

Note on the proceedings

Tripartite Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Electrical
and Mechanical Engineering Industries

Geneva, 23-27 September 2002

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Introduction

The Tripartite Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Industries was held in Geneva from 23 to 27 September 2002.

The Office had prepared a report¹ issued in English, French and Spanish to serve as a basis for the Meeting's deliberations. It addressed the following topics: recent developments in the machinery, consumer electronics, and office and telecommunications industries; the need for a paradigm shift from vocational education and training to lifelong learning; the situation with respect to selected developing countries; recent examples of lifelong learning and specific examples in various representative countries; as well as an examination of high-performance work practices.

The Governing Body had designated Mr. Mel Lambert, Employer member of the Governing Body, to represent it and to chair the Meeting. The three Vice-Chairpersons elected by the Meeting were: Mr. K.H. Al-Tall (Oman) from the Government group, Mr. L. Skoglund from the Employers' group and Mr. N. Koga from the Workers' group.

The Meeting was attended by Government representatives from: Angola, Benin, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, South Africa and Tunisia, as well as 20 Employer representatives and 19 Worker representatives. A representative of the Government of the United States was also present at the sittings.

Observers from the Arab Labour Organization attended the Meeting and representatives from the following non-governmental international organizations also attended as observers: the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; the International Metalworkers' Federation; the International Organisation of Employers; and the World Confederation of Labour.

The three groups elected their Officers as follows:

Government group:

Chairperson: Mr. K.H. Al-Tall (Oman)
Vice-Chairperson: Mr. C. Dias Pais (Portugal)

Employers' group:

Chairperson: Mr. J. Cassady
Secretary: Mr. J. Dejardin (International Organisation of Employers (IOE))

Workers' group:

Chairperson: Mr. J. Leslie
Secretary: Mr. P. Unterweger (International Metalworkers' Federation)

¹ ILO: Tripartite Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Industries, Geneva 2002: *Lifelong learning in the electrical and mechanical engineering industries*, Geneva, 2002, 138 pp.

The Secretary-General of the Meeting was Mr. O. de Vries Reilingh, Director of the Sectoral Activities Department. The Deputy Secretary-General was Mr. N. Jennings of the same Department. The Executive Secretary was Mr. P. Bailey. The Clerk of the Meeting was Ms. S. Maybud. The Experts were: Mr. Y. Kamakura, Mr. B. Ratteree, Ms. A. Vere and Ms. J. Wells.

The Meeting held seven plenary sittings.

The Chairperson welcomed the participants to the Tripartite Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Industries. The Meeting was timely in terms of the industries covered and the subject matter of the comprehensive report. The MEE industries had experienced a number of significant developments in recent years. Moreover, the topic “lifelong learning” was important in the light of the revision of the Human Resources Development Recommendation that was in the process of being revised. Referring to previous sectoral meetings in these industries, he emphasized the important shift from vocational and educational training towards lifelong learning that was taking place. This had occurred because of the pivotal role of the industries as pattern-setters for the rest of the economy in the context of their size, membership in sectoral employers’ and workers’ organizations and high exposure to world markets. Lifelong learning issues had to be addressed in the context of globalization. Increasing global competition had led to major regional and sectoral shifts during the past two decades. One outcome was intensified international outsourcing. The Chairperson urged the Meeting to work hard to produce agreed recommendations and conclusions which would be useful at the national level and for the ILO in assisting the industries. The Meeting was also an important forum for engaging in social dialogue and for exchanging information and experiences. In order to achieve these goals, this Meeting was in the form of four thematic panel discussions, rather than focusing on a point-by-point discussion.

The Secretary-General of the Meeting welcomed the participants on behalf of the ILO. This Meeting was the second for the MEE industries to be held under the reorganized system of sectoral meetings that was introduced in 1996. This reform had allowed the ILO better to serve its constituents. For example, it was now possible to provide more accurate statistical data on the four subsectors of the MEE industries. The increasing speed of product innovation meant that lifelong learning was particularly necessary in the MEE industries. Technological development required not only the improvement of existing skills, but also the acquisition of new skills. The report contained many interesting examples of what some governments, enterprises and trade unions had achieved in the areas of lifelong learning in the industries, which should provide stimulus for the discussions. The four thematic discussions should enable all the participants to benefit from sharing their particular knowledge on the topics. Another innovation was that each group or individual Government representatives could submit to the secretariat recommendations or conclusions which had emerged from the discussion of each topic. These suggestions would be consolidated by the secretariat for discussion in a working party that had the task of preparing a final text to be submitted to the Meeting for adoption at its closing sitting.

Part 1

Consideration of the agenda item

Report of the discussion ¹

Introduction

1. The Meeting met to examine the item on the agenda by way of five themed discussions. In accordance with the provisions of article 7 of the *Standing Orders for sectoral meetings*, the Officers presided in turn over the discussion.
2. The spokesperson for the Employers' group was Mr. Mahesh and the spokesperson for the Workers' group was Mr. Leslie. The Meeting held six sittings devoted to the discussion of the themes.

Composition of the Working Party

3. At its fifth sitting, in accordance with article 13, paragraph 2, of the Standing Orders, the Meeting set up a Working Party to draw up draft conclusions reflecting the views expressed during the course of the Meeting's discussion of the themes. The Working Party, presided over by the Government Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Al-Tall, was composed of the following members:

Government members

France:	Ms. Ory
Greece:	Mr. Assimakis
Oman:	Mr. Al-Tall
Philippines:	Ms. Porschwitz
South Africa:	Mr. Daniels

Employer members

Mr. de Navacelle
Mr. Cassady
Ms. Lopes
Mr. Nasr
Mr. Skoglund

Worker members

Ms. Eberhardt
Mr. Leslie
Mr. Makaba
Mr. Sims
Mr. Steindl

¹ Adopted unanimously.

Presentation of the report and general remarks

Presentation of the report

4. The report for the Meeting prepared by the International Labour Office was introduced by the Executive Secretary. He outlined recent developments in the mechanical and electrical engineering (MEE) industries. In many industries within this large industrial grouping, production was concentrated within a few developed countries, notably the United States, Japan and some European countries. Developing countries were, however, increasing their share of production in some industries. A small number of developing countries, mostly in Asia, now accounted for almost one-half of world exports of office and telecommunication equipment (OTE). Most developing countries' exports of OTE originated in the export processing zones (EPZs). Some small economies were heavily dependent on exports from one industry or one company and an economic downturn could have disastrous consequences for these economies, whether developed or developing. Although job cuts continued to be announced, the extent to which they were implemented was largely unknown. They had to be considered against the substantial employment growth that had occurred over the past five years. The fact that product life was shortening meant that knowledge was also becoming obsolete faster, which increased the importance of lifelong learning. Expenditure on research and development (R&D), which had been increasing, could hold the key to the identification of new skill requirements. The speaker compared the old and new approaches to training, with one-off training, that was supposed to last forever, giving way to continuous training and retraining. One implication was that certification of competence might only be valid for a fixed, limited period after which re-certification and therefore retraining were needed. He outlined responses from the industry to the challenge of lifelong learning. Many companies in the MEE industries now provided shop-floor instruction and many had in-house learning centres often linked to distance learning. Developing countries without Internet connections and a reliable electricity supply could not fully participate in these developments. Three-quarters of all foreign direct investment (FDI) by multinational companies was concentrated in just ten, largely Asian, countries which had invested heavily in science, mathematics and engineering education and had the capacity to undertake research and development. Examples were cited of recent initiatives from both employers' and workers' organizations and case studies from private companies. The speaker then outlined some recent development in the United States, Japan and China that were included in the report. He concluded by explaining the themes to be discussed by the panels.

General remarks

5. The Employer spokesperson said that the report came over well, although it would have been useful to have had more examples from developing countries and small enterprises. The report focused on the present, but lifelong learning was vital for development and would determine which country would get ahead in the future. It was essential, particularly in times of uncertainty, for the individual to learn new skills in order to stay in employment, including different employment, as well as to make a useful and productive contribution to national development. Learning was related to change and economic growth. Employers, Governments and Workers had joint responsibility in this respect. They should cooperate to fund training and build skills for life and take the nation forward.
6. The Worker spokesperson said the report and presentation provided an excellent summary of the issues facing the MEE industries. He had first-hand experience of the benefits of lifelong learning. Workers' rights had to be respected around the world. Lifelong learning should lead to growing job opportunities with good wages and working conditions, greater profitability for enterprises, and to more sustainable communities. This would result in less

dislocation as jobs were moved around the world and all members of society would gain. It was important that issues of lifelong learning and planning be addressed at the national level so that workers had a role in the development and implementation of these plans. Training needs in the transition from state to private enterprises required particular attention, and technology should be made available to developing countries so that lifelong learning could be developed there. Finally, since many workers were not aware of the complex nature of lifelong learning and the structural changes taking place in their economies, the ILO had an important role to play. It should ensure that the *Note on the Proceedings* was made widely available so that all Workers, Employers and Governments could benefit from the deliberations and their outcome.

