

**Sixth sitting**

Wednesday, 9 June 2004, 10.05 a.m.

*Presidents: Mr. Maatough, Mr. Attigbe***REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING  
BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION  
(CONT.)**

## The PRESIDENT

We shall now resume the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Mr. ATHAUDA (*Minister of Labour Relations and Foreign Employment, Sri Lanka*)

On behalf of the Government and delegation of Sri Lanka, let me offer my warmest congratulations to the President and the Vice-Presidents of this Conference on their election.

I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the Director-General for their Reports which take decent work objectives beyond ILO to a global level.

We all have to accept the fact that globalization is inevitable and that it can be a powerful force for positive change. We fully agree with the observations of the Director-General that the Commission's report presents a new way forward for globalization by looking at the existing realities critically and recognizing the positive aspects of its enormous potential, based on a realistic approach to the common aspirations of men and women. It is interesting to note that the key elements in the national agenda proposed by the Commission, that is to say identifying the need to focus on people, good governance, improving the capabilities of the state and integration between social, economic and environmental policies.

Sri Lanka has implemented many policies within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda. The newly elected Government of Sri Lanka, under the leadership of Her Excellency, President Kumaratunga, is fully committed to a decent work plan of action, which will become a policy document ensuring social and economic progress.

The decent work plans of action will outline the key deficits and set out action plans to remedy them. The Reports of the Commission and the Director-General will certainly be immensely helpful.

My Government is committed to creating the required environment for the private sector to operate and expand, thus providing additional employment opportunities. The Government will ensure that the unemployed, especially youth, are trained according to market demand and the necessary changes will be

effected to ensure that the supply conforms to demand.

Poverty is the major challenge facing all of South Asia. During the past few years there is a trend of declining absolute poverty in Sri Lanka, yet income inequality has increased. Recent political trends in the region have clearly shown that growth-centred policies alone may not be sufficient and policies that promote fair distribution may be needed as well to ensure social legitimacy and peace.

Migration for employment is a global phenomenon and an estimated 86 million people are economically active the world over. In Sri Lanka, some one-seventh of the labour force has migrated for employment abroad. Sri Lanka welcomes the proposal to improve policies relating to migration for employment and wishes to urge the receiving countries to strengthen policies ensuring welfare, protection and equity relating to migrant workers, in recognition of the vast contributions made to their economies.

Sri Lanka has already ratified all eight ILO core Conventions and is currently working closely with the ILO in filling existing gaps. We are fully aware of the need to strengthen social dialogue. There is a need to strengthen trade union leadership and promote trade union organization in the unorganized sectors. There is a need to change the mindsets of business to look beyond compliance issues as a means to increase competitiveness. While we endorse the role of the ILO as identified in the chapter on mobilizing action for change in the Director-General's Report, we commend the proposal to rely on the tripartite structures, values and traditions and to actively engage the tripartite actors as the driving force in the process.

In conclusion, I wish to place on record my sincere gratitude for the assistance, guidance and cooperation extended to Sri Lanka by the ILO and in particular I would like to thank the ILO office in Colombo and the Country Director for their commitment.

*Original Arabic: Mr. AL-KHATIB (Government representative, Palestine)*

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Allow me at the outset, on my own behalf and on behalf of my delegation, to extend our congratulations to the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election and to wish them every success.

We have examined with interest the Report of the Director-General, *A fair globalization: The role of the ILO*, and we share his conclusion that this phe-

nomenon is a source of both suffering and hope for humanity at the current stage.

The problem lies in the fact that there are some who seek to exploit the wealth derived from globalization in order to extend their political, cultural and economic hegemony.

As indicated in the Report, we have seen a decline in efforts to seek a balance between the growth of wealth and its distribution with a concomitant increase in poverty and destabilization. There is a proven relationship between poverty exclusion on the one hand and extremism on the other. The ILO is called upon to play a lead role on the other side of the fence, namely, with those seeking to use the tools and potential of globalization to bridge the economic and social gaps between the two worlds.

While you are debating the subject of globalization, the lifting of borders and deregulation, the Palestinian people struggling for freedom is living in a state of siege. The territories are subjected to closures and a separation wall is being built. The Palestinian people is suffering from an unjust war, aimed at destroying its economy and starving it, in order to impose political solutions denying its natural and inalienable rights endorsed by the international community: the right to freedom and dignity and to establish their own independent State within the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds as its capital and guaranteeing the right of return of refugees in accordance with the United Nations resolutions.

The Report of the Director-General, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, quite rightly emphasizes the suffering of the Palestinian people in general, and the workers in particular. This is due to the measures and actions taken directly and arbitrarily by the Israeli occupation forces, including restrictions on movement, systematic closures of certain territories, confiscation of land, demolition of houses, the construction of the wall and repeated murders. The Israeli occupation forces impose restrictions, collective punishments that are contrary to international law. Those measures are directly responsible for the exacerbation of the situation and the increase in unemployment in Palestine. As a result, unemployment rates range between one-third and one-half of the economically active population. Consequently, two-thirds of the Palestinian population are living in poverty.

Nonetheless, the Palestinian people is determined to continue to resist the occupation forces regardless of the cost and sacrifice required. We stand ready to negotiate a lasting and just peace based on international legality. The occupation of not only Palestinian but also Syrian and Lebanese lands must come to an end.

The Palestinian people is of course ready and willing to make its contribution to putting an end of this occupation, which feeds the cycle of violence.

We are looking forward to your economic support through your contributions to the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection, in order to fight unemployment and poverty in our country. Thank you for all your efforts to support Palestinian working men and women, as well as employers' associations. May peace and God's mercy be upon you.

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Mr. GEORGE (*Government delegate, Trinidad and Tobago*)

It is an honour to address this august body and I thank you most sincerely for the opportunity.

Permit me, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to say how proud we are to have Mr. Ray Guevara, our Caribbean brother from the Dominican Republic, elected as President of the Conference. Let me offer our congratulations to him and to the Vice-Presidents for their elections to the esteemed positions they hold and for the impeccable manner in which they have been conducting the affairs of the Conference during these plenary sittings. We would also like to congratulate the Director-General on a job that not only is well done but that has surpassed our expectations.

Let me present this august body with some relevant information about Trinidad and Tobago. First, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the Decent Work Agenda that the Director-General so vigorously promotes. This year's Global Report *Organizing for social justice* could not have been more timely, as Trinidad and Tobago, together with other CARICOM member countries, has embarked on an economic integration process, namely the Caribbean single market and economy, involving, in the first instance, the free movement of labour that would change the character of our economies in the future. In this environment, we accept the view that it is important to have an infrastructure of social, economic and legal institutions that promote growth with equity and assist in the resolution of conflicts. We firmly believe that the ILO, through the Decent Work Agenda, is contributing to the building of such an infrastructure, connecting our growth strategies with strategies for improving the quality of people's lives.

Second, the Trinidad and Tobago Government continues to acknowledge labour not as a commodity, but as people, and we have ratified the Conventions Nos. 87, 98 and 144.

In keeping with our focus on people, one of our more significant achievements this year has been the passage of the new Occupational Safety and Health Act No. 1 of 2004. The Act seeks, inter alia, to widen the scope of employers and workers covered by the legislation by including in its coverage workers and workplaces other than factories as in the previous legislation. The legislation clearly identifies rights, obligations, responsibilities and duties of all stakeholders and enforcement mechanisms that encourage compliance.

The Act also stipulates the establishment of a joint trade union employee and employer safety and health committee in every workplace to review health and safety measures in the workplace, as well as to investigate matters considered to be unsafe or a risk to health at the establishment. The Act makes special provisions for pregnant employees and young persons.

Third, I wish to emphasize the commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labour. Our Government acknowledges that childhood is a period of life which should be concentrated on education and the development of the child rather than on work; that child labour often jeopardizes children's possibilities of becoming productive adults; that child labour is not inevitable and that progress towards its reduction and even its elimination is possible when the political will to fight it exists.

