



FOR INFORMATION

SIXTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General

Fifth Supplementary Report: Strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization¹

Introduction

1. The Governing Body recalls its decision in November 2005 to place the following item on the 2007 Conference agenda: "Strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization".
2. It was then understood that the Office would provide the Governing Body, at its March 2006 session, with certain clarifications in reply to questions raised during the discussion and that the preparation of the document would result from consultations. These preliminary consultations took place in mid-February based on a rough draft of the document.
3. In reply to a question asked in November as to the scope of the discussion at the 2007 International Labour Conference, it is important to state at the outset that the title of the question itself frames the discussion which must remain strictly within the mandate of the ILO and its means of action. The purpose of the discussion is not to reopen the debate on globalization, but rather to have an institutional debate with a view to better using the ILO's means of action to further its objectives when faced with the contemporary realities which are those of globalization. Thus defined, the debate should give constituents, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the opportunity to express their views and, if possible, to agree, within an appropriate regulatory framework (that of a question formally placed on the Conference agenda) as to the role and support constituents can expect from the ILO in this new context.

¹ GB.294/2/1, para. 7, the title of the document. GB.294/2/1(Add.) developing this theme: *Strengthening the ILO's capacity to discharge its core missions and promote decent work for all at the outset of the twenty-first century.*

4. The approach of the present document calls for further remarks. Although during the consultations some regretted that the rough draft did not provide more concrete solutions, it seemed preferable at that stage not to go too far in this direction for the following reasons:

- *First, in terms of the regulatory framework of the debate and the prerogatives of the ILC*, it is appropriate to recall that the present step is not part of the normal procedure regarding an agenda item for general discussion. According to the normal procedure, the step after placing the item on the agenda is a discussion at the ILC on the basis of a report and possible proposals which the Office must prepare in the time frame set by the Standing Orders.² To prematurely start the debate on concrete proposals and without sufficient focus would risk encroaching on the ILC's prerogatives, although nothing prevents the Members (as will be seen in the concluding remarks) from taking advantage of this unusual step to formulate any proposals for improvement they may have considered.
- *Second, the importance of progressive consensus building* has been regularly underscored by the Governing Body and during previous preliminary consultations. It is indeed a requirement which flows directly from the fact that, in order to be truly "authoritative", the document which could come out of the 2007 debate should draw on the active support of the three groups. In that regard, it was noted that reaching such a consensus should be facilitated in that the process is not starting from zero.³ The consultations, moreover, have underscored that reaching a consensus should not only mark the end of the process, but should also be a part of each stage. Likewise, the Office has been requested to play a role in reaching this consensus. Thus, it seems natural that before negotiating concrete solutions there is agreement on the general framework and the limits of the debate.
- *Finally, it is a question of having a well-ordered and efficient debate.* Before starting on an inventory of the steps likely to strengthen the ILO's capacities in the context that has developed since the end of the Cold War – at the risk of putting the ILC before a "hodgepodge" of more or less heteroclitic proposals – it seems indispensable to ask ourselves about the factors inherent in this new context that can weaken the ability of the Organization to promote its objectives in order to set forth a more strategic approach. One cannot ignore the widespread perception that this new context undermines the capability of the ILO on two essential fronts: first, its *raison d'être* which, for some, was closely linked – if not limited – to the context of the Cold War; then, that of the erosion of the role of the State and the will to implement the goals of social progress when faced with intense competition both as to conditions of production and decisions concerning investment.

² Article 11ter of the Standing Orders provides that, in the case of a question placed on the agenda for general discussion, the report – including any proposals for conclusions – must reach governments two months prior to the opening session – which, given these deadlines, means that the drafting would have to be finished before the March 2007 Governing Body.

³ Certain elements of the answer to the questions raised already exist but are scattered and at various stages of tripartite "formalization" in different documents discussed or adopted within the Organization during the past few years (for example, the debates at the ILC on the Director-General's reports "Strategic policy framework" and "Programme and budget") or sometimes in older documents whose relevance in the context deserves to be reviewed (for example, the "Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy" on the former article 41 of the Constitution (see below)).

5. For these reasons it seems timely to articulate the document around two main questions:
- The first is to know whether, as has been suggested on various sides, the time has come for the ILO to reaffirm its *raison d'être* and the relevance of its message in a radically changed context and, if so, how this should be done.
 - The second is to ask ourselves how – concretely – the ILO can help all its Members to implement individually and collectively these goals in the context of globalization, not only by helping them to overcome the constraints, but also to help them take advantage of the potential that globalization represents.