7. The representative of the Government of Kenya congratulated the Office on the report and welcomed the opportunity afforded by the Meeting to discuss important issues. The report showed that the sector comprised a wide variety of industries and required an equal variety of skills. Many countries were experiencing skill shortages at various levels. Governments needed to step up their efforts to provide a sound education that was adapted to changing needs, and training that provided employable skills. The speaker provided an example from his country of how training needs were being identified and met, with tripartite participation, through the Industrial Training Council with its 12 committees, three of which were concerned with the MEE industries. Although primarily an agricultural country, Kenya had a small industrial sector with a number of enterprises producing office machinery, televisions, etc. Employment in the MEE enterprises in Kenya was about 82,900 but had declined in 1999-2000 due to falling demand and stiff competition from imports.

Theme 1: The economic performance of the MEE industries: 2001 recession and outlook

8. The first of three presentations on this theme was made by Mr. Fauzi Che Rus (Employer member from Malaysia) from the perspective of his country. He characterized the recent economic situation as turbulent and said the future remained uncertain. Predictions of economic improvement were not being realized. The bubble of double-digit growth in computer sales had burst, both in Asia and the United States. Corporate governance issues were also putting downward pressure on markets and, therefore, on the Malaysian economy. In addition, most recently, concerns about war in the Middle East were having a similar impact. Since private computer sales accounted for about one-third of the total, a loss of consumer confidence was serious. The recent past and near future were the most challenging the PC industry had ever faced. The best it could hope for was weak growth in 2003. He presented a series of graphs to show how Malaysian GDP, unemployment and PC sales had fluctuated in the past few years. Companies that survived such times were those that were flexible, managed their inventories, controlled prices, increased the value of their products, and whose workers looked forward to acquiring extra knowledge. He noted that none of his company's products (disk drives) for 2002 existed in 2001. This had implications for the knowledge base throughout the company. The challenge for the industry was to improve product value by about 50 per cent with 25 per cent less cost. He hoped that the recent predictions of improvements in the OTE market as enterprises replaced their office equipment proved to be accurate.
9. The second presentation, by Mr. Nirhamo (Worker member from Finland) focused on the impact of turbulence in the electronics and electro-mechanical industries on a small economy. This sector grew threefold in 1995-2000 compared with a 50 per cent increase in the mechanical engineering and metals sectors, which was already better than in some other countries. There were important changes in the workforce in the six years to 2001 which showed the extent to which productivity had increased. Most of the employment

growth in the electronics sector was among white-collar workers, whereas in the mechanical sectors any growth in employment was in the blue-collar workforce. Notwithstanding impressive growth in the electronics industries in other European countries, Finland outstripped them all, even continuing to increase when growth faltered elsewhere. The question was, what would happen in the future? There had already been a structural change in the workforce in Ireland and Finland, where the proportion of electronics workers was very high compared with other countries. This had an impact on the type and level of knowledge required. He agreed that times were uncertain, even to the extent that the slight recovery that was being predicted could be short-lived.

- 10.** In the third presentation, Mr. Van Liemt, a consultant, agreed that uncertainty was the underlying message for the MEE industries and in a macroeconomic sense. He pointed out that the decline in employment had to be looked at from the perspective of the massive surge in employment in the second half of the 1990s. The five elements that comprised the uncertain situation were: slow economic growth, even though the recession in the United States was technically over, predictions for economic growth there and elsewhere were continually being revised downwards. The second factor was reluctant consumer spending due to rising unemployment, falling stock markets and the threat of war in the Middle East. The third element was the slow pace of investment growth, due in part to considerable overcapacity following excessive optimism over growth, notably in telecommunications. The fourth factor was a crisis of confidence, partly brought about by accounting scandals in the United States, including in a telecommunications company. Finally there were a number of industry-specific factors, including the continuing launching of new products, uncertainties over the next generation of mobile telecommunications, and the problems associated with vendor financing with its increased operational risks. The thousands of job losses that had been publicized were not all redundancies; early retirements and natural attrition played a role, together with outsourcing. Nonetheless, the terms of redundancy packages should be examined, as should the question of sustainable communities. Another was whether changes in employment in the communications sector was indicative of the MEE industries as a whole. Demand would eventually pick up, but it was not possible to say where or when. In the meantime, how could the industry best cope to survive until then?
- 11.** The Worker spokesperson said that in the light of the presentations, regulatory and legislative measures should reduce rather than encourage a short-term focus by enterprises. Short-termism led to overcapacity, followed by layoffs of highly skilled workers. In some cases these workers had to be retrained in order to find less-skilled jobs. Governments should adopt policies, framework legislation and economic incentives to minimize cyclical effects of industrial change and to promote the development of new industries. It was important to note that the economic performance of the MEE industries depended on demand, particularly through foreign trade. The Workers' group felt that the increasing reliance on temporary and contract workers, even in developing countries, reduced their purchasing power. The emphasis should be on well-paid, full-time jobs. In some cases workers could not afford to buy the products they made. Social dumping should be discouraged, while market access to producers in developing countries should be guaranteed. Competition for inward investment by governments offering incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies depleted public treasuries and led to overcapacity and the migration of capital, with consequent social disruption. Positive competition, such as in terms of lifelong learning and ensuring a pool of skilled and motivated workers, should be promoted and used. The ILO should compile and maintain a database of social and economic data on the MEE industries and other economic sectors, as had been requested at other sectoral meetings. Since follow-up was an essential aspect of the ILO's work, the dissemination of the results of this Meeting was important. The economic performance of the MEE industries would be enhanced by giving a social dimension to globalization. The

Workers' group sought increased cooperation between the ILO, the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF.

12. The Employer spokesperson said that survival had become a key question for most industries because of changing times. Uncertainty made it more difficult. The fact that working time was falling in some countries, to as low as 1,000-1,500 hours per year in some cases, made it imperative that workers invested their own time in undertaking lifelong learning. It was also important to impart qualitative training that benefited all parties, not merely quantitative. Employers and workers had to work together keeping ethical practices in mind. Willingness to learn and a commitment to continuous learning underpinned all learning models. He agreed that R&D spending could provide information on what training was required. The ILO and governments could provide information in this regard. It was not for the employer to take all of the responsibility for the lifelong learning of its employees; governments should establish learning centres in which employers could jointly participate and send employees to learn on a continuing basis to acquire the competencies that will enable them and their employers to become high performance organizations. The social partners had to work together to ensure the survival of their enterprises.
13. The representative of the Government of Oman felt that slower economic performance could be advantageous for developing countries. They required different models for lifelong learning from those in industrialized countries. Shorter product life with the need for continual upgrading was a disaster for developing countries.
14. The representative of the Government of South Africa stressed the need to set the patterns and attitudes towards lifelong learning.
15. A Worker member from Spain recognized the influence of uncertainty on the industry. But there were other problems too, such as the lack of professional ethics. Governments should exert greater control over multinational enterprises, which often closed down existing profitable operations to move elsewhere. This had been the case in his own country.
16. The representative of the Government of India pointed to the adverse effect on local employment that resulted from importing new technologies into developing countries. Another important factor was the slow pace of change in the education system there which meant that skills for new technologies were not being taught. He suggested that there be a system, like the Colombo Plan, that financed overseas training in new agreed technologies that would be produced in developing countries.
17. A Worker member from Costa Rica asked the panellists about the extent of worker cooperation in Malaysia in times of change, and the extent of unfair competition that resulted in increases in production in some countries and falls in others. He wondered what could be done about corruption, including action by the ILO, not just in the United States. He deplored governments offering incentives to electronics companies to tempt them to relocate. Despite economists' statements, the recession was not over.
18. Responding to the questions, the panellists said that workers' cooperation was exemplified by communication and a willingness to be flexible in order to survive. Wages had not been reduced. While the recession was technically over, the economic outlook was not good. Transparency International listed corrupt countries but did not identify individuals. In Europe, the law was supposed to deal with corrupt practices and practitioners. Many countries were involved in seeking foreign investment, including from electronics companies, including the country of the questioner.