In this regard, we are working very closely with the ILO subregional office for the Caribbean in

Port-of-Spain to eradicate the worst forms of child labour existing in our country, and we are in the process of establishing a National Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Trinidad and Tobago.

Fourth, I am pleased to indicate that Trinidad and Tobago has developed a five-year national HIV/AIDS strategic plan, covering the periods January 2004 to December 2008. The plan provides a comprehensive and decisive response to the pandemic and encourages an "all hands on deck" policy with people working together in a coordinated fashion.

At this juncture, I must express our deepest appreciation for the excellent support and assistance provided to us by the ILO subregional office in improving our responses to HIV/AIDS, in strengthening labour administration systems, labour management relations and development of a labour market information system. Our thanks go to Ms. Grace Strachan, Director of the ILO subregional office for the Caribbean, and her team.

Finally, Mr. President, we wish to conclude by conveying our appreciation for this segment of the Conference. It is through these contributions that we are afforded the opportunity to highlight what we are doing in the important areas and that are the focus of this Conference.

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Mr. SILWAL (*Government delegate, Nepal*)

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First of all, I would like to congratulate the President and the other Officers on their election. I am fully confident that under the President's able and dynamic leadership, the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference will be a successful event.

May I begin by expressing our appreciation to the co-Chairs of the World Commission for presenting a seminal document on the social dimension of globalization. The Commission deserves our sincere appreciation for the most incisive and comprehensive analysis it conducted into the impact of globalization. We all agree, as emphasized in the report, that globalization should have a human face. As the report has opened new horizons, the issues contained therein need to be highlighted and pursued further to create an equitable, progressive and open world order. We are eagerly looking forward to the endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly of the report, as submitted by the co-Chairs of the Commission on 7 June 2004. We are also looking forward to its vigorous follow up by all, in order to translate the vision into reality.

Let me also express my appreciation to the Director-General for his valuable Report entitled *Organizing for social justice*. As a member of the ILO, His Majesty's Government of Nepal is committed to the progressive implementation of the intent and goals of international labour standards. In spite of the many challenges faced by my country in the field of economic development, His Majesty's Government, with the help of all its partners, has remained committed to the promotion of labour standards and productive employment to reduce poverty. In fact, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is our tenth plan, has set poverty alleviation and employment generation as its overarching goals.

The achievements made so far have encouraged us to do more. This is the second year of PRSP implementation and the economic fundamentals re-

main sound, despite the difficult security situation faced by the country over the past few years. The situation of insurgency in the country has adversely affected the process of development through national strikes, extortions and the disruption of economic activities. However, we are committed to pursuing the fundamental goals of promoting economic growth, employment and labour standards and eradicating poverty in the country, because we believe that these goals are interrelated and constitute a firm basis for sustainable development.

Many developing countries are struggling to come to terms with various issues, including the enforcement of labour standards in the informal sector. An overwhelming informal sector coupled with a very limited inspection capacity has created an enforcement deficit. Not only is the scope of the system limited, but there is also a need to enhance the capability of relevant institutions and personnel. In this context, we think that the ILO can play a role in sharing the best practices around the world and in developing more appropriate promotional frameworks and methodologies. It can also play a role in implementing education and training programmes at various levels.

The elimination of child labour in general and the worst forms of child labour in particular poses another significant challenge to us all. Nepal has been implementing a Time-bound Programme for the Eradication of the Worst forms of Child Labour for the last few years. However, in the absence of adequate alternative economic opportunities and social protection measures, it faces obstacles in sustaining the achievements made so far and in achieving its objectives within the given time frame.

Education and income-generating activities, including the services of micro-lending institutions, are to be expanded to deal with the child labour issue. The ILO can help us to make such mechanisms viable in the country.

Similarly, with the increasing trend towards globalization, the number of migrant workers is increasing day by day. However, the enforcement of labour standards for the protection of these workers is far from satisfactory. Excessive transaction costs, the lack of relevant skills, the growing trend towards the feminization of migrant workers and the lack of an enforcement and monitoring mechanism have made migrant workers extremely vulnerable. We are confident that the deliberation on these issues will lead to concrete outcomes. Therefore, there is need for an effective international mechanism to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers, for the benefit of all.

The ILO's new campaign to promote a universal social security system needs to be examined further in view of the financial resources and institutional technical capacities required for the implementation of such a system.

We have benefited enormously from several programmes that have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented with the support of the ILO, for instance the ILO-IPEC Time-bound Programme for the Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, including bonded child labour, and the Decent Work Agenda.

The ILO has been instrumental in initiating and promoting the process of social dialogue as a means to promote democratic and consensual policy-making and legislative reforms in the country. All social partners are united in reaffirming the convic-

tion that, by working together in close cooperation, it will be possible to ensure respect for fundamental principles and rights at work.

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The PRESIDENT

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One delegation has asked to exercise its right to reply, namely the Israeli delegation wants to reply to the intervention made by Mr. Al-Khatib, Minister of Labour from Palestine, and to the speech made on Monday by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I would like to remind you that the reply must be limited to, and specific to, the matter in question, and should in no case provide a basis for a new speech. Delegates applying to exercise the right of reply must also abide by parliamentary language and not indulge in violent and insulting attacks. I shall therefore give the Israeli delegation three minutes to exercise the right to reply at the end of the morning sitting.

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*Original Chinese: Mr. CHEN (Employers' delegate, China)*

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At the outset please allow me to express our heartfelt congratulations to the President and the two Vice-Presidents on their election.

At present, the international situation is undergoing profound changes, with the world multipolarization and economic globalization developing in a tortuous way. Nevertheless, it remains the common aspiration of all the people of the world, and the theme of our times, to pursue peace and development. The world economy has begun to recover after years of sluggish growth. Through reform and opening up, China has pioneered a road to peace and development suited to its own national situation, with an annual economic growth of 9.4 per cent for the past 25 years, and historic transformation from basic subsistence to a well-off livelihood for the 1.3 billion people. At the same time the economic development of China has provided huge opportunities for development in Asia and throughout the world. At the moment, China is in a stage of fast economic growth, which brings about the most favourable conditions for business and industrial development. It is also the biggest potential market in the world. In recent years, many multinationals have come to invest and develop in China. Going to China to share the benefits of reform and of opening up has become a trend in the world. That is because to invest in China means to invest for the future.

In the course of our modernization drive, in our efforts to be human-centred and achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental development, and in our endeavours to contribute to world economic development, we are also facing many contradictions and problems which need to be resolved urgently. China is a country with a large population, weak foundation, low productivity and imbalances in its development. In particular, China is under grave employment pressure, greater than that in any other countries. Workers made redundant in the course of economic restructuring and enterprise reform, and new entrants to the labour market amount to 24 million, and we need 24 million new jobs every year. We are happy that the ILO and the Chinese Government jointly sponsored the China Employment Forum in Beijing in April 2004 which adopted the Beijing Common Understanding.

The Common Understanding reaffirmed that employment is a fundamental right for all workers, and fully acknowledged the tremendous efforts and

great achievements made by China in promoting employment and re-employment, and in poverty alleviation, and emphasized the role of economic growth in expanding employment. The Common Understanding proposed policy suggestions such as promoting the development of small enterprises creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, strengthening tripartite social dialogue, upgrading the knowledge and skills of the labour force and reforming the social security system. These play a positive role in helping various countries to better solve the employment problem.

While globalization has provided developing countries with invaluable new opportunities for making use of international capital and markets, it has also impacted negatively on them in various ways. We appreciate the ILO's efforts over the years in this respect and the suggestions put forward by the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, to the effect that the global economic rules should encompass equitable trade, financial and investment rules. We hope that the ILO will make continuous and ever greater efforts to steer globalization in the direction of justice, equality and benefits for all, and to establish a fair and reasonable international economic order.

The China Enterprise Confederation has made tremendous efforts to encourage enterprises to undertake reform development and to fulfil their social responsibilities. We will, as always, further strengthen our exchanges and cooperation with the ILO and employers' organizations in other countries in our joint efforts for world prosperity and development, and for the realization of the objectives of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all.

