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Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues

STM

FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Sectoral Activities Programme: Proposals for activities in 2006-07

Introduction

1. As reported to the Governing Body in November 2004, the reorientation of the Sectoral Activities Programme that began in 2004-05 is being implemented. This constituent-driven programme is composed of a mix of activities including national-level action programmes, short, focused international meetings with concrete products, such as guidelines and codes of practice, and programmed follow-up. Early indications are that the Sectoral Activities Programme can be responsive to constituents' needs as well as adding value to existing, broader ILO programmes by taking a sectoral approach.

2. Notwithstanding some start-up delays in getting the action programmes under way, the overall good progress to date, notably in establishing tripartite social dialogue on sectoral issues at the national level, led the sectoral steering groups' meeting to conclude in October 2004 that action programmes were a worthwhile addition to the Sectoral Activities Programme. The Committee concluded that these action programmes, however, should complement, but not entirely replace, sectoral meetings. Additionally, recent experience with short, small meetings has been positive, with negotiated outcomes that broadly reflect the participants' views and concerns and with concrete proposals for follow-up using the resources saved through this type of meeting. Accordingly, the proposals for sectoral activities in 2006-07 are a mix of action programmes and international meetings.

3. Last November, the Office posed a number of questions for the Committee's consideration in structuring the programme for 2006-07. [1] Resolution of issues with respect to rotation, type and size of activity, continuation of existing action programmes and options for increasing impact in light of declining resources will significantly shape the content of the programme for the next biennium. In order to facilitate the discussions, the Office has prepared short proposals for each of the sectors that would be "in focus", assuming adherence to historical rotation. In addition, there are suggestions for the continuation of a limited number of action programmes, as well as a few cross-sectoral action programmes and meetings.

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[1] GB.291/STM/1.

Resource context

4. As described in November, for the 2006-07 biennium, the allocation for meetings and action programmes has been cut by a total of about US$108,000. Meanwhile, traditional tripartite meetings of 20 or so Employer and Worker participants are much more expensive in terms of travel costs and allowances paid to delegates than in the past. However, smaller, short meetings have been less expensive than action programmes, leaving resources for follow-up.

5. An important factor in making decisions on the appropriate mix of activities is the necessity not to spread resources too thinly so as to jeopardize impact. Experience has shown that to develop, undertake and complete seven action programmes in a biennium may have been too ambitious, especially during the first attempt at a radically new approach. Based on the experience gained in 2004-05, and in order to maximize delivery, the Office recommends a maximum of five action programmes for 2006-07. Depending on the sectors concerned, some of the existing action programmes could be continued in parallel with up to four new ones, and could be financed by earmarking resources equivalent to one new action programme. This approach would also provide an additional incentive to leverage more resources from elsewhere, in accordance with the resource mobilization strategy that has been developed.

6. As far as meetings and follow-up packages are concerned, and depending on the sectors selected, the Office believes that four or five meetings would be optimal. From this, it might be prudent to hold one meeting in reserve, in order to respond to new, relevant developments. Additionally, given budgetary constraints and particularly the cost of interpretation, holding smaller and/or shorter meetings – such as that for the transport equipment manufacturing sector in January 2005, or the recent meetings of experts – will be essential if follow-up activity is to be assured and action programmes are not to be disadvantaged in terms of resources. Constituents have been adamant that follow-up is an essential part of bringing the outcome of international meetings to those concerned at the national level.

7. Resource constraints have emphasized the need for careful programme design for the next biennium, as well as a resource mobilization strategy. Realistically, ten activities in total, including any continuation of existing action programmes, are as much as should be undertaken in the light of the resources foreseen in 2006-07. Activities in the remaining sectors that are not part of a meeting or action programme in 2006-07, including those sectors that have action programmes in 2004-05, have been reduced by almost 50 per cent. In parallel there is a need to attract funding from extra-budgetary sources. In this biennium SECTOR considerably leveraged its financial and human resources, in one instance more than doubling the budget available to an action programme. Without such leverage, it will be difficult to have any sustainable impact.

Moving ahead

8. Deciding on the major elements of a full complement of action programmes and meetings at this sitting of the Committee will enable the Office to overcome many of the logistical and organizational delays that occurred in getting the action programmes under way in 2004. Preliminary work, including with the ILO field offices and the sectoral steering groups, could start immediately with a view to having the participating countries identified and committed to taking part by the latter part of 2005, and the national infrastructure for action programmes in place by the start of 2006. Ensuring a decision at this sitting regarding all international sectoral meetings would allow consultations on topics, preliminary research and consideration of the meetings' schedule to take place, with a view

to holding half the meetings in 2006. The topics for discussion at the first half of the meetings should be decided now, if possible, or in June 2005 at the latest. Topics for meetings in 2007 could be decided in November 2005. If the Committee wished to keep a meeting slot in reserve, a decision could be taken early in the next biennium, with the understanding that the late holding of such a meeting would make follow-up activity within the 2006-07 biennium difficult. Having regard to the need to remain topical, a short meeting could be held within nine months of a decision on the topic.

