SIXTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Developments in the United Nations

Contents

Introduction

1. This paper offers an overview of debates and decisions by UN intergovernmental bodies during 2003, and of actions taken by the UN system that are of interest to the ILO.

2. The Secretary-General gave his key speech at the opening of the General Assembly's general debate, in which he strongly upheld the UN system of collective security. Focusing on the shared vision of the Millennium Summit, and global solidarity, he noted the threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, small arms used in civil conflict, extreme poverty, diseases and environmental degradation and the challenge of responding to these threats.

3. A Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change was established in November 2003 to examine global threats, analyse future challenges to international peace and security, and recommend collective responses for addressing them.

4. The only major UN conference in 2003 was the World Summit on the Information Society.

I. Regular United Nations events

1. Fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly (Autumn 2003)

5. The fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly attracted the highest level of participation since the Millennium Summit. The statements centred on multilateralism, UN reform, trade (particularly the Cancun meeting), NEPAD and Iraq.

6. The topics discussed in the Second (Economic and Financial) and Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) Committees of most relevance to the ILO were the following:

   ■ *Second Committee:* macroeconomic policy; women in development; international migration and development; international strategy for disaster reduction; poverty eradication; finance for development; science and technology for development; international financial system; report on the work of ECOSOC; and Palestine.

   ■ *Third Committee:* social development, including questions relating to youth; ageing and disabled persons; advancement of women; rights of the child; indigenous people; elimination of racism and racial discrimination; human rights.

   Statements highlighting the ILO's work in most of these areas were delivered. [1]

7. Some of the resolutions adopted by the Committees are of particular relevance, and six explicitly mention the ILO. These note the forthcoming discussion on migration at the International Labour Conference; [2] encourage the work of the ILO with regard to the social

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[1] http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/exrel/events/statements/unga58/index.htm.

[2] "Protection of migrants", A/RES/58/190. See also resolutions A/RES/58/166 ("International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their

dimension of globalization and note the work of the World Commission; [3] invite the World Trade Organization to strengthen its institutional relationship with the UN; [4] decide to hold a high-level dialogue on financing for development in 2005 and on migration in 2006; [5] urge governments to promote the rights of women workers, including equal pay for work of equal value, [6] and to consider ratifying ILO Conventions relating to the rights of women migrant workers; [7] provide for the negotiation of a Convention on persons with disabilities; [8] and call on the Government of Myanmar to pursue cooperation with the ILO to implement the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Forced Labour Practices in Myanmar. [9]

8. In his address to these Committees on 27 October, [10] the Director-General stated that the current model of globalization had failed to create jobs – a prerequisite for poverty eradication – and that the benefits had not been equitably redistributed. He advocated better policy coherence and fairer "rules of the game".

9. The discussions on UN reform covered the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. [11] The resolution that was adopted provides for improving cooperation, coordination and coherence between the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC, as well as the working methods of the General Committee and the Main Committees of the General Assembly; publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly, with support from the Department of Public Information; monitoring the implementation of General Assembly resolutions and the conclusions of major UN conferences and summits; and strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

10. In December 2002 the General Assembly established an ad hoc working group on "the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social field". [12] The report of this working group recognizes the political and social significance of UN conferences and summits. The periodicity and format of the review of conference follow-up should be

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Families") and A/RES/58/208 ("International migration and development") which both mention the ILO. For resolutions, see http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/r58.htm.

[3] "The role of the UN in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence", A/RES/58/225.

[4] "Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development", A/RES/58/230.

[5] A/RES/58/230 and A/RES/58/208, op. cit.

[6] "Women in development", A/RES/58/206.

[7] "Violence against women migrant workers", A/RES/58/143.

[8] "Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities", A/RES/58/246.

[9] "Situation of human rights in Myanmar", A/RES/58/247.

[10] http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/speeches/somavia/2003/newyork.pdf.

[11] A/RES/58/126.

