



THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the International Symposium
on Employers' Organizations and the
Challenges Facing Business Today
(Geneva, 15-17 December 2003)**

1. The International Symposium on Employers' Organizations and the Challenges Facing Business Today was held in Geneva from 15 to 17 December 2003. It was attended by 24 Employer representatives nominated by employers' organizations selected through consultations with the Employers' group of the Governing Body.
2. The agenda of the meeting, as approved by the Governing Body at its 287th Session (June 2003),¹ was the following:
 - to discuss the key current and anticipated challenges facing enterprises;
 - to analyse what enterprise managers most need from organizations representing and providing services to employers;
 - to review recent and planned changes taking place in employers' organizations and current and anticipated priority areas for action; and
 - to suggest measures and action plans for consideration by employers' organizations.
3. Participants examined the findings of three surveys conducted over the preceding months. The first looked into the characteristics of enterprises that were members of employers' organizations and those that were not, according to certain criteria. A significant finding of this survey was that, depending on the national industrial relations system, enterprises that are members of an employers' organization tend more to have a trade union presence in their companies and engage in more collective bargaining than enterprises which are not members. Participants discussed various strategies to attract enterprises which were outside of their membership, including improvement of such services as lobbying, research, benchmarking and salary surveying, which give added value to members in other areas than industrial relations. With regard to industrial relations, participants noted the changing nature of the world of work, including the increase in part-time, freelance and temporary

¹ GB.287/12.

workers and the disappearance of lifelong employment. They also noted the emergence of NGOs in employee relations, the decline in union membership and the increase in individual-based human resource development practices. In response, employers' organizations needed to widen services beyond purely labour issues, providing members with services based on their core business which meet the emerging needs of enterprises.

4. Participants then shared information on the key challenges and issues for their respective organizations and suggested a list of areas in which the ILO and the International Organisation of Employers could provide help, including research, information and training. The ILO is already taking account of the suggestions in its current planning in the area of technical cooperation.
5. Both the background documents and the report of the meeting can be obtained from the secretariat of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP).

Geneva, 6 September 2004.