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Mr. NG (Acting Minister for Manpower, Singapore)

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On behalf of the Singapore delegation, let me extend our heartiest congratulations to the President on his election to preside over the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

Compared to last year, we meet under better circumstances. Global growth is around 4 per cent. Asia is expected to grow by about 6.8 per cent this year.

Singapore is doing better, too. The forecast for Singapore's economic growth this year is between 5.5 and 7.5 per cent. This has improved employment opportunities and eased unemployment.

Despite better growth, however, globalization and its attendant changes continue to have an impact on all our workers worldwide. Singapore has identified workforce development and upgrading as one of our main strategies to meet this challenge and help Singaporeans remain employable. Hence, my Government set up a dedicated agency, the Singapore Workforce Development Agency, in September last year, to champion our efforts to address current skills gaps and future skills requirements of workers in key growth industries.

The Singapore delegation is therefore pleased that the ILO has placed human resources development and training high on the agenda of this year's session of the International Labour Conference.

Beyond skills upgrading, a national tripartite task-force comprising key representatives of employers, trade unions and the Government also made recommendations to implement a wage system that was more flexible and responsive to volatile business cycles. A comprehensive programme is being

implemented and facilitated by the tripartite partners to help companies adopt a performance-based wage system.

With a resident population of about 3.4 million workers, Singapore needs to augment its population with foreign manpower to meet the labour demands of its industries to achieve sustainable growth.

Recognizing the importance of the well-being of foreign manpower in Singapore, my Ministry formed the Foreign Manpower Management Division last year to specifically attend to the needs of foreign workers. I am confident that we will be able to holistically enhance our framework and provide the best possible environment for foreign workers living and working in Singapore.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Conference that, in November last year, my Ministry, together with the ILO, jointly organized the Focus Seminar on Women Migrant Workers. Not only did this enable various government agencies and trade unions to have a constructive discussion on migrant worker issues, but we were also privileged to share Singapore's experience and efforts in managing foreign manpower and womanpower with the ILO's representatives.

The ILO continues to be pivotal in the improvement of working conditions worldwide. Its tripartite approach ensures that all social partners have an equal voice in the shaping of policies, and hence safeguards the interests of all stakeholders.

The Singapore delegation looks forward to a fruitful discussion on the various issues on the agenda. We are confident that, under the able leadership of the President, the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference will be highly rewarding.

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*Original Montenegrin: Mr. STIJEPOVIĆ (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Montenegro, Serbia and Montenegro)*

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It is an honour to have the opportunity to take the floor as the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Montenegro at the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, this time representing not only the State of Montenegro but the State of Serbia as well.

I wish to salute the initiative of the Director-General of the ILO in setting in motion such an important project as the assessment of the social dimension of the process of globalization.

We have followed with great interest the presentations of the co-Chairs of the World Commission, Ms. Halonen and Mr. Mkapa, which confirmed our belief that the process of globalization must be based on universal values and include the social dimension to the benefit of all.

I also wish to support the speech by Mr. Parvanov, President of Bulgaria, especially in relation to regional cooperation in south-eastern Europe, which is a precondition for the full integration of this region into the European area.

Now, please allow me to inform you briefly about the progress achieved in Serbia and Montenegro in relation to social policy.

A new policy concept in this area, as defined by the Constitutional Charter of the State Union, is specified in the action plan that has been prepared by the Governments and adopted by the assemblies of Serbia and Montenegro. To this end, we have provided particular regulation for the issue of free movement of people, services and capital, specifically working on the need to harmonize the rights of

the employed in both Republics with the standards defined by international regulations. This aspect of our regulations has been settled to mutual satisfaction and operates in practice without any problems or hindrances.

Montenegro is currently implementing recently adopted laws in the area of labour and social legislation – laws on strike action, on pension and disability insurance, on employment of immigrant workers and on other matters – and we are about to adopt a new law on protection at work and on social and child protection.

In the preparation of these laws, we have developed significant cooperation with the social partners in Montenegro. I am very pleased to say that, during last year and the beginning of this, after a long period of time, we have managed to renew and strengthen cooperation with the International Labour Organization. Cooperation between our Government, trade unions and employers' associations and the ILO will be even more fruitful and comprehensive in the future.

You are probably aware of how painful the transition process is for certain social groups. For that reason, I wish to emphasize that in Montenegro we have managed to reach a general social consensus on the importance of accelerated reform of our society and on the methods that should be employed. These reforms, envisaged by the economic reform agenda of the Government of Montenegro, actually form an agenda for wide-ranging reform, not limited to the economy and business.

I wish to emphasize that we have secured participation of the social partners, not only in the preparatory and decision-making process with regard to basic rights related to economic and social development, but also concerning the implementation of these documents. I am convinced that social dialogue, as the necessary prerequisite for the creation and implementation of the economic policy with its social dimension, is of the utmost importance in the transitional circumstances in which Montenegro finds itself today. For that precise reason, we have put a lot of effort into the development of social dialogue and good tripartite relations in order to reach the social consensus necessary for the successful implementation of urgent reforms in Montenegro.

The situation is similar in Serbia. They are working on a new labour law, a law on peaceful resolution of labour disputes and a law on the Social and Economic Council, and they are also reforming the pension and disability insurance system.

In this way, Serbia will harmonize policy in this area with EU standards, define the rights of the employed in a new manner and improve the collective bargaining process, just as we have done in Montenegro.

I am convinced that tripartism and social dialogue can guarantee the maintenance and further development of the fundamental principles of social justice that reflect the spirit of the ILO. I assure you that Serbia and Montenegro are committed to strengthening such a spirit and implementing these principles.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the overall complexity and sensitivity of these new relations within the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and to thank you for expressing a full understanding of this phenomenon, respecting the fact

that these issues are in the exclusive competence of the member States.

I expect that other international organizations will also show the same understanding for the new political and economic relations in the union of Serbia and Montenegro that you have shown from the very beginning.

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Mr. POND (*Parliamentary Undersecretary, Department for Work and Pensions, United Kingdom*)

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Having spent most of my early career working for an anti-poverty NGO, I have long admired the work of the ILO, but this is the first time that I have had the opportunity to attend a session of the International Labour Conference.

I was very pleased to host the United Kingdom reception to mark the launch of the World Commission's report in London in February.

It is important that we do not lose the impetus which the World Commission's work has created, focusing on the issue of globalization through the lens of employment.

As ILO constituents, we all have a responsibility to breathe life into the report and ensure that its recommendations lead to practical action which will bring about real change.

A key challenge is to engage relevant international institutions in the debate on how stronger coherence in regard to their policy areas could contribute to the goal of a fairer globalization. I note that the Director-General has already personally engaged with colleagues across a range of international institutions in light of the proposed "Policy Coherence Initiative" on growth, investment and employment.

The need to bring greater coherence to economic and social initiatives presents a similar challenge. I am pleased that future "decent work" country programmes will build upon the ILO's experience in promoting policy integration and that the ILO continues to promote employment as an essential component in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

The recent China Employment Forum clearly demonstrated the extent to which there is now an international convergence of views on the policy approach to employment, despite big differences in the scale of the problem, as we have just heard, and widespread support for active labour market intervention delivered through a modern employment service.

The Director-General's Report highlights the role of multinational enterprises in promoting international labour standards through voluntary codes of practice.

My Government will shortly be publishing a White Paper on trade and investment which includes an examination of the relationship between globalization and employment. It recognizes the importance of ensuring that globalization leads to more and better jobs for all, and firmly acknowledges the valuable role that corporate social responsibility can play in promoting labour standards.

There is much scope for the ILO to expand its expertise in this area. I welcome the Director-General's proposals for the ILO to build upon its current knowledge base, particularly in the area of multinational enterprises, in order to further its understanding of the functioning of global production systems and the ways in which voluntary initiatives of companies contribute to decent work.