Question one: Has the time come to update the ILO's message?

6. The ILO was the first specialized agency of the League of Nations and then of the United Nations; it is also the institution whose mandate most directly addresses the daily hopes and concerns of the vast majority of people worldwide. Recently the ILO has rejuvenated its message and strengthened its impact as seen through the creation of the World Summit for Social Development of 1995, the Declaration of 1998, the strategy of decent work, the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and, in another field, the most recent adoption of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. It seems very important that the role and the place which belong to the ILO in the post-Cold War context are asserted and strengthened within its own constitutional framework, as a condition of its future efficacy. It is in this context that several speakers in November considered that the time had come for the ILO to reaffirm and update its message at the dawn of the twenty-first century, as the Organization has known how to do at other times, especially at the end of the Second World War.⁴ *Two possible lines of thought* can be considered.

A. Reaffirming the *raison d'être* of the ILO in the current context

7. According to a very questionable but rather widely-held view, the *raison d'être* of the ILO was linked to the Cold War and from 1919 until the beginning of the 1990s the ILO provided a reformist alternative to concepts based on the radical opposition between the interests of workers and of capital. That view was so prevalent that some did not hesitate to call into question the ILO's *raison d'être* after the fall of the Berlin wall.
8. More than 15 years and many disillusiones later, that way of looking at things fortunately is no longer prevalent. Nevertheless, the question is whether the time has come to recognize that the context of globalization has *not* altered the *raison d'être* of the ILO, but globalization may indeed have strengthened it. The ILO's mission remains vital not only in terms of lasting peace based on social justice; there are also good reasons to consider that the ILO is essential to the sustainability of an open economy and an open society. Despite undeniable progress, the persistence of “injustice, hardship and privation” continue to be the fate of “large numbers of people” (according to the terms of the Constitution), fuelling various arguments as to the compatibility of globalization with the objectives of progress and social justice. In this regard, one must not underestimate the risk of a return to protectionism.

⁴ As the Conference delegation on constitutional reforms stated: “its (the ILO) record shows that it (...) has discharged its responsibilities and adapted itself to changing needs with a considerable measure of success”. Report of the delegation (1946, p. 15).

9. Faced with these risks, and recognizing that there is no miracle solution, the ILO can assert the pragmatism of its method which is linked to its structure. According to this method, whose efficacy has been increasingly confirmed by experience, optimization of the benefits for all result from the potential of progress and fulfilment that an open economy represents. A fair distribution of the human and social costs of the inevitable adjustments cannot happen alone. This method calls on the active will of public authorities based on free expression and conciliation of interests, through representative organizations in both quantitative and qualitative terms at the national level, with the ILO consolidated in its mandate and in its ability to assist all of its Members at the international level.
10. In order to assert its credibility and impact, the message must be conveyed with appropriate solemnity and a universal and tripartite consensus such as only the ILC could crystallize. The first question for the constituents is thus to decide if they want to use the opportunity provided by the 2007 agenda item for this purpose.

B. Providing a more synthetic vision of the goals of the ILO through the concept of decent work

11. The ILO's impact suffers from the fragmentation and the relative complexity of its mandate. Apart from a narrow circle of specialists, there are very few people – including national political leaders – who could describe the core missions of the ILO. This is due to the diversity of its missions and the texts that define them. The Preamble of the ILO Constitution, in a non-exhaustive listing of specific goals, gives a somewhat kaleidoscopic vision. As for the Declaration of Philadelphia, it must be read from beginning to end to appreciate its richness.
12. The concept of “decent work” has established itself as a global objective. It was proposed by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and reaffirmed as a “global objective” in paragraph 47 of the text adopted at the 2005 World Summit by the Heads of State and Government,⁵ and provides insight. The discussion could enable the status of “decent work” to be officialized within the Organization. It must be clear, however, that officializing the status does not in any way mean defining the concept, as if it were a separate concept or a replacement for existing constitutional objectives. It is more a question of drawing on both the concept of decent work and its acceptance in order to understand a certain number of practical consequences to integrate the objectives and to implement them more efficiently, meaning:
 - First, by regrouping the constitutional objectives and the programmes for their implementation around a few “core missions” which could correspond to strategic objectives, without changing anything in the enumeration set forth in the Constitution.