9. In every case, SECTOR will work closely with other departments and the ILO field offices, as well as with constituents, in financing and undertaking the action programmes and in ensuring that regional concerns are taken fully into account in topics and reports for meetings. Examples of sectoral links to other headquarters' activities include MIGRANT, Youth Employment Task Team, ILO/AIDS, follow-up to the resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue, IFP/SKILLS, SAFEWORK, INTEGRATION and follow-up to the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. It is clear that unless the action programme proposals and country participation are broadly in line with the priorities established and agreed at the regional level, their utility and impact, not to mention the ability to attract funding from regional offices and extra-budgetary resources, will be much reduced. The same applies to meetings. If they are not topical and focused, with a clear outcome, their impact and utility to constituents will be less and commitment to follow-up muted.

Proposals

10. The following proposed topics for action programmes and international sectoral meetings have been developed in consultation with the social partners, other ILO departments and the field offices, on the basis of recent meetings and to meet perceived needs. All these proposals have been developed taking into account previous and current work in these sectors. A fuller description of the proposals for new activities is found in the appendix. Based on the discussion above, the overall recommendation of the Office to the Committee is as follows:

Action programmes

11. A maximum of five action programmes to be selected now, comprised as follows:

   ■ four new action programmes for 2006-07;

   ■ resources equivalent to one action programme to be used to continue five 2004-05 action programmes.

Meetings and follow-up

12. A maximum of four to five meetings to be selected now with discussion topics to be decided as follows:

   ■ two to three topics (for 2006 meetings) to be decided now if possible, but in any case by June 2005 at the latest;

   ■ remaining topics to be decided by November 2005, or in one case early in 2006.

I. "In focus" sectors – Assuming adherence to historical rotation

Chemicals

- **Action programme** to promote social dialogue and decent work in the pharmaceutical industry in the light of outsourcing and the emergence of small enterprises.

- **Meeting of experts** to examine instruments, knowledge, advocacy, technical cooperation and international collaboration as tools with a view to developing a policy framework for hazardous substances.

Commerce

- **Meeting** on the role of new retail technologies in shaping the employment landscape in commerce.

- **Meeting** on promoting corporate social responsibility in commerce through social dialogue.

Food, drink, tobacco

- **Action programme** to establish structures for better governance in the food and drink industry.

- **Meeting** on opportunities to promote decent work in the food processing industry: challenges for social dialogue.

Health services

- **Action programme** on the international migration of health service workers: the supply side.

- **Action programme** on promoting youth employment in health services in crisis-stricken countries.

Mechanical and electrical engineering

- **Action programme** on ensuring adequate conditions of work in the light of the offshoring of the manufacture of electronics components to transition and developing countries.

- **Meeting** to address the phenomenon of an ageing workforce in the mechanical and electrical engineering industries, coupled with the augmentation of the planned motor vehicle database to encompass a broader range of mechanical and electrical industries.

Mining (coal, other mining)

- **Action programme** to develop and implement capacity building and training projects in specified aspects of mine safety in no more than two countries with the participation of the mining industry and workers' organizations at the international levels.

- **Meeting of experts** to revise the 1984 code of practice on safety and health in coalmines, and develop and agree a programme of follow-up action for the remainder of the biennium to promote the use of the new code and provide training in its use in countries seeking assistance to improve coalmine safety.

Oil and gas production, oil refining

- **Meeting** on the effect of restructuring on productivity, working conditions and industrial relations and the development of good practices in the oil and gas production and oil refining sector.

- **Meeting** on the impact of subcontracting on employment, productivity, conditions of work and occupational safety and health in the oil and gas exploration and production sectors.

Postal and other communication services

- **Action programme** on social dialogue, employment and competitiveness in the postal and telecommunications services sector.

- **Action programme** on the impact of next-generation networks on employability and work organization in telecommunications services.

- **Meeting** on liberalization in the postal industry: the impact on employment and work organization.

Public service

- **Action programme** on promoting and strengthening social dialogue in the public service and public service reform in a changing environment.

- **Research/action programme** on the impact of HIV/AIDS on human resources in the public service in certain countries, followed by the development and promotion of appropriate human resources strategies.

Transport (including civil aviation, railways, road transport) and ports

- **Action programme** on improving the conditions of work of international road transport drivers, for example on the Western Europe-Central Asia road axis.

- **Meeting** on the labour and social issues affected by problems of cross-border mobility of international drivers in the road transport sector.

Utilities (water, gas, electricity)

- **Action programme** on capacity development in good governance in utilities as a key to working out of poverty.

- **Meeting** on promoting sustainability and growth in the utilities sector through improved social dialogue.

II. Cross-sectoral proposals for action programmes

- Challenges and opportunities in global food chains (food and drink, catering, distribution, public health).

III. Cross-sectoral proposals for meetings

- Meeting on social dialogue in the production, refining and transportation of oil, petroleum products and natural gas.

- Meeting to address the social and labour issues in the organization and functioning of two or more global production chains (e.g. electronics, textiles and clothing, services, automobiles).

