivity and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises is low; underemployment is pervasive; the quality of jobs is often inadequate and government efforts targeted to small-scale businesses are limited.

221. To address these issues, ILO efforts in the region during the biennium will support stronger labour market information systems that should help to alleviate mismatches between labour demand and the supply of workers coming out of education systems. Other work will address gender equality in employment. This will be a challenge, since the participation of women in the labour force is low compared to other regions and those who do work are largely restricted to ster-

eotypical jobs with limited participation in decision-making processes. Still there have been positive initiatives that would be encouraged and supported.

222. The working conditions of vulnerable groups will also be a major priority, especially for countries that have faced conflict and civil unrest. As part of this, assistance will be provided to the development of specific programmes to improve the labour market integration of members of vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and ex-detainees. Attention will be paid to the employment patterns and social protection needs of the large number of migrant workers, and workers in the informal sector in the region.

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

223. The low rate of ratification and application of standards related to working and employment conditions in the region reflects poor legislation and commitment in this field. Social security coverage is limited and sometimes non-existent. The expansion of the informal sector and the increase in migrant labour and domestic workers in a number of countries add an additional burden to weak social safety nets.

224. Regional priorities will include capacity building to support adoption of international labour standards; implementation of policies and programmes that address occupational hazards; support for social security reform and stronger social safety nets for currently unprotected workers.

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

225. Mechanisms, structures and the legal framework for genuine tripartite dialogue are largely missing in the region. The trade union situation in the region is still far from compatible with international labour standards, particularly those related to freedom of association, the right to organize and collective bargaining. Furthermore, the capacities of existing workers' and employers' organizations and labour administrations are not adequate for effective tripartite consultations. This will mean that employers' and workers' organizations are expected to require assistance on a host of technical issues.

Asia and the Pacific

226. The most visible event that has affected economic and social conditions within the region during recent years continues to be the financial crisis that began in 1997. It led to political instability in some parts of the region that is still affecting social development. At the same time, it helped pave the way for major advances in democracy and human rights.

227. Looking ahead to factors influencing actions in the new biennium, many member States in the region are pursuing strategies that support regional economic integration. The ASEAN free trade zone (AFTA) is set to become a reality in 2003. The ten-nation association is building on its already close levels of cooperation with key East Asian non-member countries, in particular, China, the Republic of Korea and Japan. The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) is also expanding its membership.

228. It is important to note that social issues, including human resource development, are increasingly being addressed in regional economic integration work, especially for ASEAN. Even so, there is more to be done to incorporate the social dimension into regional integration efforts. There is an urgent need to integrate employment strategies in larger economic development policies at national and regional levels. In this evolving context of regional institution building, ministries of labour will need to re-examine and redefine their roles.

Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

229. During 1998-99, 27 ratifications of fundamental Conventions were recorded in the region — two and a half times the number recorded during 1996-97. The ILO expects to extend that progress in the region through follow-up on the Declaration. It will help member States build the foundation and legal framework necessary to operationalize the decent work agenda. Action on child labour will be another priority, including projects addressing the traffic in women and children. As part of this, regional management is identifying how best to support a growing level of programme activity, especially for IPEC, with a zero-growth budget.

Create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income

230. Asia and the Pacific has extremely diverse national situations and conditions. While the region has many particularly dynamic economies, it is still home to more than two-thirds of the world's 1.2 billion poor, with a particular concentration in South Asia. Alleviating the poverty, unemployment and underemployment that the region confronts will continue to be a daunting task and one requiring a range of strategies.

231. In a number of economies in transition, support for the redeployment of displaced workers from state-owned enterprises into alternative jobs will be a key priority. Support for the needs of small island economies in the South Pacific, in contrast, will emphasize employment development strategies that are suitable for economies that are now highly dependent on particular commodities. The ILO can expect to be actively involved in addressing the employment needs generated by the sudden independence of East Timor. The gender dimension to employment in all parts of the region will also be important as the ILO mainstreams gender issues to address inequality, discrimination and exclusion.

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

232. The diversity of social security systems and occupational safety and health regimes mean that the ILO's role must vary across Asia and the Pacific. For example, in transition economies schemes often require redesign in the face of changing government role. In other countries, the challenge is to reinforce or revitalize existing schemes to widen coverage to people in small enterprises and the informal economy. The needs of vulnerable groups, particularly migrant workers, require added ILO attention in both sending and receiving countries. Other social protection priorities in Asia and the Pacific include safety and health in the workplace as well as developing effective strategies and policies to address the HIV/AIDS crisis and its workplace impacts.