⁵ Cited in document GB.294/2/1(Add.) developing this theme: *Strengthening the ILO's capacity to discharge its core missions and promote decent work for all at the outset of the twenty-first century*:

“47. We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. These measures should also encompass the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, as defined in International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, and forced labour. We also resolve to ensure full respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work.”

This would imply that each mission must be well defined and clear, which should not be too difficult as it is possible to borrow elements from existing tripartite texts.⁶

- Second, by affirming the indivisibility/interdependence of constitutional objectives: the enumeration of objectives in the ILO Constitution explains what certain academics call the ILO “self-service” approach where there is a juxtaposition of objectives/goals among which one can “shop” and pick and choose. This view is clearly flawed. Members are not free to reject or ignore at their whim one or another of these objectives, even if they do not subscribe to specific obligations inherent in the ratification of the corresponding instruments. Moreover, experience has shown that the most efficient way to advance each objective is not to promote it in isolation, but to take into account its interdependence and synergies.⁷ The concept of “decent work” has increased awareness of the indivisibility of the stated objectives as a matter of principle; while experience and empirical evidence suggest (see below) that the most efficient way to advance each objective is to do so in light of its complementarity and the interdependence of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of “decent work”.
- Third, by recognizing that all of the constitutional objectives are meant to be implemented both universally and with necessary flexibility. In keeping with the principle of flexibility in the context of standards, as set forth in article 19 of the Constitution, the concept of decent work illustrates that, if all ILO objectives are intended to be implemented by all Members, this does not mean in the same way or at the same time for each one.

Question two: How can the ILO help its Members to most efficiently implement these objectives in the present context?

13. Even if at the end of the current process the ILO can reach a universal, tripartite consensus at the ILC, the reaffirmation of the ILO’s *raison d’être*, the validity of its methodology, and the relevance of its objectives, could fail to have the desired impact if this does not clearly address the main handicap affecting the efficiency of the ILO in the context of globalization: the failing will of States increasingly put on the defensive by the constraints of globalization.
14. According to conventional wisdom, the will and even the ability of States is relentlessly undermined by the realities and constraints of globalization – especially with regard to attracting or retaining investment – as well as by the sudden appearance of new players.

⁶ As regards fundamental rights, one can refer to the “particular significance” of these rights as indicated in the Declaration itself. As regards employment, there is already the updating from the Declaration of Philadelphia, which shifted the focus from the Constitution and the struggle against unemployment to frame it more positively in terms of the significance of productive employment as regards personal fulfilment while renewing the social link. For social protection, the essential objectives set forth in the former article 41, which is no longer in the Constitution but which has not been formally withdrawn, could provide a convenient reference. Then comes social dialogue, whose growing importance since the end of the Cold War is linked to the increasing freedom of the social partners, which confers on them a representative character not only quantitative but qualitative, the significance of which could be expressed in terms of “governance”.

⁷ If, for reasons of commodity, standard-setting instruments have been developed around specific objectives, this does not prevent the recognition of certain obvious links and drawing the appropriate conclusions (for example, the link between vocational training and employment; or through the Declaration, the “particular significance” of fundamental rights as enabling rights).

This then results in either an easy alibi for States to abandon their responsibilities, or the loss of policy tools to address the new situation in a balanced way.

15. The report of the World Commission helped to put things in perspective. The sustainability of globalization, which largely depends on the foreseeability of commercial transactions, and thus on the stability of the rule of law and socio-professional relations, relies on the durability of state structures. Likewise, the legitimacy of States and governments in the long term, along with social cohesion and stability, are inseparable from the ability of States to ensure that all workers have fair access to the benefits of material progress and personal fulfilment that technological progress and a global economy can offer.
16. Thanks to a structure which brings States into direct contact with the social actors of each country, the ILO would seem particularly well placed among IGOs to help States reassert their ability to undertake their responsibilities. In more concrete terms, however, a strategy could be foreseen that could be developed at three levels: the States, the ILO and the international environment.