IV. Continuation of existing action programmes

Agriculture

- Continuation of the action programme on decent work in agriculture and retention of the focus on improving safety and health through social dialogue, whether at the national, enterprise or local community level. As has been the case in the current biennium, the programme would be structured in such a way as to maximize the involvement of field offices and other headquarters' units in programme delivery.

Construction

- The construction action programme is innovative for SECTOR, ILO field offices and the tripartite constituents. The positive effects of social dialogue as a basis for concrete activities can last well beyond 2005. For this to be assured, the programme should be continued so that a series of key pilot activities can be undertaken in 2006-07. These will constitute good practices that could attract donor funds for the longer term.

Education

- The later than expected start to the creation of national steering groups, plus the need to support groups in a follow-up phase to implement policy options proposed at national level and recommended as a result of regional dialogue (through national legislation, revisions of government or social partner policies and other activities), would argue for extension of this promising action programme into the 2006-07 biennium. An extension would also permit a small group of interested member States which have not yet formed national steering groups and begun work according to the 2004-05 timetable to undertake such work, forming a "second generation" of beneficiary States and social partners.

Hotels, catering, tourism

- Continuation, in additional countries, of the promotion of improved working conditions in the sector, strengthening the participation of women in workplace social dialogue, the support of workers' mobility through training, the development of a methodology and application of labour statistics on tourism, and the application of the code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work.

HIV/AIDS

- The cross-sectoral action programme on HIV/AIDS has been successful in obtaining resources from ILO/AIDS in Geneva and in the field to develop and test sector-specific guidelines or model policies based on good practice and the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. This activity, in cooperation with

ILO/AIDS, would continue with additional sectors and expand the work in existing sectors to other countries.

13. *The Committee may wish to advise the sectoral steering groups to:*

    (a) take into account the priorities for ILO action agreed at the regional level when selecting countries to take part in action programmes;

    (b) focus each action programme on fewer countries;

    (c) seek, as far as possible, an appropriate overall geographical distribution, not one for each programme.

14. *The Committee may wish to recommend to the Governing Body:*

    (a) new action programmes that will take place in 2006-07;

    (b) current action programmes that will continue in 2006-07;

    (c) sectors for which international sectoral meetings will be held in 2006-07;

    (d) topics for international sectoral meetings that will be held in 2006;

    (e) that the governments of all member States will continue to be invited to participate in sectoral meetings, for which the Standing Orders apply, that are held in 2006-07.

Geneva, 11 February 2005.

Points for decision: Paragraph 13;
                         Paragraph 14.

Appendix

Details of proposals for sectoral activities in 2006-07

I.   *"In focus" sectors – Assuming adherence to historical rotation*

Chemicals

Action programme to promote social dialogue and decent work
in the pharmaceutical industry in the light of outsourcing and
the emergence of small enterprises

> The action programme would address issues and problems of small enterprises in the pharmaceutical industry. First, several national surveys would be carried out in outsourcing countries and receiving countries to collect and analyse information on the development of the global outsourcing of pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. The surveys would reveal factors such as the evolution of the flow of jobs on a global scale, the driving forces and impacts on employment at the national/regional levels; terms of employment and working conditions; earnings; benefits; the evolution of job types and the level of skills and a transfer of technologies to benefit to both ends. Second, a number of meetings would be held in the outsourced countries with the participation of tripartite national delegations from the outsourcing and outsourced countries to discuss the findings of the national studies and draw up an action plan for promoting decent work agendas through social dialogue.

Meeting of experts to examine instruments, knowledge, advocacy,
technical cooperation and international collaboration as tools with a
view to developing a policy framework for hazardous substances

> The meeting would discuss how ILO instruments and other tools concerning occupational safety and health and hazardous substances could be best incorporated into a new policy framework and action plan. This could be a Protocol to the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170), or a combined set of measures addressing priority problems related to hazardous substances; to examine best practices and appropriate national legal frameworks to promote safe and healthy working environments; the roles of governments, employers' and workers' organizations; establishing tripartite consultation mechanisms on occupational safety and health and ensuring that workers and their organizations participate in the consultation mechanisms and thereby build a preventative safety and health culture at work (as referred to in the International Labour Conference 2003 strategy). The meeting should also consider the impact of new and ongoing initiatives related to hazardous substances, in particular, the UN-wide Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), new process for registering and evaluating chemicals, implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), and issues and instruments related to asbestos. Furthermore, the ILO's recent experiences in establishing a "promotional framework instrument" should be taken into account. The meeting would adopt recommendations which would be the basis of subsequent ILO action.