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19. An Employer member from France pointed out that many enterprises were changing the focus of their operations and this led to losses in direct employment. Production units were being sold off to other enterprises. Job losses in one enterprise or country could be offset by gains elsewhere, particularly in developing countries that were able to add value.
 20. The Employer spokesperson reiterated the level of uncertainty and the resulting slowdown in investment. A proactive approach, from all concerned, was needed. Opportunities had to be recognized and seized. Just because situations changed, employees could not be discarded. Rather, efforts should be made to provide them with the opportunity to learn new skills through lifelong learning.
 21. A Worker member from South Africa had no objection to workers investing their own time in lifelong learning, provided due account was taken of family responsibilities and long working hours. Governments should play a role in easing the burden of employers in providing training and in promoting lifelong learning, particularly among those who were disadvantaged.
 22. The representative of the Government of Kenya stressed the importance of “hands-on” learning, something that took place outside the classroom. It was important therefore to ensure that sufficient industrial experience was included in training courses.
 23. The representative of the Government of Finland wondered how important the current economic situation was from the point of view of lifelong learning. Countries had developed a learning culture over many years, each one focusing on its needs. This was an appropriate and continuing approach.
 24. The Chairperson said that it was important that people be helped to improve themselves through learning opportunities. But he had been struck by the examples that had been provided of people’s willingness to continue with education that went beyond the strict requirements of the job in order to improve themselves. Increasing the desire for self-development was an important aspect of lifelong learning.
 25. An Employer member from Sweden, in response to an intervention from the representative of the Government of Finland, noted that companies had to reduce costs in economic downturns. It was therefore important to discuss how best to address the provision of learning and training for the future, and this was expensive, in times of financial stringency.
 26. A Worker member from Indonesia said that training had ceased in many enterprises in his country after the Asian crisis. A means had to be found to ensure that learning and training was continuous. The ILO could be of assistance in this regard.
 27. The representative of the Government of Malaysia pointed out that encouraging lifelong learning was part of the Government’s policy in order to ensure employability, including outside Malaysia, and the continued production of new products there.
 28. The representative of the Government of Portugal referred to the role of government in ensuring that training be considered as an investment rather than as a cost, and, even in an economic downturn, that it be appropriately managed and followed. He stressed the importance of a tripartite approach to evaluating training needs for the MEE sector so that workers could improve their skills, productivity and wages. Government should act as a regulator and facilitator and employers should say what training was required.
 29. In summing up, the panellists reiterated the need for lifelong learning, particularly in times of uncertainty. Because learning took time, it was important that the ILO provide

information on what learning structures were available and what might be appropriate. Learning was not merely an economic tool, it was part of societal development. While there were many types of training, it was not always in tune with industry's needs. There needed to be a closer match between demand and supply.

30. The Worker spokesperson concluded by reiterating that predatory policies on issues such as global outsourcing should be discouraged. Workers should be empowered to learn as much as they could so that, with fair and progressive standards, they could contribute to economic growth and improve their own standard of living.

Theme 2: The social impact of restructuring the MEE industries

31. The first of three presentations on this theme was made by Mr. Pinkus (adviser to the Employer member from France). The social impact of restructuring was a vast subject with implications for qualifications and the management of human resources. Restructuring was needed because of the continuous development of products and markets and the development of services to meet customer needs. Uncertainty was a concern for both companies and workers. In future, workers would have to have more skills, be multi-faceted and able to work in a team. Although the individual worker was responsible for his own future, the responsibility for training was shared. Companies had to ensure that workers had the skills needed to adapt to changing requirements or to find jobs elsewhere. The speaker then presented a programme for training in the metallurgical industry which was financed on a tripartite basis. He outlined four principles of the programme. First, the provision of information, so that young people were aware of the opportunities available. Second, the evaluation of the potential of each individual through self-assessment. Third, the provision of individualized training programmes, adjusted to the individual's needs. Fourth, the validation of training through certification, with priority given to joint qualification certificates recognized as useful to the metallurgical industry. Provision was also available for engineers with work experience to obtain validation of their acquired skills and undertake further individualized training with the help of distance learning.
32. The second presentation was made by Mr. Dong-Gyun (Worker member from the Republic of Korea) from the perspective of his country. He highlighted the destabilization of the Korean economy in 1997 which had led to a slower growth and rising unemployment. The economy was much more dependent on foreign markets and on the IT industries and flexible labour practices had been introduced. Companies in the MEE industries had restructured and upgraded their technologies and production methods from labour based to knowledge based. They had also developed an efficient organizational structure and restructured their employment. The process was illustrated by a case study of the three main electronic companies. The trade union response to restructuring included developing a preventive strategy against unilateral dismissal and engaging in the process of employment adjustment. But effective participation had been hampered by the enterprise base of the trade unions in the Republic of Korea. This was no longer appropriate in the changed context and unions were merging in order to centralize their bargaining power and build an industrial union structure.
33. The third presentation was given by Mr. Ozoux from the ILO's Employment Sector. He observed that all countries and all sectors were affected by world recession and by the pressure of competition that was increasing daily. The process was driven by consumers in the developed countries continuously wanting more and better goods and services for less. In this context, a task of the ILO was to promote appropriate behaviour, particularly when restructuring was involved. The objective was to promote better practices based on ILO international labour standards so as to decrease the negative social impact of restructuring.

The ILO was also developing three types of training for governments, employers and workers. The training was not sector specific but did focus on the concept of “employability” and lifelong learning. It promoted social dialogue because this approach offered the best chance of success in the long term.

- 34.** The Worker spokesperson said that, in addition to sound economic policies, there was a need for companies to have sound business and investment plans that encouraged research and development into new products and processes. Business enterprises should include workers in their strategic planning process, which should include a plan for growth to counteract any reduction in the need for labour. In high performance organizations workers and managers should collaborate to improve productivity and efficiency. Workers should be informed well in advance of any restructuring; this should be followed by detailed negotiations. Alternatives to redundancy needed to be considered. Government assistance might be necessary for industries that restructure in order to assist workers to adapt and to provide for retraining programmes administered by the social partners. As restructuring often had adverse impacts on SMEs they should be helped to adapt. The ILO should report on restructuring in the MEE industries and on measures taken to cushion its impact. A similar conclusion had been adopted at the last meeting of the MEE industries, with special reference to the needs of developing and transition countries. The same meeting had adopted a resolution on job creation. The Workers’ group reiterated these requests and called for follow up to tripartite meetings.
- 35.** The Employer spokesperson welcomed the workers’ desire to be involved in the development of strategic plans. Restructuring might be unavoidable and workers should be taken care of by the industry. Lifelong learning could enable them to find better jobs in the future and prevent them being left behind, which would create an adverse impact on society. Employers and governments should actively participate in building up the skills of the workers so that, even if workers were lost to a particular enterprise, the nation and the industry would gain. The speaker agreed that restructuring had adverse effects on SMEs. Governments and employers had a role to play here also.
- 36.** The representative of the Government of Greece, speaking on behalf of the Government group, said that the Workers’ and Employers’ groups were close to each other. This made the governments’ role much easier. The employment of workers and the growth of industries brought stability, social cohesion and social balance to a nation. It was the obligation of governments to ensure this social balance by providing an appropriate legal framework, special training programmes and opportunities for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning would help to keep workers employed and lead to industries being competitive in world markets. The three social partners, working together with good will, understanding and respect, could develop efficient programmes to overcome the problems of restructuring. These issues were particularly difficult for the developing countries, but the only solution was to work together, with the help of the ILO.
- 37.** The representative of the Government of Finland said that productivity was an important concept underlying restructuring and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning boosted the productivity of labour and restructuring that of capital. Both were important. Experience in his country showed that it was possible to restructure the economy in an acceptable way.
- 38.** A Worker member from Japan said that SMEs, an important pillar of manufacturing in Japan, had been negatively affected by restructuring, particularly the workforce. While employment in the sector as a whole had fallen by 15 per cent, the fall in SMEs had been 30 per cent. Positive action was needed to ensure the survival of the MEE sector and its workers. One achievement had been the enactment of a basic law to promote manufacturing technology and provide training. The trade union was now working to make

sure it was implemented. While redundancy might sometimes be unavoidable, all must strive to ensure that workers were as protected as possible.