The World Commission proposes a forum to engage international employers' and workers' organizations on the subject of corporate social responsibility and related matters. I look forward to discussions on the preliminary agenda for such a dialogue. It will be important that the ILO makes full use of existing expertise in this area while, at the same time, ensuring that it does not duplicate existing work. It is essential that the ILO brings a fresh and unique perspective to the debate.

Finally, I agree that it would be helpful to explore further the idea of a socio-economic floor to the global economy. The main components of the concept, fundamental rights at work, combating exclusion in the labour market and social protection policies, are already high on the ILO's agenda.

As the Director-General makes clear, his response provides an initial reaction to the Governing Body's first discussion of the World Commission report. We are very much at the start of the process of taking forward action.

Also in February this year, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, launched a Commission for Africa. Many of the issues and problems identified by the World Commission are writ large in Africa.

We are extremely pleased that President Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania has agreed to serve on the Commission for Africa, looking in particular at the issues of employment, education, skills and labour. As one of the co-Chairs of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, we are sure that his work with the World Commission will help the Commission for Africa to focus on specific action for decent work, growth and prosperity in Africa.

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Ms. HUNT (*Workers' delegate, United Kingdom*)

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The plenary is asked to consider many issues in this one debate so I shall refer only to some key Trades Union Congress (TUC) priorities.

I am the first woman United Kingdom trade union delegate to address this Conference. In that role it is incumbent on me to say that there are still far too few women here. We have raised repeatedly a truth reflected in the Global Report. Freedom of association is most commonly denied in the feminized sectors of the global economy, in export processing zones, in agriculture, in domestic and other informal work and in the public services. We in the trade union movement know that we must reach out to women workers and increase the representation of women trade unionists at the International Labour Conference. Governments that allow only one worker to attend the Conference do not help us in that. Equally, governments and employers must also accept their obligations to remove the barriers to women's organization in free trade unions. This is equally true for migrant workers. Convention No. 87 is a human rights Convention because it proclaims the rights of all workers without distinction.

This is linked to our support for a tripartite, standards-based ILO. We work well with friendly NGOs in Britain and elsewhere, but non-representative organizations should have, we believe, no role in ILO governance.

The TUC welcomes the World Commission report, though we believe it would have been even more comprehensive had it examined more closely how denial of workers' rights in China is central to the current nature of globalization. My general

council has discussed our role in the British follow-up and we strongly endorse the call for greater global coherence in support of fundamental rights and decent work. A lead ILO role in the follow-up is essential and we call on all governments to ensure coherence in their own policies in all international institutions.

In that spirit, we renew our call for more coherent ILO work on corporate social responsibility (CSR). We believe that there are only two ways to defend working people. Through good law, properly enforced, and through workers' self-organization in free trade unions. CSR is good if it promotes the former and opens up space for the latter. It is bad when it supports bad law or promotes alternative paternalistic models of industrial relations. The ILO must make good the lost ground in the CSR debate and all parties, including companies, must surely recognize the benefits of an ILO role in ensuring greater coherence and competency to replace the prevailing anarchy of commercial social auditing.

There is no special sitting this year so let me turn, on behalf of the TUC, to the situation of the Palestinian workers. We have condemned, and we continue to condemn, the violence on both Palestinian and Israeli citizens. In November, our PGFTU and Histadrut colleagues welcomed a TUC delegation to the West Bank and Israel. In the West Bank we saw an economy in shreds.

We strongly support the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection and call on all donor governments to contribute. Peace-building requires decent work, but the restrictions on free movement of labour and goods, even within the occupied Arab territories, deter investment and prevent the Palestinian Authority from developing labour market policies to deliver decent work.

Let me turn finally to another TUC priority. Three TUC delegations will visit Colombia this year. Arbitrary detentions, outlawing of strikes and militarization of the workplaces there have all increased.

The ILO's constituents' failure to agree an appropriate ILO response is harming Colombia and undermining the ILO's authority. We believe that it cannot be right that only authoritarian regimes that reject the current globalization model are subject to stronger supervisory measures. They deserve criticism when they violate ratified Conventions but others should not escape similar measures just because they have a market economy. If this atmosphere re-enters the ILO it will not survive long. The TUC wants it to survive as a beacon of freedom, tripartism, decent work and impartial supervision of international labour standards.

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*Original Arabic: Mr. NEFFATI (Minister of Social Affairs and Solidarity, Tunisia)*

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In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I have the pleasure of most warmly congratulating Mr. Ray Guevara, Minister of Labour from the Dominican Republic, the Vice-President Mr. Maatough and indeed all the Officers of the Conference and of wishing them every success in their duties.

The inclusion of migrant workers on the agenda of this session reflects a growing interest in migration in a changing world. Migration is seen as a multidimensional civilizing influence because it brings civilizations and cultures closer together.

As globalization allows the free movement of capital and goods, it must not exclude the free

movement of workers. This is one of the inconsistencies which must be overcome if migration is to become an effective mechanism for global development and solidarity benefiting all the peoples of the world.

I would like to play tribute to the Director-General's proposal that an international forum on migration for employment should be established. As Tunisia is convinced of the close link between migration and development, it has supported regional and international initiatives to manage migration and strengthen consultation and coordination in this sphere at the bilateral and multilateral levels. Hence we were the first to convene a conference for Western Mediterranean countries (the 5 + 5 Conference) in December 2003. A substantial proportion of its deliberations were devoted to the joint management of migration, since this topic had formed the subject of the first regional ministerial conference that had been held in Tunisia.

It is a secret to no one that in order to achieve sustainable development, closer attention must be paid to the gathering pace of change throughout the world. The adoption of a new international instrument on human resource development will certainly inspire member countries to formulate policies and establish appropriate mechanisms and programmes in this field. Tunisia has banked on human resource development and has accordingly introduced reforms so as to adapt its educational system to the new demands made by advances in information and communications technology. It has also introduced education for all in an effort to make culture accessible to everyone through modern information and communications technologies. The fact that Tunisia was chosen to host the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005 is an acknowledgement of its efforts and of the progress it has achieved in this sphere. We hope that this summit will help to find ways of reducing the digital divide and consolidating development efforts.

The Global Report on freedom of association and collective bargaining highlights progress in securing respect for the fundamental rights at work set forth in the 1998 Declaration, a progress which has been reflected in the large number of ratifications by member States of the Conventions in question and in their commitment to apply the principles contained therein, as well as in the efficacy of the follow-up mechanism.

As for the Report on the social dimension of globalization, we have examined all the main recommendations in this Report which formed the centrepiece of the special sitting at which emphasis was placed on the means of making globalization more humane and more just by anchoring it in respect for human rights and human dignity and by ensuring equal opportunities for all peoples without discrimination.

The size of the challenges highlighted by the report means that the international community will have to resort to cooperation and partnership in order to achieve well-being and security for all.

The situation of the Arab workers in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories as outlined in the annual Report from the Director-General is still a cause for concern because the Report shows the extent of the suffering borne by various sections of the Palestine people, a situation that is contrary to the most elementary human rights recognized in international charters and labour standards.

We expect the ILO to play a bigger role in this regard through stronger support for the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection, in the form of the requisite financial resources.

Tunisia, as His Excellency, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, stressed in his opening address to the 16th Session of the Arab Summit in Tunis, reaffirms its attachment to international dignity and peace as a strategic choice and calls on the United Nations and other influential international bodies to give renewed impetus to the Road Map and to seek a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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Mr. DALLEY (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica*)

I would like to begin by extending, on behalf of the Jamaican delegation, congratulations to the President on his election to preside at this 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

Our congratulations also go to the Director-General for his excellent Report on the progress made in implementing the Decent Work Agenda (*ILO programme implementation 2002-03*). I would also like to convey a very special greeting from the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the most Honourable P. J. Patterson, who has asked me to convey to the Director-General his special greetings and best wishes for his continued leadership and guidance in advancing the work of the ILO. As a token of our appreciation I would like to extend publicly, today, an invitation to the Director-General to visit the Caribbean to gain a first-hand appreciation of our work in the region.