Commerce

Meeting on the role of new retail technologies in
shaping the employment landscape in commerce

> In retail services, the customer has long been persuaded to undertake much of the work of distribution; selecting the goods from the shelves, carrying them to the checkout and then transporting them to their final destination. The adoption of even more advanced technologies is set to accentuate this trend, profoundly affecting employment, work organization and working conditions throughout the distribution chain. Warehouse management systems with more functionality at lower costs, including vendor-managed inventory and scan-based trading, label printing and real-time inventory access are set to combine with in-store radio frequency identification (RFID) technologies to greatly enhance operations and productivity. A growing number of major retailers around the world are currently carrying out trials on various self-checkout

systems in preparation for their operationalization. It is expected that, within a few years, the trajectory that a product takes from the producer to the end customer will have changed completely as a result of these developments. In combination with widespread introduction of new technologies at all stages of the goods-handling process from logistics to checkout, retailers are also adopting greater "lean staffing" strategies as part of cost-cutting procedures in a highly competitive business environment. The increased efficiency and automation of the distribution chain will doubtless lead to improved competitiveness, productivity and profitability of both wholesale and retail enterprises as well as the sector as a whole. However, without greater recourse to sectoral social dialogue to better reconcile corporate, and social and employment objectives, such competitiveness and profitability might be at the expense of substantial numbers of jobs or, perhaps, erosion in wages, benefits and overall working conditions.

A report would be prepared on the effects of greater use of advanced technologies on employment, work organization and working conditions in the retail industry, analysing the benefits and costs of the changes for enterprises and workers. Special attention would be given to gender aspects, in view of the fact that commerce is one of the largest employers of women around the world, and a major entrance route to employment, particularly for young women. A medium-sized tripartite meeting would be convened to review such effects and develop recommendations on how to reconcile the interests of all stakeholders in the face of a changed employment landscape.

Meeting on promoting corporate social responsibility in commerce through social dialogue

Employers in commerce increasingly recognize that, to be successful in a highly competitive and globalizing industry, companies must be familiar with and integrate the concepts of corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their business strategies and operations. Social and environmental issues of interest to companies' main stakeholder groups: customers, staff, suppliers and relevant communities, comprise an essential component in such CSR programmes; becoming a vital element in retailers' branding strategies by sending a strong signal to consumers that their values and views are given serious consideration. There is, therefore, a growing acceptance by businesses that socially responsible practices contribute to long-term corporate prospects as they foster good relationships between companies, their workers, customers and the general public. ILO instruments, especially the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up (1998), provide key points of reference for promoting CSR in commerce.

A report would be prepared identifying examples of best practice in CSR in commerce, defining the critical factors for the successful integration of CSR in business strategies. It would analyse the most appropriate approaches to integrating CSR over global supply and distribution chains, with a particular focus on effective implementation in developing countries. A medium-sized tripartite meeting would be convened to discuss the report and to develop recommendations on promoting the wider implementation of CSR in the sector, highlighting the respective roles of the social partners, other stakeholders, the public authorities and the ILO.

Food, drink, tobacco

Action programme to establish structures for better governance in the food and drink industry

The formal food and drink manufacturing sector employs over 16 million people. However, food and drink processing does not operate in isolation. It is sandwiched between agriculture upstream, and catering, marketing and distribution downstream. All these fields flow into one another, but they often operate within closed circuits in terms of policy and regulation. The result can be poor governance, which places a brake on employment and wealth creation, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition. Governance of the food chain is a concern for all. It poses challenges to the social partners and public authorities to review policies and safeguard the industry against public health risks which inevitably entail job losses with accompanying social and labour costs. The establishment of mechanisms to launch and promote social dialogue in the food and drink processing sector is therefore a priority. An action programme would help to establish, through social dialogue, effective structures for better governance in the food and drink industries in selected countries.

Meeting on opportunities to promote decent work in the
food processing industry: Challenges for social dialogue

A meeting of experts or a regional or subregional workshop and programmed follow-up would provide an opportunity to stimulate the setting up of schemes for reducing poverty among vulnerable groups; empowering women workers; developing strategies to mainstream informal economy workers; setting in place microfinance structures and mapping training needs. The Memorandum of Understanding between the ILO and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) offers scope for partnerships to develop cooperatives for processed food products. This sector brings its own dynamics to the promotion and strengthening of cooperatives in developing countries to create jobs and reduce poverty. Harnessing the expertise of the ICA and implementing the ILO Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), will result in a concerted and focused effort not only to strengthen the industry but to improve the environment in which the industry operates, both in developing countries and countries in transition. This proposal will benefit from the leverage of ongoing work in Africa and Asia, the objective of which is to promote decent work in rural areas and strengthen the process of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) through the inclusion of cooperatives. The output of the meeting/workshop would be formulated into an action programme integrated into the ILO-ICA programme.

Health services

Action programme on the international migration
of health service workers: The supply side

International migration has become an accepted feature of globalized labour markets in health care, yet the effects of international migration of health-service workers on the nations supplying the workers are cause for concern. There is a growing shortage of health-care workers in developed countries. The reasons for this shortage include: increasing demand from ageing populations, chronic cases requiring longer treatment and care, unattractive working conditions in the sector (long working hours, shift work, workplace violence), and low wages. Women, who comprise 80 per cent of the health workforce, have been less attracted to health services as inroads have been made into other education and employment opportunities.

