



FOR INFORMATION

SIXTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the International Symposium
on the Role of Trade Unions in the Global
Economy and the Fight against Poverty
(Geneva, 17-21 October 2005)**

1. The International Symposium on the Role of Trade Unions in the Global Economy and the Fight against Poverty was held in Geneva from 17 to 21 October 2005. Representatives of 45 national trade union centres, nominated by the Workers' group, attended the meeting. In addition, 40 trade union representatives from 15 countries participated as observers.
2. The agenda of the Symposium was approved at the 292nd Session of the Governing Body in March 2005.
3. The meeting was supported by a background paper, which provided an analysis of the state of globalization and poverty; traced the return of poverty in development policies and the contribution of the ILO; and outlined trade union strategies to fight poverty.
4. Mr. Ricupero, former Secretary-General of UNCTAD, delivered the keynote address of the Symposium. Senior officials of trade unions, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), international institutions (namely the ILO, the IMF, the UN, the World Bank, UNCTAD and the Commonwealth Foundation) as well as the Ambassadors of Sweden and the Netherlands, intervened during the Symposium.
5. Discussions covered: an analysis of the state of poverty in the global economy and the progress being made to reach the Millennium Development Goals; the impact of World Bank and IMF policies on the poor and the role of unions in PRSPs; the essential role of freedom of association for sustainable human development and the ILO strategic objectives; and how ILO technical cooperation could respond better to the needs of unions in their fight against poverty.
6. Based on these discussions, governments were called upon to:
 - respect and promote workers' rights as a means of ensuring a fair distribution of economic growth and incomes;
 - pursue employment-intensive pro-poor growth policies;

- implement the Millennium Development Goals;
 - consider ways of mobilizing additional resources for development aid, including through international taxation;
 - reform public policies to ensure gender equality; and
 - develop good governance and fight corruption.
7. The Symposium also called on the international financial institutions (IFIs) to:
- make decent work a central objective in all their policies and programmes;
 - engage in policy coherence initiatives with the ILO, in close collaboration with ILO constituents;
 - guarantee the implementation of the pledges made by the G8 concerning debt cancellation and increased ODA, and eliminate conditionality associated with loans; and
 - expand the criteria for the IFI Country Performance Indices to include trade union rights.
8. The ILO was called to:
- reinforce its work on poverty and prioritize capacity building of the social partners in PRSPs;
 - expand its research on widening income inequality and the policies needed to reverse this trend;
 - expand its advice on policy reforms required to promote the expansion of the manufacturing sector in developing countries;
 - contribute to the strengthening of social dialogue at all levels; and
 - support the activities of sectoral trade unions in their efforts to promote collective bargaining at the industry level.
9. The central message of this Symposium is that trade unions have always been a tool for workers to lift themselves out of poverty. They remain the principal means for working people to have representation, escape poverty and attain social justice for themselves and for their communities.
10. The background documents, the full report and the conclusions of the Symposium can be obtained from the secretariat of the Bureau for Workers' Activities.

Geneva, 26 October 2005.

Submitted for information.