A. Action at the state level: Encouraging States to ILO objectives by adopting an “integrated social policy”

17. At the outset, it should be noted that the objectives discussed here are not just “ILO objectives”. These are objectives which the Members have set for themselves and which they intend to achieve through the ILO and with its assistance. To implement these objectives with greater efficacy, Members should learn from the links between the different objectives and the dynamic strategic perspective of enterprises. For this purpose, the discussion could consider if it would be advisable to encourage Members to consolidate their efforts in a truly integrated “social policy”⁸ designed to optimize the opportunities for progress in terms of decent work resulting from the development of the global economy and new technology. This would be achieved through a better distribution of the human and social cost of such adjustments, particularly in terms of “human insecurity”.
18. If this is to be done, some guidance should be provided, but not as to any specific content of this policy. Indeed, the content, i.e. the “dosage” of the different objectives, must be recognized as the exclusive area of negotiation within each Member in light of the specificity and “collective preferences” of the country according to the objectives that it must set for itself. By way of illustration, these objectives can be articulated around three ideas:
 - *The scope of an integrated social policy should reflect a global viewpoint* (i.e. all the constitutional objectives). ILO objectives are not only indissociable; they are meant to be implemented universally and to apply to all whose means of subsistence flow from their past or present work, regardless of their past or present legal status.
 - *The policy should be **participative** in the implementation of the internal arbitration between the objectives* (in a flexible form suited to each country), so that the understanding of collective preferences is neither unilateral nor arbitrary, but takes into account the views of those concerned through their representative organizations,

⁸ As recalled in previous documents, there is an ILO instrument on social policy, the Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117), adopted in a very different context and which juxtaposes more than it integrates a certain number of priority objectives.

so that all feel that they have been fairly implicated in sharing both the benefits as well as the costs of the necessary social adjustments. Respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, of course, takes on a special significance in this regard.

- Finally, the policy should be carried out in a mutually supportive spirit as part of an international community of interests. Affirming the requisite autonomy of Members in defining the content and the priorities of their social policy does not mean that States can “go it alone”. The intensification of competition in the context of globalization underscores the relevance of the warning in the Preamble of the Constitution according to which “*the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries*”. In this perspective, one must consider whether the Organization should encourage its Members to help each other through the ILO or through any other appropriate bilateral, multilateral, or regional means compatible with their international obligations.

19. If agreement can be reached concerning these orientations, then and only then should the question be raised as to how and in what form the ILO could lend its support; it being understood from the outset, however, that a Convention seems particularly ill-suited to an objective that is to have an impact on all Members and not just those who would choose to ratify.

B. Action within the ILO

20. There is no question for the ILO of exceeding its mandate (which, as defined by the Constitution and expanded by the Declaration of Philadelphia, is quite broad) or to go beyond its constitutional means, which are both flexible and varied, and which the recent adoption of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, has just demonstrated. Instead, the ILO should use the means at its disposal more effectively and optimize the comparative advantage of its tripartite structure to provide Members with the support they are entitled to expect in order to efficiently set up and implement an integrated social policy.
21. The 2005 consultations elicited the following suggestions, corresponding to functions which the Constitution expressly confers on the Office, but which are not always carried out as rationally and systematically as would be desirable and possible. These points are reviewed and expanded hereafter to take into account certain questions raised during the Governing Body discussions in November.

(a) Better understanding change to better set priorities for ILO action

22. From the informal consultations in 2005, it appears that one of the obvious services that constituents have a right to expect from the ILO is to benefit from an objective overview of worldwide trends and changes – validated following tripartite discussion and updated at appropriate intervals – in fields relating to the strategic objectives. Presently, that overview is provided regularly only for fundamental rights, and less regularly for employment. The ILC could thus examine the possibility of setting up a system of regular reports prepared by the Office which would then be placed as a recurrent discussion item on the agenda of each session of the International Labour Conference. Besides being able to make a tripartite assessment concerning changes as regards a given objective, the discussion should enable the identification of priorities for action which the Organization could set for the following period regarding the strategic objective under consideration.