39. An Employer member from the United States pointed out that restructuring was mostly the result of customer demands. Enterprises had to retain the ability to respond quickly in order to stay in business. Restrictions on employers could be harmful in this respect, even in times of economic crisis.
40. A Worker member from Spain, responding to a comment by a panellist that restructuring was sometimes inevitable, pointed out that workers were often not given sufficient information and not included in the early stages of restructuring but only called in later to “extinguish the fire”.
41. An Employer member from Germany focused on a positive aspect of restructuring associated with lean production. This process reduced the number of levels of management and gave more decision-making power to skilled workers. The proportion of skilled workers had been increasing in his country and was now above 60 per cent. Moreover, these workers had less risk of unemployment.
42. The representative of the Government of India suggested that a reduction in management hierarchy might mean that promotion was less frequent and workers were stuck at the top of the scale and became demotivated. Also, skills took time to acquire and some were not able to acquire them. Keeping increments, rather than closing the salary scale, could solve the problem. The speaker also suggested that developed and developing countries needed to exchange information on future developments in technology, so that the developing countries could be helped to acquire them.
43. A Worker member from Algeria spoke of the tragic consequences of restructuring, particularly in developing countries, where there were often a large number of illegal workers. He agreed that governments, employers and workers must cooperate to solve these problems but the international financing institutions must also review their policies.
44. A Worker member from Costa Rica appreciated hearing that restructuring was a general problem affecting all sectors and not just the MEE industries. A unified approach, under the umbrella of the ILO, was necessary so that the social partners could work together in greater understanding of each others’ problems.
45. The Chairperson said there were always winners and losers in restructuring, but attitudes could make a difference to the outcomes. He cited an example from his own experience when his company decided to establish a new automobile factory in Spain rather than expand production in the United Kingdom. A major result from the decision was that the workers recruited for the Valencia plant demonstrated a positive attitude and were open to change and interested in developing themselves. Employers could offer training in skills for today, and sometimes for tomorrow but the real issue in lifelong learning was about individuals and their desire to learn, rather than expect others to do it for them.
46. A Worker member from Japan suggested that the motivation of workers was affected by the attitude of the company. A key question was whether the company could provide the environment and motivation to capitalize on the attitude that the workers originally harboured.
47. The Employer spokesperson pointed out that many corporations had not survived and many workers had lost their jobs. Moreover, there would be many more shocks to come. Lifelong learning opportunities could be offered by employers who would also gain from lower costs. This was potentially a win-win situation. By the application of common sense

principles, such as value-engineering, companies could prepare themselves for the realities of tomorrow.

48. An Employer member from Malaysia agreed that employers needed to provide the right atmosphere, but workers also needed to respond positively. His company had opened a factory in Thailand where costs were significantly lower but, through cooperation with the workers, they had managed to keep the factory in Malaysia operating too. In this instance, management had provided a positive climate and workers had responded positively.
49. In summing up, the panellist from the ILO recalled his experience with an ultra modern system of management having only two levels of manager and workers. It had not been successful because the workers had high levels of qualification and saw no future in their jobs. The panellists agreed that restructuring should be based on effective dialogue at an early stage. If dialogue occurred too late in the process, adaptation could take much longer. Fortunately, there was a rich tradition of social dialogue in this sector. Even more could be achieved if the international financing institutions were involved.
50. The representative of the Government of Greece, speaking on behalf of the Government group, reiterated that job losses were the responsibility of governments, as human resources and dynamic industries together provided the power for the growth of nations.
51. The Worker spokesperson said that all workers wanted similar things and it was regrettable that they had to be pitted against each other. This should not be a zero sum game.
52. The Employer spokesperson concluded that restructuring was inevitable but all stood to gain from lifelong learning. All had to work together to achieve it. The ILO could play a key role in promoting the concept.

Themes 3 and 4: Lifelong learning in the MEE industries: Concepts and examples; The appropriate curricula for the various aspects of lifelong learning

53. The first of the three presentations was made by Mr. Mahesh (Employer member from India), who addressed the theme of appropriate curricula for lifelong learning. He described the need for appropriate curricula and discussed using projections based on current R&D expenditures to create a new lifelong learning model that would focus on vocational and behavioural training. He described an expanded role for universities in building this new model, whereby universities would move away from theory-based teaching and would instead assist in the creation of a learning model grounded in today's demand-driven industry. New learning areas, such as team building, transformational leadership and stress management, could be explored within this learning model. The model would also assist in anticipating future skills needs, thereby minimizing the skills gap. In order to achieve this, the model would need to remain flexible and open to continuous improvement. He emphasized the need for cooperation and suggested the ILO play a role as facilitator, assisting the three groups in arriving at a consensus.
54. The second presentation, by Ms. Eberhardt (Worker member from Germany), was made from the perspective of her union's activities. Skills development policy should form part of the collective bargaining process and her union had recently reached a collective agreement concerning skills training. Outcomes of this agreement included the development of a framework for regular discussions, the creation of a dispute settlement mechanism and the establishment of a common agency to foster training awareness and monitor training and technological changes. The union had also established a new

programme to provide career advice. The programme had four main components: a competency handbook allowing workers to assess their own skills with respect to the labour market; a comprehensive questionnaire assisting workers in identifying potential careers; personalized advice in the form of seminars, group talks and counselling; and a further training checklist providing information on the further training market. The union also offered an IT training programme allowing those lacking previous education to attain internationally recognized certificates.

- 55.** The final presentation was given by Mr. Riordan, from the ILO's InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability, who presented an overview of recent ILO research and publications (www.ilo.org/skills). Three main points were essential in creating lifelong learning. Firstly, examining how the individual learns, through the use of core competencies or key work skills; secondly, reforming the education system to shift away from an active teacher-passive learner paradigm; and lastly, recognizing that further training needs could not be met solely by governments; the social partners must be actively involved. The *World Employment Report 2001 – Life at work in the information economy* examined skills development and training in an environment of rapidly changing technology. The report found that development and growth were directly linked to learning and, due to short product cycles, this learning had to take place as close as possible to the workplace. It also found that literacy in education was essential and that education was more important to the ICT sector than connectivity. The second publication presented, *Learning and training for work in the knowledge society* (Report IV for the 91st Session (2003) of the International Labour Conference), will serve as the background for the revision of the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150). This report found that for people living in OECD countries, learning peaked between the ages of 16 and 18. By age 29 there was very little involvement in formal education. Furthermore, less than 50 per cent of workers in OECD countries had access to continuous training. The third publication, *Supporting workplace learning for high performance learning*, found that high-performance learning provided good practices, promoted decent work, prevented the exploitation of workers, encouraged consultation and had a positive effect on business performance. In order to achieve these benefits however, commitment and cooperation was needed from workers and employers.
- 56.** The Worker spokesperson stated that lifelong learning should be viewed as a system for lifelong competence development that would include the following components: initial education; on-the-job training; and training required as a result of restructuring. The right to access this system should be legally guaranteed, with the cost of realizing these rights borne by governments and employers. Special attention should be paid to marginalized groups, such as women and temporary workers. Public policy should establish education and training norms allowing the portability of skills. Lifelong learning should be a collective bargaining point for unions. The social partners should inform workers of the importance and availability of lifelong learning; unions should motivate workers to develop their skills and emphasize the workers' responsibility to take up lifelong learning; employers should facilitate lifelong learning by providing the necessary infrastructure; and the ILO could assist through the collection and dissemination of best practices for education and training methods. For example, in the Boeing company's "Quality Through Training" programme, through negotiations with the employer, the focus of the programme had shifted from training geared towards specific job skills, to the skill of knowing how to learn. This had proved an effective method of involving adults in the lifelong learning process.
- 57.** An Employer member from the United States presented the Employers' group's perspective on some current realities. Firstly, restructuring would continue, with resulting upheavals in the workforce. For employers this meant the notion of "no losers" and of sustainable communities was not foreseeable in the near or long-term future. Secondly,

employer actions were limited by the fact that they must keep in mind the benefit of the entire enterprise. Therefore, while employers certainly had a role to play, governments should also share the responsibilities, and a major role had to be taken by workers themselves.

- 58.** The representative of the Government of Greece, on behalf of the Government group, said human resources were an important need for governments. He agreed that, although lifelong learning systems differ from country to country, ensuring lifelong learning remained a priority as it ensured skills were maintained, led to increased productivity and income, and improved social equity. There was also a need to increase technical and financial assistance to developing countries. Success in establishing the guidelines and operational framework necessary for lifelong learning depended on social dialogue. Referring to the question of curricula, education needed to be flexible in order to confront the new challenges it faced. In order to meet labour market and industry needs, curricula should contain a basic education component, a life skills component, and a lifelong learning component.
- 59.** The representative of the Government of Egypt noted the importance of defining necessary skills within the industry. An organization operating at both the national and international level could be created to take on this task, with the financial burden being shared by governments, employers and workers.
- 60.** An Employer member from Germany agreed with the second panellist's description of effective cooperation between workers and employers in Germany in the field of vocational training. The establishment of the agency referred to was a positive result of the collective agreement, in particular the agency's role in providing advice to SMEs on matters concerning organizational and technological development. But this collective agreement could not be carried into other areas because of its stipulation that training had to remain within the workplace. Yet training should not be restricted to working hours. Moreover, the full costs of training, including release time for employees, should not necessarily be borne by employers; a more flexible financial basis needed to be established.
- 61.** Ms. Eberhardt responded by maintaining that training should remain within the workplace. It was here where changes took place and the skill requirements were being set. In addition, one had to look at the reskilling requirements for jobless workers.
- 62.** An Employer member from France felt that the Meeting should discuss trainers and the tendency still for training to be supply driven. Employers needed to assert their desires for more demand-driven learning to meet enterprise expectations. Universities could play a role in lifelong learning as long as the training provided was oriented to professional competence and not based on the classic teaching and learning offered to young people. The Office report was not sufficiently clear on this point. Learning broad concepts was sometimes important, but university-based training should move away from the general and theoretical towards more inductive methods. In France, the validation of competencies based on an evaluation of whether training met needs, and the greater use of ICT, rather than traditional teaching and learning approaches, were the two most important paths to follow.
- 63.** An Employer member from Switzerland was fully convinced that lifelong learning represented the future, provided it was not killed off by two potential menaces: losing track of reality, i.e. expecting small enterprises to make unrealistic training leave provisions (for example three years) which would divorce employees from the reality of a firm's changing environment; and making lifelong learning "unfundable", i.e. placing an impossible financial burden on firms to meet all of the workers' demands. Companies were already

doing a lot; they were obliged to change technologies, products and processes constantly, and therefore to learn and relearn, providing continual learning opportunities in the process for workers. There had to be a similar change in the general education system away from teachers merely imparting information and knowledge to students and more towards learning by doing.