Both the President of Finland and the President of the United Republic of Tanzania must be commended for their brilliant work as co-Chairs of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Their report, *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*, speaks to the urgency of formulating a new governance structure that defines globalization in human terms and provides opportunities and tangible benefits for all the citizens of the world. The report embraces the cardinal principles of humanity – equity, rights, democracy and social justice. Jamaica stands fully in support of these conclusions.

As we contemplate the ILO's role in shaping a fair and equitable globalization for all, the strategic objectives evident in the Director-General's Report become even more instructive. The promotion of standards and the fundamental principles and rights at work, the securing of decent work for men and women, enhancing the coverage of social protection for all, and strengthening tripartism and social dialogue will remain a myth if we ignore the essential theme of President Thabo Mbeki's address to the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference last year. He spoke of the cruel reality of the debt burden on the South, through social adjustment programmes which "caused further deterioration in the living conditions of the most fragile classes of the population" and resulted in "the financial transfers from South to North", which has hampered the development of the South.

The ILO is therefore challenged now more than ever before to ensure that globalization does not manifestly worsen the situation and wreak havoc on the world's poor, but offers hope for a better and improved life for two-thirds of the world's population.

There is a common theme that links the cause of mankind through time, and that is the search for economic improvement to their lives. Globalization, perhaps more than any other phenomenon throughout the sweep of history, has the most profound and far-reaching implications for our social, economic, political and cultural ways of life. As a social system, it cannot ignore the cultural uniqueness and diversities that shape the world. As an economic system, its failure to address the growing disparities in wealth and entrenched poverty in parts of the world will give rise to social malaise and exclusion, with the attendant consequences of social upheavals. This is why Jamaica fully endorses the placing of development at the heart of the Doha agenda and joined its colleagues of the South in directing the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun away from the "Singapore issues" and along the path of sustainable development. We must therefore pursue an agenda of issues that seeks to achieve development and improved living standards for the peoples of the world.

While we struggle to ensure that the global rules and policies on trade provide for equal opportunities for developing countries to gain market access and foster the process of growth and development, and while we fully endorse the need for labour market reform to facilitate the process for competitiveness and increased productivity, we must also ensure that the basic rights of workers to freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively remain fundamentally secured. At the same time, we must equally ensure that the social protection agenda is vigorously pursued. In this regard, Jamaica is proud to state that last August we ratified the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and have been actively pursuing a programme of action, with the assistance of the InFocus Programme on Child Labour (IPEC) and the ILO subregional office for the Caribbean, to eliminate child labour in our country.

Our efforts continue to be underpinned by our commitment to the principles of tripartism and social dialogue, the result of which has been an historic signing recently of a Memorandum of Understanding in the public sector between two of our social partners, the Government and the trade union movement, represented by its umbrella organization, the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions.

In conclusion, both the reports on fair globalization and that of the Director-General give credence to our work and the important issues we are content to grapple with in the hope of securing long and lasting benefits for the world's poor. We must now enter this period of discussion with a renewed spirit and awareness that the fate of humankind rests upon the work we do, the cause we defend and the challenges we are prepared to relentlessly pursue in order to achieve social justice, equality and development for all of us.

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*Original Turkish: Mr. KILIC (Workers' delegate, Turkey)*

I extend to you all my deepest regards of friendship and solidarity on behalf of the working people in Turkey. I congratulate the President on his election and the Director-General for his successful work.

On behalf of the working people in Turkey, I condemn the inhumanity and torture practised on the Iraqi people and the violence towards the Palestinian people which are currently taking place in this,

the twenty-first century. I invite the international community to take immediate action.

The strategic objectives underlined in the Director-General's Report are fully supported by Turkish workers. I should like to congratulate him for his efforts to bring forth the concept of decent work as a global target and also for his struggle to eliminate poverty and unemployment, the worst consequences of globalization.

A considerable portion of the world's population is either unemployed or in search of an additional income to help their families to survive. The increase in national income does not make any sense unless it provides productive employment for more people. I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Governing Body's Committee on Employment and Social Policy for their studies on productive employment for poverty reduction and I should like to remind the Government and the Employers' delegations that this concept is their common responsibility.

It is not possible to sustain and secure social peace in the world without a structure offering fair income distribution, otherwise social chaos is inevitable. Income distribution has evolved into an unfair and unstable structure, decreasing the living standards of the workers, especially through the globalization process. Urgent policies must be put into place and urgent measures must be taken.

Without any doubt, the first step is to put an end to the implementation of economic policies imposed by the international finance institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank which is having a profound effect on the world in the process of globalization. In particular, privatization practices in our country which have no meaning other than unemployment must be addressed.

The concepts discussed in the chapter of the Director-General's Report focusing on issues of organization and trade union rights and freedoms are of the utmost importance, especially for Turkish workers. The labour movement in our country is facing a period of difficulty with regard to organization. Throughout the last decade, membership figures of trade unions seriously decreased due to the economic crisis, privatization practices and the current economic model. Difficulties are being encountered as a result of laws and the abuse of regulations.

The Job Security Act, which is something the workers have wanted to achieve for many years and which was finally put in force last year, was restricted, resulting in 3.5 million workers being excluded from the coverage of job security.

Unfair postponements of strikes by the Council of Ministers, were overruled by decisions of our independent courts. Our legal struggle to fully exercise our right to strike, our right to collective bargaining and our right to end the postponement of strikes will continue.

The concept of "social dialogue", specifically emphasized in the Director-General's Report is also a priority in my country. The tripartite negotiations between the Government, workers and employers are continuing in order to improve our Labour Act and overcome the deficits in legislation to bring it into line with modern times.

Following the latest amendments to our Constitution the international Conventions have gained value in our internal legislative system. Our chief expectation is to make sure that civil servants bene-

fit from the rights provided for in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Furthermore, necessary measures must be taken to harmonize the existing regulations with the ILO Conventions ratified by Turkey.

Governments must initiate more active measures regarding social protection policies. Much more effort is needed to overcome the difficulties encountered in the field of occupational health and safety resulting from the globalization process implemented for the benefit of transnational capital. Furthermore, governments must improve the social protection measures regarding women workers, child labour and the disabled.

The ILO should improve the universal labour standards and the social model, as globalization is increasing its dominance over labour and capital. In addition to this, globalization has a negative impact on developing countries while creating a positive impact on industrialized countries.

The Turkish Republic and the Turkish community of northern Cyprus has undertaken all its responsibilities towards integrating with the world. Following this positive step, the States of the world and the international community must endeavour to lift the political and economic embargo from northern Cyprus.

Turkish workers call upon the representatives participating in the Conference to take action in this regard.

Turkish workers support human rights, peace in the world and peace in our country. We have deep concerns about the situation in the Middle East. War and terrorism are the biggest enemies of human rights and democracy. Furthermore, they are the biggest enemies of workers' rights and freedoms. Turkish workers desire a peaceful world without any wars. We hope that this Conference will serve to promote world peace and social welfare.

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Mr. ALOEWIE (*Government delegate, Indonesia*)

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On behalf of the Indonesian Delegation, I congratulate the President on his election as President of the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, as well as the three Vice-Presidents. I am confident that, under his able leadership, the Conference will produce fruitful results.

I should like also to extend my delegation's appreciation for the Director-General's Report, as well as for the report of the Chairman of the Governing Body.

We commend the Director-General's Report on the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which outlines how the ILO could play a key role in promoting its decent work programme as part of a global agenda.

Let me begin by sharing with you our views concerning the implementation of the ILO programme.

The document has clearly mapped out the course of action taken by the Organization for that biennium, based on its four strategic objectives which aim to attain of decent work for all. Moreover, the actions undertaken have been directed at efficiently addressing the needs and interests of the tripartite constituents. Nevertheless, we would like to reiterate that the ILO should focus on a holistic approach with respect to the assistance it provides to governments and their social partners.

With reference to the first objective, which is to promote the protection of workers, the Government of Indonesia continues to upgrade its legislation on labour issues. At the beginning of this year, the Government passed an act on the labour dispute settlement, which is the latest legislation forming part of the labour law reform package, launched by the Government in 1998.