23. Certain questions have been asked regarding possible overlaps. They call for the following preliminary observations, on the understanding that the Office proposes a more in-depth examination in light of the discussions:
- (i) As stated during the consultations and in November, the system of global reports regarding *fundamental rights* remains for the time being unaffected. On the one hand, this system could only be reviewed within the framework of the follow-up to the Declaration; however, the way these reports are discussed is not necessarily the model to follow for the review of future periodic reports.
 - (ii) The *World Employment Report* is published at irregular intervals and does not lead to tripartite discussion on the basis of which priorities could be set. It might however be easily adapted to be included in this cycle.⁹
 - (iii) The same observation applies, moreover, to the *World Labour Reports* produced in the past and which also covered social protection and social dialogue.
 - (iv) The *social protection* sector is clearly too broad to have just one review and would need to be divided (general working conditions/social security?).
 - (v) *Social dialogue* could overlap with the Global Reports on freedom of association and collective bargaining. One possible solution would be to focus this review on the impact of other objectives concerning on employment and social protection.
24. Finally, there is the question whether – after having reviewed the different strategic objectives – it would be advisable to end the cycle by giving the constituents a general overview (also taking into account the results of the *social policy reviews* described below).
25. The question concerning the modalities and costs of these readjustments calls for a general observation. The concern it reflects seems to be based on the assumption that this system would add to the workload resulting from current practice regarding the International Labour Conference agenda. However, the idea is to rationalize current practice: a recurrent agenda item would enable review at regular intervals of all the Organization’s core missions. This could in effect reduce the number of ad hoc items, the selection of which has often been fraught with difficulties and uncertainties. Such a review, however, would help to objectively identify specific questions worth discussing as specific agenda items at the International Labour Conference.
26. Concerning the more specific question as to whether the system would involve questionnaires for governments, creating an additional workload or cost implications, there are two observations:
- (i) The Global Reports prepared as part of the follow-up to the Declaration are not based on questionnaires, but on information available in the Office and from the field (including information from questionnaires sent for articles 19 and 22 reports).
 - (ii) This question raises another timely one: whether it would be advisable to synchronize or coordinate the system of periodic reports with that for General Surveys (article 19 of the Constitution) dealing with corresponding “families” of instruments, so that the

⁹ It should be noted that the ESP Committee is currently in the process of developing new modalities for monitoring and reviewing the ILO’s work in the employment field. The outcome of these discussions should enable the proposals put forward in the present paper to be further developed.

discussion of the reports could integrate or refer to reliable data on the impact of standards-related instruments in the area under review.

27. In short, the proposed cycle should not involve any additional costs; it would raise the profile and increase the efficacy of the Organization in discharging its core missions. This change would enhance the ILO's relevance, representativeness and transparency in choosing the priority activities that it must undertake in order to better carry out its missions.

(b) Better understanding the synergies between objectives in order to better orient strategic choices

28. Empirical data suggest that in the long term States that are most successful in coping with globalization are those that try to promote all the objectives in a coherent and coordinated way. Although it would be unrealistic to expect that solutions from one country could be readily transposed to another, it is nevertheless essential to better understand the factors which explain a country's greater or lesser success in reconciling progress towards the ILO's objectives with the realities, constraints and opportunities of the global economy.

29. It would therefore seem that establishing a "social policy review mechanism" under the auspices of the Governing Body could be a natural and significant complement of an endeavour through which the ILO would encourage and support the efforts of its Members to implement an integrated social policy. Once a representative sample had been obtained, the ILO could draw more general conclusions. Such an exercise could only be carried out on a voluntary and tripartite basis with the full cooperation of the countries involved, as was done for a series of countries in 1997-99¹⁰ combining independent expertise and *peer review*. Although the ILO is not the only body able to do this, it nevertheless seems to have an obvious comparative advantage due to its universality and especially its tripartite structure.

(c) Better coordinating the means of action to better support the efforts of Members

30. In order to implement social policy and evaluate progress, Members will rely on integrating the different means of action which the ILO provides, including research and technical assistance. The ILO has experience with the "decent work country programmes". On the basis of pilot experiments, the 2006-07 programme and budget plans to implement "decent work country programmes" taking into account the specificities and priorities of each Member. The conclusions of the Conference, through the aforementioned mechanisms, could provide a common frame of reference. In that regard, it would be interesting to see whether the ILO could assist Members by making available a conceptual and statistical tool, respectful of their autonomy and allowing them to make a comparable and reliable evaluation of the success of their integrated social policy in terms of developing the objectives and criteria of decent work ("decent work opportunities/outputs").

¹⁰ Surveys concerning the impact of the liberalization of trade and globalization on the implementation of ILO objectives (and vice versa).