- 64.** These ideas were supported by the Chairperson of the Meeting. Lifelong learning was fundamental for companies and individuals, but one had to look at it in the context of the current, post-11 September economic context. Airline and motor industry companies for example were on the edge of bankruptcy, laying off workers. It was dogmatic for the workers to demand that all training of workers take place during working time. Companies had certain responsibilities for training, but so did individual workers to take up long-term personal development and training on their own time.
- 65.** An Employer member from Lebanon continued along these lines: the message from the Workers' group was that workers had inherent rights to continual training while employers and governments only had obligations. Employers saw lifelong learning as a means of keeping businesses healthy and competitive, therefore all three partners – employers, governments and workers – had rights and obligations to ensure that businesses survived, workers were employed and societies remained stable.
- 66.** A Worker member from Indonesia acknowledged that small companies faced difficulties in investing in training, particularly after the financial crisis that hit his country, affecting also regional government budgets. A special approach to SMEs was needed. Governments and the ILO could help smaller enterprises to understand new concepts and adopt new approaches. Special attention should be paid to retraining unemployed workers to enhance their job opportunities.
- 67.** In this respect, a Worker member from South Africa emphasized the formation of strategic partnerships to address employers' concerns. For example, three-year university training could help integrate theory and practice in ways that benefited workplaces. This, in turn, provided a rationale for industry partners to try and influence university learning providers, encouraging them to form learning consortiums to respond to industry needs. Similarly, governments could provide support mechanisms to alleviate SMEs' financial burdens, and education and training departments could become more attuned to employers' expectations. In this process, learning providers would be further influenced to meet industry expectations for learning outcomes.
- 68.** A Worker member from Austria added that employer-provided career development opportunities, including up to management level, were important to encourage workers to take up lifelong learning opportunities. Skills shortages were emerging in his country because companies were not investing sufficiently in continual training, and young people entering the workforce were not attracted to certain technical skills.
- 69.** The representative of the Government of Oman contended that governments had an important role to play in curriculum development for lifelong learning which was relevant to workplaces and oriented towards development of skills and competences, as stated by the Employer member from France. E-learning was promising, but a number of issues around its development needed investigation, for instance access through appropriate bandwidth. A comprehensive plan covering these issues was clearly needed.
- 70.** Responding to the debate, Mr. Mahesh hoped that lifelong learning would not go the way of other recent jargon associated with globalization trends and be forgotten in a few years. To avoid this, certain essential points needed to be kept in mind: lifelong learning was a continuous, not one-off process; approaches were country-specific; e-learning and distance

learning opportunities should be increased; learning in the future should encourage multiskilling, should be oriented towards self-development, focused on the employee and therefore, learner-centred, not teacher- or facilitator-centred. Further, continual training should seek to build individual competences for employability, the results evaluated through assessment centres. Learning opportunities needed to take into account emerging technologies which altered industries and global markets (the ILO could help monitor such developments). Finally, governments and employers would have to share expenses, and employers and employees would have to share time to make lifelong learning a reality.

71. Ms. Eberhardt insisted that responsibility for lifelong learning opportunities did not lie only with employers and workers; everyone shared responsibilities. However, realism also dictated that unreasonable burdens should not be placed on workers to undergo training after an eight-hour working day. Retraining and lifelong learning was a process of give and take between different actors. SMEs certainly had constraints, but one needed to look at practical solutions to overcome them. For example, Nordic countries provided numerous positive models such as replacing workers on retraining leave with unemployed workers, and in Germany, job rotation was spreading. The debate needed to be more frank and concrete. Her union's triangular logo could be transposed to the lifelong learning concept which should seek to satisfy the expectations and needs of customers, employers and workers.
72. Mr. Riordan noted that the debate had not revealed significant differences between the mechanical and electrical engineering industry and other industries. The ILO had already developed considerable information databases on human resource development, available on the web site, and would shortly make available 500 national initiatives on the subject. Databases on qualifications frameworks and investment in training were also being developed, and a new book on learning and training in SMEs would be published next year. As to the big question of who paid for training, the conclusions of the 2000 discussion on human resource development at the International Labour Conference and the conclusions of the G-8 summit from Cologne, Germany provided some useful guidelines. On the question of partnerships for lifelong learning, the ILO report on human resource development in preparation for the next Conference discussion provided examples.
73. Summing up the discussions on this topic, the Worker and Employer spokespersons agreed that it had been a fruitful exchange of views and, despite the differences, both felt that there was enough common ground to produce balance conclusions which would satisfy all the partners. The panellists' presentations had provided some positive ideas to help define conditions and models for lifelong learning, and the information from the ILO highlighted the value of this kind of international research on the subject.
74. The representative of the Government of Greece, speaking on behalf of the Government group, agreed that it had been an excellent discussion, though perhaps influenced too much by current economic difficulties. There was agreement on the importance of lifelong learning for the social and economic development of all countries. Governments would make the necessary contributions to meet expectations. The key to moving forward however, was political will among the partners to reach agreements that ensured success.

Theme 5: The roles of the social partners and governments in lifelong learning in the MEE industries: Implications for the ILO

75. The first presentation on this theme was made by Mr. Bartel (Employer member from Germany). He explained, from the employers' viewpoint, what was being done to promote lifelong learning in Germany and drew conclusions from German experience about the

responsibilities of the various partners. A system of professional training had existed for many years in Germany and lifelong learning had grown out of this. The foundation was laid at school, followed by three or more years of specialized professional training, all provided and paid for by the State. The Ministry of Labour determined the content of the courses and each training institute had to comply. However, the rules for continuous training and promotion, as well as training for new skills, were negotiated and agreed between the social partners before being approved by the Government. They were then applied throughout the country. Once approved, nothing could be changed without the agreement of the social partners.

76. There were 3.5 million workers in the German MEE industries and Germany was one of the main exporters of MEE products. As enterprises in the sector sold individualized solutions to meet clients' needs, their competitiveness depended on the qualifications and skills of the workforce, and their updating. Lifelong learning was regarded as insurance for the future, for both enterprises and individuals. It offered workers the opportunity continuously to enhance their qualifications. Current expenditure on further training was almost twice that on basic training. It was delivered according to individual needs, mostly within working hours. Data from a survey of companies in the MEE sector showed the average expenditure on training had risen to €1,237 per person per annum in 2000; about half of which was spent on internal courses. A survey of workers had revealed a high level of interest in further training among management and skilled workers, but little interest from those with low levels of skill. The social partners had a role to play in motivating workers, particularly the unskilled, to undertake further training. Overall responsibility for lifelong learning rested with the social partners and the State, with the main responsibility for funding divided according to each partner's area of interest. Thus companies should be responsible for funding work-related training, workers for "employability" training, and the State for retraining to meet the needs of the labour market.
77. The second presentation was made by Mr. Sjöquist (Worker member from Sweden). The concept of lifelong learning embraced education and training from cradle to grave. There were two approaches to education. From the viewpoint of the industry, the labour market had to be supplied with the skills it required (the demand-driven approach). From the viewpoint of the individual, employability was the main concern. This meant having the capacity to adapt to changing requirements. A key question was how to promote an active labour market policy that combined these two approaches. The social partners could influence the outcome, particularly if they worked together. The speaker described two projects in Sweden to improve cooperation between the social partners and between industry and the education system. Another issue that was currently the focus of attention in Europe, was further training for the existing workforce. There would not be sufficient new entrants to the industry to meet the demand for new skills, so the existing workforce would have to adapt and take up new challenges, often with an inadequate educational background. The responsibility for implementation of policies for lifelong learning clearly rested with the workers and employers. They had to work together to anticipate the demand for skills, implement training, enhance motivation, and handle the impact on work organization and the wage system. They also had to find a balance between the needs of the company and of the individual. A tripartite regional partnership arrangement (KFY 2000+) that was used to develop competence close to production centres focused on enhancing competence, employment and employability. The strategies included using the capacities and resources of large companies to develop and test models that could be modified for use by SMEs. Large enterprises also acted as mentors to SMEs. The regional approach was important since up to 90 per cent of the labour force for any enterprise came from the region in which it was situated. Moreover, different regions had different needs, which strengthened the importance of a regional approach and had implications for enabling sustainable communities.