[12] http://www.un.org/esa/documents/conferencefollowup.pdf.

decided on a case-by-case basis, as delegates do not favour holding more conferences in the sequential "plus five" patterns. Therefore, further special efforts need to be made to ensure that social issues receive adequate priority on the development agenda.

11. In 2005 there will be a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Youth employment and gender equality will receive attention.

12. The General Assembly held a two-day high-level dialogue on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The general view was that Monterrey was only a start, that too little was agreed then, and that there has been too little implementation since.

13. The Secretary-General noted that in 2002 developing countries made the largest ever net annual transfer of funds to developed countries (almost US$200 billion). The dialogue focused on development strategies, foreign direct investment, ODA, investment in public services and infrastructure, commodity prices and the need to reduce trade barriers, debt and agricultural subsidies. There was support for the United Kingdom proposal for an international finance facility. Further work on innovative forms of financing for development was suggested.

14. The General Assembly recognized the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as a specialized agency of the United Nations. The WTO will organize in 2005 a World Conference on Analysing Tourism in the Global Economy: Applications of the Tourism Satellite Account, at which it has invited the ILO to lead a session on the theme of "monitoring labour markets in the tourism sector".

2. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

15. The high-level segment of the 2003 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) took as its theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development", and included a ministerial dialogue. An account of the session was presented in November 2003. [13]

16. It should be noted that, at the General Assembly, many countries welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal for an extended, regionally representative Bureau for ECOSOC, and supported the meeting between the UN and the BWIs and the WTO in April 2004. Strong calls by developing countries for increased voting power in the BWIs were supported by a number of developed countries.

3. Commission on the Status of Women: 47th session (3-14 March 2003)

17. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted conclusions on "Women's access to the media and information and communications technologies (ICT)" calling on all stakeholders to provide equal access for women to ICT-based economic activities. The Committee also adopted resolutions on: "The situation of and assistance to Palestinian and Afghan women and girls" which, inter alia, call on the Afghan Transitional Authority to respect the equal right of women to work and promote their reintegration in employment;

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[13] See also GB.288/TC/2.

"Women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS"; and "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN system". [14]

18. The Commission failed to adopt draft conclusions on "Women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls". Members called for legislation on domestic violence, trafficking in women and sexual exploitation, training for government officials, and mechanisms for protecting women's rights.

4. United Nations treaties concerning human rights

19. The ILO presented written and oral reports, in accordance with existing arrangements with the various UN treaty bodies responsible for the application of the following UN instruments relevant to the ILO:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

- Convention on the Rights of the Child.

20. UN treaty bodies regularly refer to information provided by the ILO and recommend the ratification and application of relevant ILO Conventions. For example, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) identified common challenges facing countries: persistent stereotypical attitudes towards the roles of women and men; violence against women; trafficking in women and girls; and under-representation of women at the highest levels of decision-making. Labour rights were also discussed. [15]

21. The ILO discussed its programmes and disseminated information at a CEDAW round table on women migrant workers, organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

II. United Nations system

1. World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (First Phase, Geneva, December 2003)

22. The ILO actively took part in preparations for the Summit, disseminating its vision of the information society and emphasizing the importance of labour standards, tripartite dialogue and the structural changes that information and communication technologies (ICTs) bring

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[14] The text can be found in E/2003/27, E/CN.6/2003/12.

[15] A/58/38.

to labour markets. The Summit adopted a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. [16] The Second Phase of the Summit will be held in Tunis in 2005.

23. At the Summit, the Director-General suggested that greater attention be given to the choice of investment and employment policies that would result in a fairer society, to social dialogue as the basis for an inclusive society, and to social protection as a mechanism to shield workers from the negative effects of ICTs. The ILO organized a side event that brought together eminent researchers and high-level representatives of business, labour and the UN.