This shortage is being increasingly filled with migrant nurses and other health-care workers from developing countries. Reasons and motivations for health-care workers to migrate abound. While migrant health workers are a source of remittances for their families and countries, migration creates its own subset of issues in the supplying nations. National systems that have invested a great deal in educating and training their health-service staff see the dwindling of their qualified and experienced performers. In sub-Saharan Africa, health systems already weakened by deaths and disability caused by HIV/AIDS are further depleted by the migration of health workers. The impact of migration on the individuals and their families can be acute. An ever-increasing number of women health-care professionals are migrating, with family and social consequences that are not yet fully understood.

In the initial phase of this action programme, up to five health-care worker supplying countries will be identified with a view to exploring the effects of health-worker migration on these countries, analysing their existing migration policies and practices, and identifying the lessons learned and best practices from each, such as ethical recruitment guidelines, pre-departure briefings, monitoring of employment placement, and mutual recognition agreements. In the second phase, the findings from the selected countries would be compared, contrasted and analysed so as to develop strategies and good practices that could be shared with other supplying countries. As part of this exercise, it is proposed that a sectoral meeting, with appropriate tripartite representation from the selected countries, be held in Geneva in order to benefit from effective social dialogue in the development of the strategies and practices. Participation from other international organizations, with the purpose of creating opportunities for close cooperation, will be sought throughout the duration of the action programme.

Action programme on promoting youth employment
in health services in crisis-stricken countries

The world is facing a global crisis in human resources for health. Chronic under-investment in health services, compounded with health-service migration and devastations such as HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and the Tsunami in Asia are painfully over-burdening health workers. In most developing countries, inefficiencies and skills imbalances exist, resulting in overwhelming

shortages. Training doctors and specialists takes years of hard work and investment, and yet workforces are needed that address the needs of largely rural populations who have little access to health services in large cities.

There is renewed interest in attracting, training and retaining middle-level health worker cadres who could take on the basic jobs and roles of health professionals. These "substitute" health workers would receive shorter pre-service training, yet would be capable of conducting the basic tasks of primary and emergency care, particularly in rural areas. Low- and middle-level cadres would not have internationally marketable degrees and would not be tempted by migration unless they further developed their skills. Policies are being developed in some countries to bolster these cadres for primary health care, despite a certain amount of resistance from professional associations. Yet in many of these same countries, youth unemployment rates are high. Twenty-one per cent of young people are unemployed in sub-Saharan Africa. Indonesia has 6 million unemployed young men and women, representing three-quarters of the unemployed population. Concerted national campaigns to match unemployed young women and men with the needs of the health-care systems could be developed. Harnessing their potential to contribute to health care would result in the promotion of young people as partners in the economic and social development of their crisis-stricken countries.

The action programme would incorporate a number of factors to assist in the development of national policies and regulations in recruiting and retaining low- and middle-level health cadres. Efforts to bring together the medical professional community with national youth unemployment programmes need to be undertaken in order to study the issues, the basic educational requirements and the criteria for success (for example, required service in rural areas). Social dialogue is needed at national levels in order to facilitate the development of national policies and subsequent employment campaigns for the recruitment and retention of primary caregivers. Two subregional meetings could be held to promote exchange and cooperation by sharing national experiences. Outcomes from the action programme could include: rural populations in crisis countries benefiting from health services; cost effective solutions to health-care provision being identified; young women and men actively employed in service to their communities and countries.

Mechanical and electrical engineering

Action programme on ensuring adequate conditions of work
in the light of the offshoring of the manufacture of electronics
components to transition and developing countries

The manufacture of electronic components, computer chips, LCD screens, etc., is increasingly concentrated in a handful of industrialized countries, a few countries in Asia and in Central and South America, and in some of the transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe. An action programme could examine the social and labour implications of the shift in production between industrialized, developing and emerging economies, focusing on conditions of work.

Meeting to address the phenomenon of an ageing workforce
in the mechanical and electrical engineering industries

In light of skills' shortages and as life expectancy is increasing, many countries are actively taking steps to raise the retirement age and thereby also prolong the number of years contributing to pension schemes. Notwithstanding this, many countries do not provide public funding for retraining for workers over the age of 45 on the assumption that early retirement would cancel out the benefit of such training. In view of the fact, however, that a retirement age of 67 would mean that a worker at 45 would still have 22 productive years, lifelong learning would suggest public participation in training beyond the age of 45. A small tripartite meeting would examine measures being taken and contemplated to manage and benefit from an ageing workforce. Data could be used to augment the planned motor vehicle database to encompass a broader range of mechanical and electrical industries.

Mining (coal, other mining)

Action programme on mine safety that builds on a global union federation, ILO and mining industry initiative in 2004 for a tripartite approach to improving mine safety in China, to develop and implement a small number of capacity-building and training projects in specified aspects of mine safety in no more than two countries (e.g. China, Ukraine). These national activities would be

developed and carried out in conjunction with the mining industry and workers' organizations at the national and international levels, and with the relevant national government agencies. Additional resources, particularly recourse to experienced personnel, would be sought from the international social partners.