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- 78.** The Worker spokesperson said it was important that the ILO continued to play a role in capacity building and lifelong learning, including by undertaking research into how workers could adapt to technological change – in products and production. The ILO could provide information on successful means of acquiring knowledge and on the demographic implications of a changing workforce and how to ensure that lifelong learning needs were met. A survey in the United States showed that about one quarter of adults were functionally illiterate. In other words they did not have the basic skills to attain the greater competence that was required. A panellist had shown that it was the least skilled workers who were most reluctant to undertake training. A core issue was how to bring home to workers the importance of continuing their education and motivating them to do so. There were systemic problems to be addressed throughout the education and training systems. All forms of education and training, from basic education to nationally certified technical training, should have an equal value as far as the policies of governments and the social partners were concerned. Everyone should have a basic education that allowed them to develop the skills necessary to move forward in an evolving job market. The two ILO Declarations – the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work – should be more widely observed by governments and the social partners. Governments should create an enabling environment for negotiations between employers’ and workers’ organizations, as set out in the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). The social partners could not do this in a vacuum. The Workers’ group reiterated its call for the compilation and maintenance by the ILO of a database on social and economic conditions in the MEE industries and other sectors and that it carry out research into the pace of technical innovation.
- 79.** The Employer spokesperson referred to governments’ responsibilities concerning labour market related training. Employers had responsibilities regarding work-related training that increased workers’ skills so that they could learn about new processes, products and technological advances. Workers had responsibilities regarding the enhancement of their employability. He agreed that the ILO needed to undertake research on competence building and to inform the social partners on the importance of lifelong learning and provide examples of how effective it had been.
- 80.** The representative of the Government of Greece, speaking on behalf of the Government group, said the economic and work-related changes put great demands on governments, employers and workers, especially in the areas of education, training and economic policy. Collaboration was therefore important in order to develop concepts and programmes to promote industrial development and increase human skills. This was particularly the case when it came to modifying education and training standards to meet the demands of new markets. Governments had the task of setting guidelines and operating frameworks for lifelong learning and for encouraging the social partners to reach agreements through social dialogue and collective bargaining. They also had the task of providing training opportunities for the most vulnerable groups in society. Social dialogue was a means to address issues of common interest and was the best means to obtain effective partnerships to address human resources development and training. The ILO had an important role in assisting in this process.
- 81.** In response, Mr. Bartel repeated that in times of rapid change there was a need for new ideas, including for training. New teaching methods, such as e-learning and distance learning; more on-the-job training and in-company learning; and motivating workers to commit themselves to increasing their skills were all necessary. In the light of finite resources, priorities had to be established at each stage. The main responsibility for the use of training resources was with enterprises, but proposals from workers were encouraged. Legislation or collective agreements that led to the same approach for all was not an appropriate option.

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- 82.** Mr. Sjöquist reiterated the importance of shared responsibility and social dialogue, together with an appropriate sectoral approach, so that the different elements of supply and demand for lifelong learning were matched.
- 83.** An Employer member from Sweden pointed out that vocational training in Sweden took place within the school system, not through apprenticeships. This was not satisfactory since vocational training was best provided at the level of the enterprise, but legislation and collective agreements constrained this approach.
- 84.** The representative of the Government of France recalled the fundamental role of the State with respect to ensuring the provision of basic education at school and university for boys and girls. Collective agreements included these rights. Free education, particularly in schools, was in effect an important factor for preventing exclusion from the educational system. The State had an equally fundamental role to play with respect to adopting incentive-based regulations for continuous training throughout working life. That right was provided for in the implementation procedures contained in collective agreements negotiated by the social partners. The State should intervene when there was no cohesion between the social partners and, in times of unemployment, by way of retraining and adaptation courses to enable people to find new jobs.
- 85.** The representative of the Government of Portugal referred to governments' role in vocational training, both direct and indirect, especially as far as funding was concerned. He described vocational and professional training centres in his country that were jointly managed by the Government and the social partners and run jointly with enterprises. The social partners were very much involved in the development of sector-specific training courses. Results had been excellent. He underlined the importance of all the stakeholders contributing to the provision of high-quality training that was adapted to the future needs of the MEE industries to the benefit of all.
- 86.** An Employer member from Lebanon said that the technologically advanced nature of the MEE industries meant there were relatively few opportunities for unskilled or semi-skilled workers. It was difficult and inappropriate for employers to be responsible to find jobs for them, particularly when there were more relevant, more labour-intensive industries seeking workers.
- 87.** The representative of the Government of Kenya said that, as a net importer of technology, his Government was dependent on the suppliers of technology for lifelong learning because of their expertise. National training resources were inadequate and the industry was being asked to play a leading role in re-equipping training institutions for the use of large companies and SMEs. The idea of having large firms as mentors for SMEs was an attractive one that should be followed up.
- 88.** A Worker member from Germany referred to the "watering-can principle" in the context of providing further training. This was an unfocused and inappropriate way of providing training. It was necessary to know who was going to be trained and how. It was elitist to say that only a part of the workforce – those already with skills – had the right to be involved in lifelong learning. If people were not motivated, it was incumbent on the social partners to motivate them to accept opportunities to receive further training. E-learning was encouraging but not the only way, particularly for those who did not have access to or could not afford a computer. Appropriate training techniques had to be used, including traditional ones.
- 89.** A Worker member from Costa Rica said that the benefits of training had to be quantified and weighed against the cost. Also, when looking at attitudes to training, it was important to take a range of factors into account, including the type of training and whether it was

being offered during working time. He gave examples of the benefits to productivity that had been achieved by investing in training in enterprises in his country.

- 90.** A Worker member from Austria referred to surveys of training in his country that showed that 35 per cent of workers benefited from training in the last 12 months, mostly paid for by the enterprise. But only 21 per cent of courses were for lower skilled workers. It should not be up to the company to decide who got trained. He noted that the European Commission recommended that all workers should be entitled to 35 hours of training per year, paid for by the enterprise and undertaken during work time. If the company could not provide such training, there should be an option to receive it from outside.
- 91.** The representative of the Government of Poland said that lifelong learning was well established in his country, including the involvement of the Government and the social partners. Many lessons had been learnt from other countries' experience. Having a central source of information on lifelong learning would be very useful, as would a central source of certification of training, possibly under the umbrella of the ILO. When technologies were exported, certified people should accompany them to provide training in the receiving country.
- 92.** The representative of the Government of Finland said that lessons from his country's five-year programme on lifelong learning pointed to the importance of demographic issues and the role of the social partners, particularly since governments could not motivate at the shop-floor level. In the absence of the professional bodies, such as in the medical sector, the social partners in the MEE industries had to take the lead as far as motivation for training was concerned. Appropriate means to target groups that had had a poor educational experience were necessary, including training methods and presentation. Were old "school-type" methods the right ones, or were new means to stimulate interest necessary?
- 93.** An Employer member from Lebanon reiterated that employers in the MEE sector could not focus on making everyone highly skilled.
- 94.** An Employer member from France said that the special nature of the MEE industries and the diversity of sizes of its enterprises meant that the social partners had to play a central role in the management of training and education policy and needs in the light of innovation, competition and mobility within and outside the sector. This was particularly important at the enterprise level. Today's workers were different from even a few years ago and training was evolving accordingly, including outside working time and the fostering of the development and certification of young workers. The social partners had a role as far as training at blue-collar and professional levels were concerned. Governments should allow the social partners a degree of flexibility as well as making a financial contribution to lifelong learning.
- 95.** The representative of the Government of South Africa said that since 1998 his Government had set up 25 sectoral education and training authorities that were jointly governed by the social partners. Annual training plans had to be submitted and were monitored by the Department of Labour. A National Skills Fund was examining training needs in the MEE industries, including bursaries, so that an environment that was conducive to lifelong learning was ensured.
- 96.** A Worker member from Algeria reported that restructuring that was taking place in the move towards a market economy had resulted in downsizing in MEE enterprises. No priority was being given to training existing workers. If skilled workers were needed, enterprises merely went to the market place. Under an agreement with several European

countries, considerable resources were being devoted to introducing new education methods.