2. Chief Executives Board (CEB)

24. The CEB held two regular sessions in 2003. At the Secretary-General's request, the spring session was chaired by the Director-General of the ILO. CEB members addressed the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, especially the Secretary-General's report to the 2003 session of the General Assembly. In April, they discussed "strategies for sustainable development", calling for coherence and consistency, country ownership of the follow-up process, and integrated follow-up on UN conferences and summits. At the retreat, the Director-General briefed the CEB on the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and its implications for the UN system.

25. In October the CEB discussed financing for development, noting that developed countries needed to do more to deliver on their commitments, and developing countries needed to create enabling environments for their own development. They agreed that the UN system's contribution to follow-up on the Monterrey Conference should continue to focus on enhancing advocacy and coherence. They also discussed staff security extensively. At their autumn retreat the executive heads focused their discussion on the future of multilateralism.

3. Bretton Woods institutions

26. The ILO's relationship with Bretton Woods institutions continued to evolve with significantly increased levels of collaboration, policy dialogue and exchanges of information in 2003. Particular attention should be drawn to the ILO's expanding collaboration with both the World Bank and IMF as regards national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). [17] The ILO, World Bank and UN also enhanced their collaboration related to the design and implementation of support frameworks and mechanisms to promote and facilitate the establishment of national youth employment initiatives linked to the UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network as a follow-up to the MDGs. Opportunities for policy discussions and dialogue between World Bank and ILO technical officials increased through participation at various workshops, seminars, etc. sponsored by the World Bank, ILO and others. The ILO also continued to participate as an Observer at the spring meetings (Washington, April 2003) and annual meetings (Dubai, September 2003) of the IMF's International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and the Joint World Bank-IMF Development Committee. Prior to these meetings, the ILO Director-General sent written comments to the IMF concerning the draft World

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[16] http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi-en-1161|1160.asp.

[17] See GB.285/ESP.2.

Economic Outlook (WEO) as well as written statements prepared for both the IMFC [18] and the Development Committee. [19] The ILO participated in the ECOSOC Special High-Level Meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in New York in April and October 2003.

4. Further strengthening of human rights-related UN action

27. The UN made progress on the Secretary-General's proposal to integrate human rights in all programmes and projects. [20] The ILO contributed to this process by highlighting the importance of international labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work for strengthening human rights. It participated in negotiations for a three-year inter-agency plan of action to strengthen national human rights promotion and protection systems. Consultations on an implementation strategy are in progress.

5. Global Compact

28. The Global Compact now has over 1,200 participating companies. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) joined the Global Compact in May 2003. The ILO increased efforts to involve the social partners. In March 2003 the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) signed a significant agreement to collaborate in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the workplace. [21]

29. New training materials on fundamental principles and rights at work were tested in a number of countries and presented at the annual Global Compact Learning Forum in Brazil in December. Training materials on the environment and human rights are being developed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The ILO and UNEP finalized a resource package that highlights the importance of social dialogue. Work was started on a Global Compact Source Book.

6. Migration

30. Two new UN Conventions on migration entered into force during 2003: the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families (1 July 2003); [22] and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

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[18] See http://www.imf.org/external/spring/2003/imfc/state/eng/ilo.htm and http://www.imf.org/external/am/2003/imfc/state/ilo.htm.

[19] See 67th Meeting, Development Committee, 13 April 2003: DC/S/2003-0013; and 68th Meeting, Development Committee, 22 September 2003: DC/S/2003-0043.

[20] A/57/387.

[21] Global Compact policy dialogue on HIV/AIDS and the workplace response (March 2003); http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/events/ioeicftudec.pdf.

[22] http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/m_mwctoc.htm.