Accordingly, in order to implement these labour laws, Indonesia has also ratified the ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). These various measures should strengthen labour protection in Indonesia and lead to more harmonious industrial relations by giving workers the social protection they need. The industrial actors themselves should establish harmonious industrial relations.

The Government consistently makes serious efforts to assist them by establishing an effective bipartite forum.

Since Indonesia still faces an employment problem, the Government has been doing everything in its power to increase employment opportunities. This policy is in line with our mandate as stated in the Constitution whereby every citizen has the right to decent work.

We are aware that an informal economy is an unavoidable fact in the process of national development. Consequently, our national development programmes are directed towards strengthening the informal sector by improving relevant regulations.

I should like to touch on one of the issues in our agenda for this year's session of the International Labour Conference, namely that of migrant workers. This topic is of particular importance to us and my Government appreciates its inclusion in the agenda. We therefore welcome the opportunity to discuss migrant worker issues as part of the agenda. The worldwide dimension of the problem indicates that this issue should be dealt with internationally and it naturally points to the ILO as the Organization best placed to address it and seek relevant solutions.

My Government recognizes that measures should be put in place to protect Indonesian migrant workers. Some measures are in fact already underway, notably with the formulation of draft legislation on the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers.

My delegation would like to make a brief comment on the Director-General's Report on globalization which includes some of the arguments contained in the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Indonesia supports globalization as the basis for economic growth. However, globalization should not be dissociated from its social dimension and the fulfilment of public interest which calls for the achievement of the Decent Work Agenda.

The Government of Indonesia is gratified by the assistance and cooperation afforded to us by the ILO in our efforts to implement the four strategic objectives in the country.

Before closing, I should like to add that the Government of Indonesia remains concerned by the workers' situation in the occupied Arab territories. We believe that it is important that the ILO continues to provide its assistance and to give the highest priority to addressing this issue.

Finally, I would like to stress that our success depends on the willingness to work hand in hand in

addressing our differences in a spirit of understanding and dialogue.

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*Original French: Mr. IVALA (Minister for Labour and Employment, Gabon)*

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First and foremost, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I should like to echo the congratulations expressed by the previous speakers to the President on his election to guide our Conference.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Juan Somavia for the quality of the reports tabled for our study, without omitting of course the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization for an excellent report entitled *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*.

I should like to submit a number of comments on this subject.

When the World Commission tabled its report in March, His Excellency President Benjamin Mkapa said, and I quote: "the problems related to the social dimension of globalization can be attributed to globalization without accountability. While more and more governments are held accountable by their citizens, fewer and fewer global actors are held accountable by anybody".

We share the key elements identified by the Commission, which show the path that we should follow. I will just quote briefly from that: "globalization with solidarity, policy coherence for global development, fair rules", those are some of the key elements.

However, we should not confuse decisions with progress. The process of globalization, as it is currently happening, is unfair. That is why we should act consistently, both nationally and internationally, to address this.

At national level, good governance, the promotion and respect for fundamental human rights, the strengthening of tripartism and the promotion of social dialogue are all important. It is our collective responsibility to put together national strategies on globalization.

This strategy, in our view, should contain a certain number of elements. At the national level, the Government of Gabon believes that decent and productive employment is one of the essential ways of combating poverty and exclusion and it is in that framework that the President of the Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, has declared 2004 and 2005 full employment years.

In addition, the Government is translating this high-level political determination into a daily reality. Specific actions have been taken. One of these is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is currently in its final stages. This Paper naturally makes employment a priority in our poverty reduction campaign.

Provincial forums on employment are currently being held in order to determine the employment market better. We believe that we should stifle unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, which has been rising. We advocate, with this in mind, labour-intensive employment.

In order to relaunch our economy, it is essential to create a peaceful social environment. In this connection, a three-year truce between the social partners has been signed. That truce is designed to create a favourable climate for economic recovery, which I mentioned earlier.

One of the manifestations of this truce is the fact that, for the first time, the trade union confederations have launched a single manifesto on the occasion of Labour Day.

We welcome the fact that migration has been put on the agenda of our Conference. As a host country, Gabon, which has a great deal of immigrant labour, believes that labour mobility should be set within a clear regulatory framework.

We approve the process that should lead to the adoption of an action plan designed to strengthen the ILO's ability to assist member countries to manage migration, based on the constant values that guide us here, that is, non-discrimination and equity.

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Mr. MEYER (*Government adviser and substitute delegate, Canada*)

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May I first take this opportunity to congratulate the President and other Officers of the Conference on their election.

In his Report to the Conference on the follow-up to the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, the Director-General challenged us to take a hard look at the role of the ILO today and in the future.

His Report is frank in its self-assessment. It says, and I quote: "We can be criticized as inward looking, preoccupied with procedure, relatively slow in response, and having a style of expression that deters all but the most enthusiastic from discovering our ideas." This Report also says: "The Organization and its activities are not well known even within the international networks of employers' and workers' organizations." And yet this somewhat forgotten, often ignored and largely ritualized Organization is being challenged by the World Commission to find a new voice and to make itself heard over the din of a very noisy global marketplace, which in many parts of the world is also torn apart by violence.

The message we are to give the world is both old and new. The old message is found in the Constitution of the ILO: that lasting peace must be based on social justice, that the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations, that labour is not a commodity. The Director-General's Report very appropriately begins by quoting these famous dictums of the ILO.

The new message is about governance, both within nations and among nations, and about coherence: integrating the social and the economic – merging the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO with the economic growth agendas of the Bretton Woods institutions.

Before embarking on such a challenging mission, it is worthwhile to take stock of our assets. The main assets of the ILO, pointed out in the Director-General's Report, are also both old and new. First is tripartism itself – the original genius of the ILO founders was to bring the key economic players to the same table.

Second is the governance structure of the ILO, which somehow manages to work despite the complexity of 177 nations. Third is the global consensus on the central ideals and goals of the ILO, most recently expressed in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Finally, we should count as a major asset the clear strategic objectives of the ILO's Decent Work

Agenda. But, if we are being critical of ourselves, then we must question whether these assets are enough. The ILO, after all, has not just arrived on the scene. It has been actively engaged with many of the issues raised for decades. What have been the results of this activity on a global scale? Einstein is often quoted as saying that the definition of madness is to repeat the same actions while expecting different results. Are we satisfied with the results which the activities of the ILO have been producing? What needs to change if we want to expect different results and call ourselves sane at the same time?

These are strategic questions which are posed by the Director-General in his Report, and to address them he calls for a detailed examination of the strategic directions of the Organization this coming November in the Governing Body.

Canada believes that ILO activities should directly contribute to the creation of decent work in a global economy by fostering the effective use of human capital and respect for workers' rights. In this context, we call on the ILO to focus on supporting activities: to reflect in legislation and effectively implement fundamental principles and rights; to build effective labour administrations that can develop and implement sound labour policies and legislation oriented to the contemporary economy; to establish and strengthen institutions of social dialogue; to obtain and disseminate the best possible information on preventing occupational injuries and disease; to promote training and skills upgrading for workers who want to enhance productive potential; and to ensure that workers have the economic security they need to pursue their own personal development and that of their families.

The Governing Body will need to be clear about the results it wants to achieve and about the selection of a limited set of strategic targets it wants to aim at. It will need to maximize the leverage of the ILO's most strategic assets and make sure it does not deviate from the ILO's most fundamental objectives. Only by being highly focused can our Organization expect to play a leadership role in today's fast-changing world.

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*Original French: Mr. SARBU (Minister Responsible for Relations with the Social Partners, Romania)*

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On behalf of the Romanian Government, I should first of all like to congratulate the two distinguished co-Chairs of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, Her Excellency, Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, and His Excellency, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, for their valuable contribution to the work of the Commission.

We are truly living in an era of globalization. Together, we are climbing a new rung in the ladder of history, at a time when humanity, no doubt, has the necessary maturity to recognize the incredible opportunities open to it and to be aware of the risks it faces. Every individual in human society stands to benefit from globalization and risks falling victim to it.