- 97.** A Worker member from South Africa noted that while an individual might be responsible for his own development, he needed to be informed about the needs for particular skills and given government support in obtaining training. Thus funding and other incentives from government and employers were essential, and trade unions would encourage workers to increase their skills.
- 98.** The Chairperson recalled that Worker members saw the need to motivate people to develop themselves further, while there was evidence that managers were more inclined to commit personal time to furthering their careers. The challenge was to ensure that everyone was motivated towards greater personal development. While companies must ensure that they had people with the skills when necessary, there had to be a distinction between their responsibility to train and develop their workforce for company business and the provision of lifelong learning for personal development. It was not appropriate to treat everyone the same; not all were interested or had the potential. Rather it was important to encourage people to meet their aspirations. But it was not merely management's responsibility, everyone had a role.
- 99.** Mr. Bartel, responding to a number of points that had been made, agreed that something needed to be done to increase the proportion of lower skilled people undergoing further training. The assignment of funds for special training was based on the premise that it was an investment that led to commercial survival by virtue of having a highly qualified workforce. Nonetheless, all expenditure had to be justified, more so in times of uncertainty. In the light of this and because a positive outcome from training was required, it was for enterprises to determine that priorities were given to different forms of training. Responsibility for personal improvement rested with the individual.
- 100.** Mr. Sjöquist added that for lifelong learning to be relevant to workers there must be action at the sectoral, and company levels. The ILO had a role to play too. When asking why lower skilled workers were less inclined to undertake training, it was important to ascertain the circumstances in which lifelong learning was introduced. Was it as part of working life? Was there a possibility for career development, improved job quality, better work organization or higher earnings?
- 101.** The representative of the Government of Greece, speaking on behalf of the Government group, concluded that governments had to cover gaps in lifelong learning so that all workers who needed it had access. Legal frameworks were needed, in consultation with the social partners, whose role was to maintain skills and increase employability.
- 102.** The Worker spokesperson said that governments and the social partners provided opportunities for different types of lifelong learning, but not everyone had the same opportunities. It was more than just a matter of motivation or of providing opportunities for those who were motivated. Each group had to assume its responsibilities. Employers increased their efficiency, profits and market share by ensuring opportunities for learning. Higher skill levels led to a better society and increased tax receipts from higher earnings.
- 103.** The Employer spokesperson summed up by stressing the tripartite stake in lifelong learning. If taken seriously, rather than merely receiving lip service as had been the case with some fads, all would benefit from it. The ILO had an important role in enabling governments to monitor what was happening in lifelong learning and in enabling experiences to be shared. An annual conference could be considered. Centres for learning and development could be established in different countries. They could monitor experiences and analyse results, such as the extent of employability. Lifelong learning

should lead to greater competence and employability in the context of new technologies and trends.

Consideration and adoption of the draft report and the draft conclusions by the Meeting

- 104.** The Working Party on Conclusions submitted its draft conclusions to the Meeting at the latter's seventh sitting.
- 105.** At the same sitting, the Meeting adopted the present report and the draft conclusions.

Geneva, 27 September 2002.

(Signed) Mr. Mel Lambert,
Chairperson.

Conclusions on lifelong learning in the mechanical and electrical engineering industries¹

The Tripartite Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Industries,

Having met in Geneva from 23 to 27 September 2002,

Adopts this twenty-seventh day of September 2002 the following conclusions:

Theme 1: The economic performance of the MEE industries: 2001 recession and outlook

1. The most recent and current economic crises affected: industrialized and developing countries; large, medium, and small-sized enterprises; and workers in all sectors, including the mechanical and electrical engineering industries. As the economic performance of the MEE industries depends on many factors, the best way of avoiding the consequences of economic recession would be the adoption of industrial and financial policies to minimize the effects of cyclical fluctuations and to promote new technologies in those industries, as well as employability.
2. Governments should play a role in reducing economic risks through adopting appropriate legislation and transparent policies which would:
 - encourage long-term growth strategies away from the present short-term focus;
 - promote fair trade;
 - grant developing countries greater access to markets in industrialized countries;
 - contribute to the development of a level playing field; and
 - provide incentives to those investing in lifelong learning.
3. Enterprise performance depends on the acceptance of responsibilities and the respect of rights of all stakeholders. Employers should not disregard the rights and duties of all stakeholders in their enterprises, including workers, shareholders and the communities in which they operate. Ethical behaviour of all concerned parties in the economy will improve industry performance and help to regain the confidence of the stakeholders. Workers' organizations are willing to enter into dialogue with enterprises to assist them in adapting to changing economic and social circumstances. Instead of "negative" competition, there should be positive competition, e.g. in terms of lifelong learning.
4. Lifelong learning is a large but necessary undertaking that should be addressed jointly by governments, employers, workers and their respective organizations in an appropriate manner, especially in times of economic downturn.

¹ Adopted unanimously – with the exception of paragraph 8 which was opposed by the Employers' group.

Theme 2: The social impact of restructuring the MEE industries

5. Sound business and investment plans are one of the best ways of avoiding restructuring in the first place. Restructuring affects the products, manufacturing processes and the organization of management and labour. Alternatives to employment reduction must be considered. When restructuring is inevitable, the employers should design a restructuring plan and implement it. In this context, lifelong learning and training should respond to the needs of the enterprise and be designed to mitigate the adverse effects on the workforce.
6. Workers' organizations and their representatives should be informed in a timely fashion of restructuring plans and, if retraining and redeployment to jobs requiring new or changed skills is not possible, be followed by consultations and negotiations, which should include consideration of alternatives.
7. In the event of unavoidable restructuring, there should be government assistance to workers including, for example, cost-sharing of short-time working, retraining, relocation, social services and early retirement schemes. Governments should make funds available or grant tax incentives for company-level development and training programmes which can, where appropriate, be jointly developed and administered by the social partners. Financial benefits for individually pursued lifelong learning activities could also be provided.
8. Such government assistance should not be abused and the social partners and governments must prevent the inequitable impact of restructuring on vulnerable groups such as women, youth, minorities, etc. When restructuring, large employers should, whenever possible, assist their SME suppliers and support businesses and their workers in adapting to changing economic circumstances for lifelong learning purposes.

Themes 3 and 4: Lifelong learning in the MEE industries: Concepts and examples; The appropriate curricula for the various aspects of lifelong learning

9. Lifelong learning refers to a continuous process of competency development to ensure mobility and employability of the individual, rather than a system for narrow skills acquisition, which will, following appropriate basic education² and training for initial employment, include:
 - (a) on- and off-the-job education, training and development;
 - (b) retraining for new jobs as industries restructure; and
 - (c) higher education for enhanced employability.
10. Lifelong learning and training should be a combination of vocational (job) training focusing on a particular skill and long-term (developmental) training focusing on the abilities within the speciality or expertise of the individual and personal career guidance.

² The following elements should form part of the basic education: reading, writing, numeracy and at least a second language, problem-solving ability, creativity and teamwork, computing skills, ability to communicate, including in a multicultural context, and the ability to learn how to learn, etc.

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11. The right of every person to basic education, and access to training, retraining and further education should be constitutionally or at least legally guaranteed. Basic education systems must be accessible to all and establish a sound foundation for future learning. Governments should develop a regulatory framework and devise appropriate policies with regard to the above (especially with respect to the financial implications) and encourage dialogue with the social partners as required. While it is understood that governments bear primary responsibility for basic education, it is likewise understood that once students leave school and enter an industrial setting, employers bear the responsibility of vocational training as it relates to the enterprise and there is a greater need for the social partners to be involved in further education and training programmes based on demand. This social dialogue can take the form of consultations, collective bargaining or the joint administration of training bodies or funds.
 12. One of the challenges for lifelong learning is the development of the ability to provide a quick response to new requirements. If devised in a flexible manner lifelong learning should allow for continuous improvement to meet rapidly changing market demands and, in addition to skills development, address issues such as creative thinking, problem solving, team building, leadership, decision-making and coping with stress. In this context, e-learning or other methods in or outside the workplace are also important so that opportunities for lifelong learning should be made available to the workforce from the unskilled to the most highly qualified workers. Lifelong learning systems must pay special attention to the most vulnerable groups.
 13. The development of relevant competencies benefits not only the career of the individual in providing better employment and self-development opportunities, but is also of benefit to the employer who is able to draw on the proficiency of the workers to apply these newly acquired abilities to market needs.
 14. In order for lifelong learning to be accessible to all, skill certification and skills upgrading need to be nationally accepted and internationally transparent and understandable. Information on this should be exchanged internationally.
 15. On the question of financing:

There is no universal model of investing in training. Governments should create a general economic environment and incentives conducive to encourage individuals and enterprises to invest individually or jointly in education and training. This investment and the responsibility for it should generally be determined by the objectives of training, e.g. individual, enterprise or societal objectives. Countries can use different ways and means to foster investment in training and increase resources for training. Enterprises have a critical role to play in investment in training. A number of mechanisms used in combination to further investment in training and to guarantee access are required. These may include levy systems on enterprises accompanied by public grants, establishment of training funds, various incentives for training and learning, e.g. tax rebates, training credits, training awards, individual training accounts, collective and individual training rights, sabbatical leave, collective training agreements and emulation of national and international best practices of investing in training. The chosen mechanisms should take into account the special needs of the SMEs.³

Such education and training programmes should enable participants to find jobs in industries lacking skilled workers.