C. Other actors: Promoting a climate of understanding

31. As indicated above, the ability of States to operate a coherent social policy does not only depend on themselves, but also on an international environment in which other non-state actors play a role. The ILO would, of course, exceed its mandate if it dictated to these actors how to interpret their mandate or required them to respect its standards in the exercise of their responsibilities. However, this would not be the case as regards awareness raising to make these other actors more aware of their interest in strengthening the ability of States to operate a coherent social policy. Without going into details, it is possible to illustrate in a more concrete but preliminary manner what that awareness raising could involve, in relation to two quite different but important non-state actors.
32. First, *as regards IGOs*, three aspects could be considered. The possibilities of cooperation which may result from the provisions of the respective charters of organizations active in the international economic, financial and trade sectors make reference to one fundamental objective of the ILO: employment. Without reverting to the aforementioned paragraph 47 – which is also addressed to them – it would be reasonable to think that these organizations could be sensitive to the interest that strengthening the capacity and institutional legitimacy of States through implementing a coherent and efficient integrated social policy would have for IGOs in carrying out *their* mandate. In practical terms, and without prejudging the outcome of future debates, a direct way to raise awareness could be to encourage IGOs to come and actively participate in the discussion, which in any event is open to them.
33. *As regards multinational enterprises (MNEs)*, it will be noted that, as indeed its name suggests, the social policy of States is at the heart of the problems addressed by the Tripartite Declaration, which aims at promoting partnership with member States and employers' and workers' organizations, with a view to optimizing their contribution to social progress and to minimizing the difficulties to which their operations may give rise. If these enterprises agree, voluntarily, and according to their activities and specific concerns, to promote a number of social or environmental objectives, they do not wish to be pushed into assuming the role of the State, including in respect of the primacy of the rule of law and its implementation. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that this category of actors might well be interested in a move to reinforce the capacity of States better to assume their responsibilities in this connection. More precisely, the ILO could, through its constituents, and on the basis of the principles of the Declaration, explore the role that multinational enterprises might play in reinforcing the institutional capacity of States in this field.

Question three: What possible follow-up?

34. Of course, this question is only relevant if the answer to the previous two questions, particularly the second, is affirmative. It also raises the question of what form the “authoritative document” could ultimately take, assuming consensus is reached on its content. Clearly, one of the conditions of consensus is not to prejudge in any way what might be the choice of the Conference and there is no question, in any event, of moving forward a “Convention of Conventions”, as was underscored during the consultations. At this stage, two distinct aspects of a possible follow-up would be:
- **Within the Organization**, which could be composed of two aspects: (i) the establishment of an appropriate *institutional/regulatory framework* for the periodic reports and analyses within the framework of the International Labour Conference, and the “in-depth analyses/case studies of social policy” in the framework of the Governing Body, if the principle is retained; and (ii) the follow-up under successive

programmes and budgets. As previously noted, the establishment of these systems should logically make the choice of priorities and coordination of the ILO's means of action more effective (standards, technical cooperation, research, documentation, commercial and human resources policy, etc.) and more rational. In the framework of successive *programmes and budgets*, they would be based on the directions/conclusions (regarding the steps to take and the gaps to fill) made on the basis of the "periodic reviews".

- **Outside the Organization** could involve sending the document resulting from the debate as well as useful guidance about action to be taken by Members.

Concluding remarks

35. The preceding observations confirm that the 2007 debate does not mark the beginning, but rather the culmination of a process in which the constituents and the Office are called on to work together in reaching a consensus – without which there can be no "authoritative" outcome.
36. In light of the discussions prior to placing this item on the agenda and the consultations that followed, the bases and conditions necessary to reach a consensus now seem clear: no reopening the debate on globalization but, as the question is framed, finding how to best use the various institutional means and the unique structure of the ILO to serve its Members and, finally, not to prejudge in any way or form pursuing the debate beyond 2007.
37. It should be equally clear that seeking a consensus does not mean agreeing on the lowest common denominator. Rather, it should satisfy that which is most important to each party without being unacceptable to the others.
38. In this consensus building, the unusual step that the Governing Body has taken at the present session provides a rare opportunity. It enables the members to express their opinion on the principal but not exhaustive questions raised in this document and to indicate what they would like to see dealt with in the future report. However, more broadly speaking, while this step provides an opportunity for constructive criticism as regards the functioning or the activities of the Organization with a view to their improvement, it is also the occasion to set forth what is expected of the ILO on the eve of the second century of its existence, and to table all concrete proposals for building that future.
39. On the basis of the discussion and these contributions, the Office could then proceed to do what is expected of it, i.e. to sift through the debate to identify (for the report it is required to prepare), points which could be examined in greater depth with reasonable chances of reaching a consensus.
40. It goes without saying that before finalizing this report, further consultations will be necessary. These consultations should certainly be held towards the end of the year, with the understanding that in the meantime and particularly during the ILC, the Office will remain at the disposal of members or groups wishing further information.

Geneva, 7 March 2006.

Submitted for information.