A worker who cannot find work is an infinitely more tragic character than any Hamlet or Oedipus, said John Morley about one of the profoundly dramatic and unfortunately very common realities of society today.

This type of reality, in other words the social dimension of globalization, cannot be ignored. The

effects of globalization on every individual and the improvements brought about by establishing fairer rules in international trade, finance, investment and migration must be our main concern.

A global problem requires a global solution and the International Labour Organization, through its founding values and the way it implements those values, plays a vital role in the evolution of the dynamic concept of globalization, all the while respecting “justice and humanity”. Decent work, security, development based on education and social justice: Romania has been and will be a staunch supporter of these ideals!

On 1 January 2007, we will be joining the European Union. This represents an important economic, political and social step forward for our country in terms of improving the living standards of our citizens. But, this open society towards which we are moving raises other challenges. In the globalized world, migration has become a central problem. In 2001, in order to meet the need for information and advice on migrant workers in Romania, we set up a specialized agency known as the Office for Labour Force Migration. Its main goal is to protect the rights of Romanian workers’ abroad and to promote the integration of those who come to work in our country.

All of the efforts made to date by the Romanian Government to regulate the movement of the workforce and to ensure that migrant workers achieve a dignified status require, in the future, the support of our European partners, particularly in terms of negotiating and concluding more bilateral agreements that provide a legal framework for regulating labour force migration.

I would like to reiterate at this point in time the open position of Romania towards forming such partnerships to this end. Experience has shown that these agreements and Conventions are extremely efficient instruments in the fight against clandestine migration and the illegal trafficking for workers.

At the same time, we are committed to continuing to strengthen our partnerships within Romania with our trade unions and Employers’ groups.

Aware of the important rôle played by civil society in our economy, the effects of which are sometimes painful, the Romanian Government has made institutionalized dialogue a permanent instrument for consultation and for the promotion of social cohesion, further harmonizing our government policies on social, educational, scientific and cultural issues in order to ensure genuine economic growth, based on sustainable development.

This shared responsibility is perceived today in Romania as more than just an abstract theory or a simple instrument for social peace. It is more of an attitude in the way we approach realities than a cultural backdrop for cooperation.

The social consultation process brought about through partnership agreements initiated, negotiated and, I might even say, concluded in a positive way by this Government, has been renewed in 2004.

The 2004 Social Stability Pact reflects the efforts of social partners and the Government to find the best and most responsible ways of improving our social protection system, increasing income levels and standards of living, improving our use of human resources and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all.

These objectives are ambitious and our efforts are commensurate to them. In the light of the forthcom-

ing accession of Romania to the European Union, we currently find ourselves at the heart of the globalization process. This historic accession process will not only provide great opportunities for Romania, but also great challenges. In this context, I would like to make a promise on behalf of the Romanian Government: when Romania is ready to adopt the spirit of competitiveness and meet the demands of the European Union, it will continue to remain loyal to, and pursue its commitments to respect, the principles of solidarity and social justice sought by the ILO.

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*Original Arabic: Mr. ALLAM (Employers’ delegate, Egypt)*

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On behalf of the Federation of Egyptian Industries, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to chair the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference. On my own behalf and on behalf of the Federation of Egyptian Industries, I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his Report, *Organizing for social justice*. The federation that I represent agrees with the content of this Report, which was already the subject of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. These principles and the rights resulting from them are of particular interest as they are important factors in all economic, social and political activities.

The Federation of Egyptian Industries believes in the principle of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining as part of an expression of human dignity, because these allow employers and workers to come together and work jointly, not only to defend their economic interests, but also to guarantee civil liberties, such as the right to life and security, protection against all forms of discrimination, intervention and harassment – and all of this is an integral part of democracy.

It has been proven that respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining plays an important role in a country’s healthy economic development. This can only have positive effects on economic growth because it guarantees a fairer distribution of the results of that growth and the promotion of productivity, sound management of adjustment measures and social peace, and this within the framework of a globalized economy that guarantees freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, which allows us to reconcile social objectives with the needs of the market economy.

The Federation of Egyptian Industries is concerned that, despite a generally positive trend with regard to the spread of democracy and the high-level of ratification of the ILO’s fundamental international labour standards and the increase in market transparency on a global basis, there are still major problems. There are still infringements of the rights of employers and workers, for example, murders, acts of violence and arrests, as can be seen in Palestine and in the occupied Arab territories. People who seek to organize themselves and defend their fundamental rights collectively are losing their lives and their freedom.

The Federation of Egyptian Industries notes that the informal economy has still not been really explored. Employers and workers should be able to benefit from the right to organize in the informal economy. It is obvious that representative structures need to be anticipated in this sector, independent of the workers’ and employers’ organizations in place.

In this respect, the Federation of Egyptian Industries calls on employers' organizations with direct links with the informal sector, through subcontracting or other forms of commercial arrangements that have their roots in the informal economy, to play an important part in promoting respect for fundamental rights without hindering the spirit of initiative and the development of this sector.

As far as migrant workers are concerned, the Federation of Egyptian Industries thanks the secretariat for including this item on the agenda of the Conference. We feel that the Arab region is well acquainted with this problem because we both import and export migrant labour, and so we have to find frameworks and structures that will allow us to defend the interests of these migrant workers. These workers must organize within existing unions, rather than set up new ones, to ensure that they are not excluded from the system of collective bargaining.

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*Original Arabic: Mr. LATIF (Government delegate, Iraq)*

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In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! It is a pleasure for me to convey to you the greetings of my Government which is preparing to take back full national sovereignty from the Coalition Provisional Authority at the end of this month. Now that resolution No. 1546 has been unanimously adopted, I extend my thanks and appreciation to the international community and to the international coalition forces which helped to put an end to the nightmare that was one of the cruellest dictatorial regimes in recent history and which gave the Iraqi people back its dignity.

I would also like to express my regard for the ILO, its Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia; the Director of the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, Dr. Rifai; and the chief of the ILO Task Force for Iraq, Dr. Qaryouti, for their sincere efforts, their perseverance and their valuable assistance to us in various fields. A coordination office has been opened in Baghdad in cooperation with our Ministry and the ILO Regional Office in Beirut, which has made it possible to strengthen cooperation and to facilitate the implementation of the draft agreement between the two parties. Training courses have been organized with the assistance of the ILO, and have been able to develop a draft Labour Code, which can be considered as an excellent model for the region, and which incorporated all the international standards, Conventions and Recommendations and especially the eight core labour Conventions.

Turning now to the Report of the Director-General, *ILO programme implementation 2002-03*, despite our absence from the 91st Session and the very difficult circumstances that my country was in, our contacts with the ILO have been uninterrupted. We therefore have to commend the Director-General for the effort put into preparing the Report and for the importance of its substance, especially the Organization's strategies. However, the Report does not include statistics, nor does it refer to states which do not respect international standards or which have adopted them but continually violate them. The Report also does not indicate the poverty level of each member State or the plans developed to improve the situation. Given that our Organization has reached the venerable age of 85, we wish to recall, as the Director-General emphasized, that its programmes and modus operandi must be reviewed.

It is also necessary to develop new ways of achieving the Organization's objectives. It is time to find a new mechanism for bringing pressure to bear on member States, as is the case with the Human Rights Commission, for example. The Report uses terminology that needs to be clearly defined. For example, we need a clear definition of what is meant by decent work or suitable work.

As to the Report *A Fair Globalization: The role of the ILO*, we all agree that globalization is not entirely beneficial and that some aspects are harmful. Those countries which do not recognize its benefits are putting in place adequate social and economic programmes, but those with corrupt administrations or under dictatorships are the first to suffer from the disadvantages of globalization. We therefore have to benefit from the experience of other countries and to demand from the developed countries measures such as opening up markets and putting an end to protectionist policies and subsidies in certain sectors, particularly agriculture.