³ Para. 12, resolution on human resources training and development, ILC, 14 June 2000, reprinted in *Learning and training for work in the knowledge society* (Geneva, ILO, 2002).

Theme 5: The role of the social partners and governments in lifelong learning in the MEE industries: Implications for the ILO

- 16.** It is the responsibility of governments to establish the legal framework and enabling environment that makes it possible for employers and workers to participate in and promote lifelong learning. While basic education is the responsibility of governments, vocational training is provided by enterprises in many countries (or in close collaboration with the government); the opportunities and benefits of lifelong learning will be fully explained to individual workers by the social partners.
- 17.** Enterprises and workers' organizations should encourage access to lifelong learning and, where workers do not participate, the social partners will jointly work to create the environment for motivating them. It is the responsibility of individual workers to use the training opportunities offered by companies and training providers.
- 18.** The ILO should continue to maintain the current social and economic databases which it has developed in connection with the preparatory work for the adoption in 2004 of the new Recommendation on human resource development (and which contains initiatives on lifelong learning) and expand it to include specific references to the MEE industries.
- 19.** The ILO should continue to promote the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (1977)⁴ and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up (1998).
- 20.** ILO sectoral meetings on MEE industries should be maintained as outstanding opportunities for tripartite constituents, especially from developing countries, to meet and exchange views on important aspects of a broad range of topical issues.

⁴ As amended in 2000.

Part 2

Other proceedings

Presentation on the Sectoral Activities Department one-stop window web site

Moderator: Mr. Norman Jennings, Senior Industrial Specialist,
Sectoral Activities Department, ILO, Geneva

Presenter: Ms. Anamaria Vere, Web Site Development Specialist,
Sectoral Activities Department, ILO, Geneva

Ms. Vere provided an outline of the new “one-stop window” conception for the Sectoral Activities Department web site, which was presented officially to the ILO’s Governing Body at its June 2002 session. In contrast to the previous site, the one-stop window allowed easier navigation, much better possibilities for hyperlinks to other relevant ILO and external sources of information of a sectoral nature, and a more user-friendly design. Ms. Vere demonstrated how the improvements gave a better overview of the whole range of sectoral activities across the ILO for each of the 22 sectors, and allowed access to much information and data that were previously difficult to locate. Links to occupational safety and health material, to the ILO’s flagship databases, to sector-relevant external web sites, and so on were illustrated. Participants were invited to provide comments and suggestions as subsequent users of the site.

Closing speeches

The Secretary-General gave some information on participation at the Meeting and reviewed its outputs. The Meeting had been an important occasion to discuss lifelong learning in the MEE industries in an ILO tripartite framework for social dialogue. Having panel discussions throughout the week was a major innovation of the Meeting and provided a good opportunity for a more in-depth exchange of information and experience on recent developments in the industry, as well as on policies to address the severe problems confronting it. During the Meeting a set of conclusions emerged from the discussions which were adopted by consensus. This text was the main outcome of the Meeting, which, together with the report of the Meeting, was to be submitted to the Governing Body in March next year. The Governing Body will then send these documents to the governments of the member States, and through them to the employers' and workers' organizations concerned, and to the international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned. It was important that the ILO's constituents, as well as the ILO itself, be ready to put these conclusions into action, both at the national and international levels.

On behalf of the Government group, the Government Chairperson thanked all the participants for their valuable contributions. Although the MEE sector, taken as a whole, was a very broad industry – ranging from the manufacture of turbines and electronic guidance systems to refrigerators, computers and cell phones – the Meeting had at least one participant from almost every subsector of the industry represented by either an Employers' or Workers' delegate. In addition, Governments had attached special interest to the subject because of the ensuing discussion in 2003 and 2004 on human resource development. The detailed expertise of the participants provided with a depth of knowledge on all of the themes on the agenda. Even though this Meeting had about 20 participants from each of the three groups, altogether delegates from over 40 countries were represented enabling global coverage of the major MEE producing countries in the world. The Meeting was characterized by a lively discussion of all agenda items and adopted a set of wide-reaching conclusions without too much difficulty.

Mr. Cassady (Chairperson of the Employers' group) seconded many of the comments which had already been made and on behalf of the Employers thanked all those who had contributed to the success of the Meeting. Everyone had been able to participate and learn with ample opportunity for networking. The interface with colleagues from countries at various stages of development had been particularly rewarding. The new procedure of thematic discussions was interesting and increased the possibility for participation. The Employers looked forward to its continuation in the future.

Mr. Leslie (Chairperson of the Workers' group), felt that this Meeting had been his finest lifelong learning experience. He thanked his Worker colleagues for their collaboration and the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) for their support. He also thanked the ILO and the various Government and Employer representatives, each of whom had a different role to play in making lifelong learning a reality.

The Chairperson, Mr. Lambert, noted that it had been an exciting week looking at the value and importance of lifelong learning in an industry the products of which were used on a daily basis and without which life would be unimaginable for some of us. There were very high-calibre interventions on all themes from all parties which led to very lively debates. The four thematic or panel discussions also provided further insights into the workings of the industry. This had been a departure from the way in which sectoral meetings were usually conducted, but participation in these panels highlighted the breadth and the depth of the expertise available from amongst the participants themselves. It also

underlined the worldwide knowledge base which only the ILO could bring together because of its unique tripartite structure and standing in the world of work. The conclusions attested to the importance that the participants attached to lifelong learning within the industry, despite the fact that everyone had come from very different backgrounds. Nevertheless, their impact would only be felt when they were widely disseminated together with the background report. After thanking all those who had made the Meeting a success and wishing everyone a safe journey home, he declared the Meeting closed.

Evaluation questionnaire

A questionnaire seeking participants' opinions on various aspects of the Meeting was distributed before the end of the Meeting.

1. How do you rate the Meeting as regards the following?

	5 Excellent	4 Good	3 Satisfactory	2 Poor	1 Unsatisfactory	Average score
The choice of agenda item (subject of the Meeting)	7	5			1	4.3
The quality of the discussion	3	9			1	4.0
The Meeting's benefits to the sector	2	9	1		1	3.8
The conclusions	3	6	3		1	3.7
Thematic discussion 1	3	5	3	1		3.8
Thematic discussion 2	4	6	2		1	3.9
Thematic discussions 3 and 4	5	7		1		4.2
Thematic discussion 5	3	5	3	1		3.8
Opportunity for networking	6	2	3	1		4.0

2. How do you rate the quality of the report in terms of the following?

	5 Excellent	4 Good	3 Satisfactory	2 Poor	1 Unsatisfactory	Average score
Quality of analysis	4	8		1		4.0
Objectivity	4	7	1		1	4.0
Comprehensiveness of coverage	3	5	4	1		3.8
Presentation and readability	5	6	1	1		4.1
Amount and relevance of information	3	8	1		1	3.9

3. How do you consider the time allotted for discussion?

	Too much	Enough	Too little
Discussion of the report	1	9	3
Panel discussions		12	1
Groups		11	2
Working Party on Conclusions	2	9	1

4. How do you rate the practical and administrative arrangements (secretariat, document services, translation, interpretation)?

	5 Excellent	4 Good	3 Satisfactory	2 Poor	1 Unsatisfactory	Average score
	9	3		1		4.5

5. Respondents to the questionnaire

	Government	Employers	Workers	Observers	Total	Response rate (%)
	2	8	2	1	13	15

6. Participants in the Meeting

Government	Employers	Workers	Technical advisers	Observers	Total
20	20	19	17	12	88

7. Delegates/technical advisers

	Government	Employers	Workers	Total
Delegates	20	20	19	59
Technical advisers	9	3	5	17

8. Female participation

	Government	Employers	Workers	Total	Per cent female delegates
Delegates	2	1	1	4	4.5
Technical advisers	3	3	0	6	

List of participants
Liste des participants
Lista de participantes

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of the International Labour Office
Représentant du Conseil d'administration
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Représentants d'Etats Membres présents aux séances
Representantes de Estados Miembros presentes en las sesiones

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