Meeting of experts to revise the 1984 code of practice on safety and health in coalmines, and develop and agree a programme of follow-up action for the remainder of the biennium to promote the use of the new code and provide training in its use in countries seeking assistance to improve coalmine safety. In the light of the changes in the coalmining industry in the last 20 years – privatization, consolidation, compensation for "modern" illness and disease, mechanization and a much smaller, multiskilled workforce – and in moves to a "systems approach" to codes of practice and safety and health management – an updating of this important code would be a timely activity in focusing on improving safety and health in this most basic and hazardous of industries. Holding the meeting early in 2006 would enable a strong programme of follow-up activities, including translation and dissemination of the code in the much-needed languages of Chinese, Hindi and Russian.

Oil and gas production, oil refining

*Meeting on the effect of restructuring on productivity, working
conditions and industrial relations and the development of
good practices to improve them in the oil and gas production
and oil refining sector*

Good industrial relations are the backbone of successful corporate structural change. Problems can arise when terms and conditions are not met because of lack of social dialogue. A tripartite meeting could discuss the development and implementation of corporate restructuring in socio-labour terms and its impact on productivity, employment, conditions of work and industrial relations. A report prepared by the Office would highlight the role of social dialogue as a means of information sharing between employers and workers and reaching agreement between them. It would identify good practice in labour-management relations in changing corporate entities and the industry.

*Meeting on the impact of subcontracting on employment,
productivity, conditions of work and occupational safety and
health in the oil and gas exploration and production sectors*

Numerous types of jobs in the oil and gas industry are contracted out to specialist enterprises. The practice is well-established and is increasing in breadth and depth. This can lead to complex relationships between employers and workers at different levels of the contractual relationship. A tripartite meeting would discuss the development and application of a use of contract work in the oil and gas exploration and production sectors and the impact on productivity, employment relations, working conditions, occupational safety and health, and training and skills development. Examples of good principle and practice would provide the basis for a discussion on how to ensure good conditions of work and occupational safety and health of contract workers.

Postal and other communication services

*Action programme on social dialogue, employment and
competitiveness in the postal and telecommunications
services sector*

The main aims would be: to examine experience of reforms in the postal and telecommunications services sector in Africa to create/enhance awareness about the need for social dialogue; to improve capacity to fully implement social dialogue in postal services in Africa; and to develop social dialogue in telecommunications services. For example, an ILO-UPU Joint Regional Seminar on Social Dialogue in Postal Services in Africa could provide a forum to discuss current challenges, problems and opportunities, and strategies to ensure effective social dialogue. The possibility of enhancing social dialogue in telecommunications services in Africa would also be examined. The action programme is likely to focus on promoting social dialogue at the national and regional levels, and on following up on the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, November 2005), building on previous cooperation with the Universal Postal Union.

Action programme on the impact of next-generation networks (NGNs)
on employability and work organization in telecommunications services

The development of the Internet and mobile telephony, along with other new technologies, privatization and deregulation, has already transformed the telecommunications industry beyond recognition in the past decade. Further changes are under way as voice over internet protocol (VOIP), mobile, public-switched data network (PSDN), and public-switched telephone network (PSTN) technologies are coexisting and beginning to converge in next-generation networks (NGNs). Telecommunications enterprises will have to adapt rapidly to NGNs' potential in the market, and new business opportunities will be created. However, NGNs are likely to have a significant impact on employment, employability and work organization in telecommunications services. Social dialogue can facilitate efforts by the social partners to work together in the process of sectoral change and to find solutions to shared problems. The focus of the action programme, which will be implemented in cooperation with the Employment Sector, is likely to be on the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, November 2005), and addressing skills transfer to Africa, among other issues.

Meeting on liberalization in the postal industry:
The impact on employment and work organization

The postal industry is changing rapidly worldwide because of privatization, globalization, technology and competition from new sources. Liberalization is under way in many countries, the market has been segmented, post offices are providing services to compete with private couriers, and new products and services offer growth potential. While the universal postal service for letters, parcels and counter services is essential for balanced economic development, there is strong competition from global integrators, private courier companies and multinational alliances of postal administrations, private couriers and airfreight businesses. It is important that national postal services, global integrators, courier companies and multinationals operate under similar rules on competition, wages, workers' rights, social obligations and so on. A report for a small tripartite meeting would be prepared drawing on experience in selected countries, linking with the UPU. The focus of follow-up work is likely to be the promotion of social dialogue and decent work at the national and regional levels.

Public service

Action programme on promoting and strengthening
social dialogue in public service and public service
reform in a changing environment

Public services are constantly being reformed to be more effective under increasing financial constraints in a changing environment. In many countries, social dialogue institutions are not well established or well functioning and reforms are implemented without sufficient consultations with the stakeholders. The result could be a deteriorated service delivery by unmotivated and inadequately trained workers. Using mainly the *Practical guide for strengthening social dialogue in public service reform* and the *Guidelines on social dialogue in public emergency services in a changing environment*, the action programme would develop and undertake training in social dialogue and social dialogue institution building in public services, including emergency services, in selected countries, for better social dialogue for improved service delivery.