(29 September 2003).[23] The latter is supplemented by two Protocols[24] dealing with the trafficking of, and smuggling in human beings. In 2006 the high-level dialogue of the General Assembly will be devoted to international migration and development.[25]

31. The ILO was represented in several migration-related UN events, including a round table to mark the entry into force of the first Convention, and the International Forum on Social Development: International Migrants and Development. In November, an official of the ILO International Migration Programme made a public presentation for delegates to the General Assembly on "The International Labour Conference of 2004: The Next International Conference on Migration Rights of Non-Nationals".[26]

32. The executive heads of UN agencies dealing with refugee and migration issues (ILO, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNODC, and UNCTAD), as well as the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have decided to meet on a regular basis. The main objective of this Group, called the Geneva Migration Group (GMG), is to provide a practical means of facilitating the exchange of key information at the highest level and to improve their understanding of the interlinkages between the various dimensions of migration. GMG members have already met on three occasions (the last meeting was hosted by the ILO Director-General) and participated in a panel discussion at the last session of the IOM Council in November 2003.

7. United Nations Development Group (UNDG)

33. The UN Development Group (UNDG) pursued its work on simplification and harmonization, joint programming, capacity building for UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and the development of a quality support and assurance system for Common Country Assessments (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). It is developing a communications strategy and strengthening training and support for UNCTs. The ILO contributed to new and updated guidance material.[27] It is a member of the recently established Quality Support and Assurance Group for CCAs and UNDAFs.

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[23] http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_cicp_convention.html.

[24] Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_cicp_signatures_trafficking.html); Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_cicp_signatures_ migrants.html).

[25] Resolution on International Migration and Development, A/RES/58/208.

[26] http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/exrel/events/statements/unga58/migrant-briefing.htm.

[27] Updated/new guidance material has been made available on MDG reports, CCAs and UNDAFs, PRSPs, joint programming, poverty reduction and human rights, and operationalizing a strengthened UN system response to HIV/AIDS at the country level. For information on the UNDG and its activities see www.undg.org.

34. The ILO chaired a UNDG Working Group which prepared "an assessment of the role and experience of the UN system in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers process"[28] and a revised Guidance Note for Agency Personnel.[29] This was reported in November 2003.[30]

35. The ILO participated in the work of the Sub-Group for Updating the CCA and UNDAF Guidelines.[31] The Guidelines now contain references to: "human rights instruments of the UN system" (formerly it referred only to UN Conventions); "comments by supervisory bodies within the UN system", which would include ILO supervisory bodies; ILO fundamental Conventions and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up; the participation of line ministries and employers' and workers' organizations; and the importance of "opportunities for work", as well as "equality" and "justice" for development.

36. The UNDG Technical Working Group on Iraq was set up to carry out a needs assessment exercise in Iraq jointly with the World Bank and under the overall coordination of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. The assessment focused on priority and funding requirements for reconstruction, rehabilitation and investment. Inter-agency needs assessment missions were undertaken to establish baseline indicators and carry out preliminary sectoral analyses. The ILO participated in the task forces on "livelihoods and employment generation" and "institutional strengthening and the rule of law".

8. UN millennium development goals

37. The ILO continued to be fully associated with the efforts of the international community towards the achievement of the MDGs. In so doing, the ILO maintained its efforts to raise international awareness of the relevance of fundamental rights at work, employment promotion, social protection and social dialogue to reducing poverty and social exclusion. The importance of the ILO's tripartite constituency, as well as the added value the Decent Work Agenda brings to the development process, were also highlighted.

38. The first phase of the Millennium Campaign concentrated on the North, with the aim of persuading donors to meet their commitments regarding aid, trade, debt relief and technology transfer to developing countries (Goal 8). The second phase will centre on stimulating national political debate in the South and mobilizing national and regional support for the MDGs.[32]

39. The first output of the Millennium Development Project was included in the UNDP's 2003 *Human Development Report*. A comprehensive strategy for achieving the MDGs will be released in 2004.

Geneva, 23 January 2004.

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[28] http://www.undg.org/access-file.cfm?cat=1&doc=2784&file=3139.

[29] http://www.undg.org/access-file.cfm?cat=1&doc=186&file=186.

[30] GB.288/TC/2.

[31] http://www.undg.org/access-file.cfm?cat=135&doc=3056&file=4057.

[32] See also GB.288/TC/2.