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

233. Weak social dialogue mechanisms are common throughout the region. However, recent ILO efforts have helped to strengthen employers' and workers' organizations as well as tripartite mechanisms. The coming biennium will offer opportunities to continue this work. This will involve support for social dialogue as a means of addressing industrial relations and employment policy issues in addition to support for workers' education and the promotion of sound industrial relations. Other efforts will encourage concrete attention to the needs of women by both employers' and workers' organizations and in social dialogue processes.

Europe and Central Asia

234. ILO work in this region has two major orientations. Work in Western Europe will encourage the greatest possible degree of engagement in and support for ILO activities. Conversely, work in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will continue to be focused on addressing the challenges of the fundamental changes resulting from their transition to a market economy. These changes touch on practically all aspects of working life.

235. In that context, ILO activities in the region will be guided by and will respond to the results of the Sixth European Regional Meeting, held in December 2000. That Meeting identified a series of major priorities centred on a more significant role for the ILO: in the European Union accession process; in the implementation of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and in the consolidation of social democracies in the CIS.

Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

236. In Central and Eastern Europe the effective recognition of fundamental principles and rights at work will need to be supported by appropriate interventions. The effective recognition of freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively will be of particular interest in these member States. Further key issues will concern the elimination of the worst forms of child labour where they exist and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

237. In the CIS, ILO action will focus on providing assistance in the ratification and implementation of core labour standards. The priority will be to combine the promotion of core international labour standards, institution building, labour legislation reform and the fight against poverty, with the elaboration of a comprehensive social, economic and human development approach.

238. Technical cooperation under this strategic objective will revolve around a core programme related to the elimination of child labour and the implementation of the principles and rights contained in the Declaration.

Create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income

239. Over the last decade, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have achieved progress in transforming their labour markets in line with the needs of a market system. However, further reform measures are necessary to ensure that economic growth is translated into employment promotion through the creation of decent jobs for all workers. Achieving this will require acknowledgement of the importance of active labour market policy measures. One example that these States have already recognized is the need for national education and training systems that do more to increase the average level and quality of education of young people and that create a sound base for lifelong learning. Another would be policies and systems that facilitate the adjustment of skills to changing skill demands.

240. Most CIS countries still have to build an employment policy and programme base. Many lack the global policy tools to promote employment. They need effective support for sustainable job creation, new or better systems for labour market information and support for skills upgrading, including the dissemination of best practices and experiences.

241. Extra-budgetary technical cooperation under this strategic objective will be used mainly to respond to the need to create employment in post-crisis situations.

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

242. The social protection system in Central and Eastern Europe is characterized by a lack of coherence and cohesion in benefits systems, managerial and administrative deficiencies and problems of financing. The systems in the CIS have undergone significant deterioration. The most vulnerable groups in both cases are single parent households, the long-term unemployed, workers in small enterprises or in the informal sector, the elderly and pensioners. Several countries have expressed particular interest in issues related to the employment and protection of migrant workers. In many countries, important decisions are about to be made concerning the future directions to be followed by social protection schemes. This means all partners, including the constituents from the region and international financial institutions need to engage in a broad discussion of the available options.

243. Governments in Central and Eastern Europe have indicated interest in assistance with improved occupational safety and health policies, including harmonizing legislative and practical safe work measures. They also anticipate assistance with pension reform. Actions in the CIS will centre on expanded commitment to occupational safety and health in target countries and workplaces. Support for social security reform, including collaboration with the World Bank, will also be a priority.

244. A major component of the future technical cooperation programme in this region will concern HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

245. Although many Central and Eastern European countries, as well as some in the CIS, have made progress towards the establishment of free market economies, they generally still face a considerable task in realizing and consolidating the new rules in day-to-day practice. One reason is the persistent lack of strong, autonomous and effective employers' and workers' organizations. Social partners need to be fostered and strengthened, sound practices have to be adopted and implemented, and compliance with commonly accepted democratic rules has to become a standard practice.

246. Consistent with building the institutions of social dialogue, States in Central and Eastern Europe have expressed interest in support for promoting collective bargaining at all levels and the role of conciliation, mediation and arbitration in settling labour disputes.

247. Technical cooperation under this strategic objective will be carried out in close collaboration with the work done under the Declaration.