Research/action programme on the impact of HIV/AIDS
on human resources in the public service in certain
countries, followed by the development and promotion
of appropriate human resources strategies

A large number of those with technical skills and professional qualifications are concentrated in public services and their role in sustaining national development is crucial. However, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is known to be seriously affecting this key segment of population as well. Public employees with frequent mobility unaccompanied by their families are in high-risk groups. The impact of HIV/AIDS on public service personnel would have a serious long-term impact on service delivery and national development. However, little reliable information is available, although it is vitally important for effectively coping with future human resource development issues. A programme of rapid assessment is proposed in selected countries to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on this issue. The output would lead to a better understanding of what is happening

in human resources in public services and to a future action programme on developing appropriate human resources strategies in response to the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Transport (including civil aviation, railways, road transport) and ports

Action programme on improving the conditions of work of international road transport drivers, for example on the Western Europe-Central Asia road axis

Globalization has created a world that is more interconnected than ever before. This has led to an increase in road traffic across borders in economically integrated regions and brought about a new set of difficult issues that affect international drivers in the road transport sector. These issues have drawn attention to the potential role of social dialogue beyond the national level.

The action programme would comprise two regional tripartite workshops covering a number of countries in two different economically integrated regions through which a significant international transport route passes. Information, lessons learned and experiences from a workshop in a region where good practices are established and operating will be transferred as feedback to a workshop in a region where improvements are required. Regional data will be collected and analysed and will form the basis for a background report to be used at the above two workshops. The outcome would be the means to improve the working conditions of international drivers in the road transport sector through continued social dialogue, strengthened by the conclusions, practical recommendations and other guidance from the action programme.

Meeting on the labour and social issues affected by problems of cross-border mobility of international drivers in the road transport sector

Globalization has created a world that is more interconnected than ever before. This has led to an increase in road traffic across borders in economically integrated regions that brought about a new set of difficult issues pertinent to international drivers in the road transport sector. These difficult issues and particularly that of visa and general cross-border mobility of international drivers have drawn attention to the potential role of social dialogue beyond the national level. While there is an ongoing effort by a number of organizations (e.g. the World Bank, UNCTAD, World Customs Organization, UNECE) in addressing cross-border issues in the road transport sector, these have mainly focused on trade facilitation (removal of obstacles for the efficient movement of goods across borders) thus leaving pertinent labour and social issues not adequately addressed.

Utilities (water, gas, electricity)

Action programme on capacity development in good governance in utilities as a key to working out of poverty

Privatized utilities services in developing countries often become too expensive for the poor who may have to resort to other means to meet their basic needs, often having to take health risks or ending up paying more for a small quantity of water purchased on the market. Where this occurs, the poor will have little chance to work out of poverty and be integrated in the mainstream of society unless special measures are introduced and implemented. Poor people also exist in industrialized countries, but they often benefit from special measures (e.g. the low-income energy affordability network (LEAN) in Massachusetts, United States) proposed by state bodies as well as assistance from non-governmental organizations that give advice on cost-effective use of utilities to reduce the burden on them. The possibility of introducing a measure such as "LEAN" would be explored in selected developing countries, learning also from the experience of IFP/SEED in its "pro-poor contracting of waste collection service" activities, in which poor people not only benefit from solid waste collection but are also given the opportunity for micro-enterprise development. The action programme will aim at capacity development in good governance in the utilities sector to help the stakeholders to work out of poverty.

Meeting on promoting sustainability and growth in the utilities sector through improved social dialogue

The utilities sector is undergoing rapid changes, including increased participation of the private sector or total privatization. But the experiences in many countries show that the changes do

not always bring about favourable results to many stakeholders, including workers and customers. In some cases the service may deteriorate and affect social and economic development. Examples of good practices in social dialogue in promoting sustainability and growth in the utilities sector will be compiled in a report. Discussion at the meeting could centre on how such examples can be transferred and adopted by other countries to the benefit of all stakeholders concerned.

II.   Cross-sectoral proposals for action programmes

Challenges and opportunities in global food chains (food and drink, catering, distribution, public health)

This proposal, based on a resolution adopted by the last Tripartite Meeting on Technology and Employment in the Food and Drink Industries (1998), would take into account the findings of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization which highlight the new opportunities which global production systems open up for organization and representation and for social dialogue.

Food chains worldwide, in industrialized, transition and developing countries, function across a number of sectors. Although each sector calls for tripartite scrutiny in terms of decent work deficits, coherent policy decisions require an upstream and downstream appraisal of social and labour issues in the entire food chain within the broader parameters of sustainable development policies, the Millennium Development Goals, the ILO resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue, and the resolution concerning decent work in the informal economy.

New processing technologies, policies with regard to genetically modified (GM) crops, uneven access to information and communications technology (ICT) and, in turn, distribution and marketing practices affect all the sectors concerned. In addition, more and more stringent quality control standards introduce inequalities among trading partners not only in terms of the value chain but equally with regard to the benefits accruing to different segments of the population from globalization. Such developments require discussion in an appropriate forum in order to identify concerns which may be tabled for social dialogue. Growing instances of social labelling, eco-labelling and "ethical consumerism" are a natural outcome of policies and strategies in forward and backward linkages which affect the public at large, including stakeholders.

A series of activities, involving different parts of the food chain would be developed to address the foregoing issues with a view to developing the means to enhance corporate social responsibility.

III.   Cross-sectoral proposals for meetings

Meeting on social dialogue in the production, refining and transportation of oil, petroleum products and natural gas

Most countries are extremely vulnerable to disruptions in the supply of oil and gas. Industrial unrest or industrial accidents can literally bring a halt to economic activity in a few days or even hours. Heightened security concerns at sea, in ports, in processing installations and distribution chains have added a new dimension to ensuring a stable supply of these key commodities. The lack of substitutes for the most part means that even after the situation is resolved it is not until pipes, reservoirs and petrol tanks are refilled that normal life can resume. Vertically integrated production, processing and distribution are being matched by closer cooperation between workers' organizations in the different parts of the chain from oil or gas well to the final consumer. The importance of social dialogue at and across all stages of production and supply would seem paramount if economic stability is to be assured. A tripartite meeting would examine the evolution of alliances in the sector and the means to deepen social dialogue by enhancing the capacity of those concerned.

Meeting to address the social and labour issues
in the organization and functioning of one or
more global production systems

Textiles, clothing and footwear

A number of different configurations have emerged in the global production systems (GPS) of the textiles, clothing and footwear (TCF) industries. In one, brand name manufacturers supply intermediate inputs (cut fabric, thread, buttons, etc.) to producers for assembly, traditionally located in export processing zones, and export the assembled product back to the brand. Those involved in assembly may in turn subcontract to smaller enterprises working in the informal economy. This type of value chain is typically associated with reciprocal trade agreements or regional trade agreements (where goods can be re-imported with a tariff charged only for the value added by foreign labour) and often lies behind the development of regional production systems.

In another configuration, brand marketers and retailers rely on first-tier suppliers to globally source from their own and subcontractor factories. These may be located in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since trade preferences still play an important role in this sector, these first-tier suppliers are also responsible for distributing production in a way that maximizes the benefits of these preferences. They exert enormous influence over the next tier of suppliers and subcontractors. Other configurations do exist in apparel, such as the classic industrial districts in Italy.

Electronics

In electronics, lead MNEs conduct most of the research and development (R&D) and higher value added services such as sales, marketing and distribution, and outsource manufacturing. They exercise power in internal markets through their ownership and marketing of the brand name and overall product development and design. An important feature of these GPS has been the emergence of "contract manufacturing" carried out by first-tier suppliers. With the exception of the personal computer industry, these first-tier full-service contract manufacturers have been predominantly located in the United States, but are now also emerging in Europe and parts of East Asia. They coordinate bundles of discrete assembly activities (e.g. circuit board assembly) in different parts of the world, often in export processing zones, and then undertake final product assembly. The product is customized to the needs of the lead MNEs. They are also involved in the design of products and sub-components for modular manufacturability, testing and after-sales service and repair, and maintain strong ties with the lead MNE.

Automobiles

There has been some restructuring under way in the global value chain in the automobile industry. Faced with increasing competition in the 1980s and 1990s, vehicle manufacturers in the United States and Europe reduced their in-house production levels and began to shift certain design functions to their suppliers. Assemblers now tend to concentrate on final assembly of the product and outsource the manufacture of components, including the sub-assembly of components to first-tier suppliers. The assembler provides overall specification and information about the interface with the rest of the car and a first-tier supplier then either customizes a component or designs a solution using its own technology. First-tier suppliers have shifted to producing complete modules rather than individual components. They also assume responsibility for managing the rest of the chain, sourcing sub-components from second-tier suppliers, overseeing the quality of the sub-assembly operations and integrating these intermediate products into the modular units they produce for assemblers.

Technology-enabled integration of logistics and quality systems between assemblers and first-tier suppliers in the context of just-in-time production methods have led to much closer relationships between them. However, as the auto industry remains highly concentrated, this close cooperation does not preclude the exercise of power in these internal markets by assemblers. There has been significant consolidation among first-tier suppliers in recent years, which have at the same time expanded their global reach into emerging markets, and often now must co-locate abroad with their final assemblers. This means that design activities, where most of the rents are increasingly to be found, lie in the hands of a decreasing number of component manufacturers.

Services

Although there is limited global value chain analysis of services, it is clear that a range of information technology enabled services such as claims processing, accounting, auditing and customer care are now provided from different locations, organized in global supply chains which integrate these discrete business process activities. MNEs may locate high-skilled business process activities in developed countries by establishing an affiliate (thus, keeping higher value added activities internal to the firm), or outsource these to independent subcontractors in developing countries who have set up for the sole purpose of offering services to foreign firms. There appears to be some consolidation under way of these mid-tier players, however it is too early in the evolution of this GPS to draw out any defining features.