The international community has concerned itself with the situation in Iraq and is trying to help us. Meetings with donor countries are held one after another not just out of solidarity but because the whole world knows how important Iraq's capacity is in all domains, and particularly with regard to security, peace and the fight against terrorism in the region, as well as the development of the tools necessary for building a real democracy.

Iraq needs your support and this support can take two forms: to bring pressure to bear on the social partners in order to write off Iraq's debts, because those debts were not used for the development of Iraq but were used to buy weapons and to drag the country into destructive wars that claimed many lives and destroyed the economy and the infrastructure. Why should the Iraqi people pay back debts that only served to bring devastation? The other form of assistance must be contributions to the reconstruction of Iraq and the rejection of using the security situation as a pretext for delaying the reconstruction process. On the contrary, the process of implementing contracts should be speeded up. Otherwise, as the Iraqi Minister of Construction and Housing has said, Iraq will be forced to cancel the contracts signed with companies that are delaying their implementation. Once sovereignty is returned to the Iraqi Government and the situation is stabilized, foreign investors will pour into the country in their thousands. Especially since insecurity is not unique to Iraq, but prevails in several countries in the region and in the world, in Asia, Africa, and even in the United States. Terrorism is a multinational and cross-border phenomenon. It is a phenomenon unrestricted by any constraints or values, much less by moral or human values. We must not fold before it, but must find answers to social problems, most importantly unemployment. It is also important to address the political and international aspect of terrorism and this means finding a fair solution to the Palestinian question that guarantees Palestinians the right to establish their own independent state and to live at long last with dignity.

The new Iraqi society also hopes to be able to enjoy its fundamental rights. The young democracy in Iraq has given Iraqis the right to form trade unions and employers' organizations, political parties and civil society organizations as well as the freedom of the press, freedom of expression and the freedom to hold demonstrations. The Iraqi Ministry of Labour

and Social Affairs has accomplished important tasks in a relatively short time; 28 buildings near the Ministry have been renovated and the civil servants began working there in March 2003. Retired workers, of whom there are more than 18,000 have been given emergency payments and we have also paid subsidies to poor families. We have also renovated orphanages and homes for disabled people and for the elderly; we opened two centres which receive abandoned children and a reception centre for abused women. UNICEF has undertaken the renovation of 24 other buildings. The Ministry has created a department responsible for child labour and staff will be trained to tackle this problem and coordinate their work with the relevant international organizations and NGOs. We have prohibited forced labour, paid or unpaid, because the former dictatorship made use of forced labour under the pretext of "national work", despite having signed the ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), in 1959.

In conclusion, I wish our Organization every success in the hunt for solutions to social problems and I hope that, through dialogue, democracy, peace, security and prosperity will be able to reign in the world. The Iraqis will not waiver in their march towards progress and terrorists will not prevent us from building a model society in the fields of human rights and democracy, nor from guaranteeing all the social partners their fundamental rights.

*(Mr. Attigbe takes the Chair.)*

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Mr. WINN (*Minister of Labour, Myanmar*)

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First and foremost on behalf of the Myanmar delegation, I would like to congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over the work of this august assembly. I am confident that under his able guidance and leadership the Conference will be successful.

At the outset, I would like to take the opportunity to commend the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General of the International Labour Office. The Reports allow us to reflect on successes and to further build upon them. At the same time, they remind us that we should pay greater attention to areas where the Organization has been less successful. An important item of concern to an increasing number of countries in the international community is this year's agenda item on migrant workers. Just as globalization has brought about movement of capital and goods and the opening of global markets, it has also affected the international migration of workers. The process has raised concerns regarding the protection of migrant workers. In ASEAN we are taking measures to resolve the problems connected with migrant workers within the region. I would like to inform this distinguished assembly that Myanmar has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Thailand to address the issue of cross-border workers from the two countries. We have already accepted over 13,000 returning migrant workers in Myanmar. We have also established a reception camp at the border area to facilitate the return of Myanmar migrant workers. All these endeavours are being undertaken at our own cost.

We hope that a general discussion of the problem of migrant workers using the integrated approach will serve to provide us with new, appropriate and comprehensive responses to labour migration. I would like to add that other technical items on the

agenda are also of importance for the promotion of standard-setting activities and we are of the view that a proposal concerning the withdrawal of obsolete recommendations is appropriate and timely.

It is opportune for me to briefly review our efforts to eradicate forced labour in my country, in close cooperation with the ILO. I would like to recall that, since May 1999, appropriate legislative changes have been made concerning the Village and Town Act to prohibit forced labour practices. Moreover, relevant administrative and executive measures have also been put in place with a view to enforcing the legislative measures. Above all, an agreement reached in March 2002 has led to the appointment of a liaison officer, which has further helped promote cooperation between Myanmar and the ILO.

With regard to the concluding remarks of the 288th Session of the Governing Body concerning the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action, to which we have agreed and which we initialled in May 2003, we already announced our genuine political will and commitment to implement the plan in cooperation with the ILO during the evaluation visit to Myanmar of Mr. Francis Maupain, Special Adviser to the ILO Director-General in March 2004. Despite our commitment, it has not yet been possible to implement the Joint Plan of Action because some quarters are linking its implementation with extraneous issues. We are of the view that it should be considered objectively, solely in the light of the merits of the elements contained in the plan, on which the two sides have worked so hard to agree on.

At this point I would like to refer to the case of the two convicts who appeared before the 289th Session of the Governing Body. I would like to reiterate that their being sentenced to death was not related in any way to their contact with the ILO. I would like to reassure you that contact with the ILO is by no means considered a criminal offence in our country. The death penalty was passed on the two people because of their contact with an illegal organization formed by dissidents in exile to engage in subversive activities against the Government.

Myanmar's judicial system is independent and free from outside interference. I would like to inform you that the case has been reviewed by the Supreme Court which has revised and commuted the death sentences handed down by the District Court to three years' imprisonment. This is an obvious response by Myanmar to the concerns expressed by the 289th Session of the Governing Body. Moreover, the two convicts still have the right to enter a second appeal to the Supreme Court.

Myanmar is at the moment passing through a most important phase in its modern history. The National Convention adjourned in 1996 was reconvened on 17 May 2004, with nearly 100 per cent participation of representatives from all strata of Myanmar's society. The reconvening of the National Convention to draft a new State Constitution is the first step in the seven-step Road Map proclaimed by our Prime Minister.

At the plenary meeting of the National Convention held on 20 May 2004, the National Convention Convening Work Committee clarified the basic principles on social and management sectors for consideration by the delegates with a view to their subsequent inclusion in the State Constitution. The delegates will deliberate these matters and put forward suggestions thereon. It is therefore expected

that the new constitution will reflect necessary provisions which are in keeping with the ILO Conventions ratified by Myanmar, including Convention No. 87.

In conclusion, I would like to state that we are taking all the necessary steps to eradicate forced labour in Myanmar in cooperation with the ILO. We will continue this process in goodwill and good faith until forced labour is totally eradicated in my country. We fervently hope that, in this endeavour, we will receive the understanding, cooperation and support from all concerned.

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Mr. GRÖNLUND (*State Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Sweden*)

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May I begin by congratulating the President and all the other Officers of the Conference on their election.

I have decided to confine my reflections to three issues which, to my Government, are of fundamental importance in any international context. They are not restricted to our dealings with the ILO only.

The first is the subject matter of this year's Global Report, *Organizing for social justice*, namely freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the principles of which are laid down in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

The right to freely create organizations to advance and to defend both individual and collective interests are enabling rights. They are prerequisites for a decent society. It is therefore a matter of deep concern that, in the year 2004, half of the world's workers are still not protected by the provisions of those core Conventions. These women and men can be found on all continents, in the developed and developing world alike, and even among permanent Members of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office.

We find them in export processing zones, with examples of deliberate exclusion of basic workers' rights in order to improve competitive status and to attract foreign direct investment. We consider this an extremely grave issue and a contradiction, as research within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, demonstrates that respect for the core Conventions plays an important part in sound economic development.

I would therefore like to repeat what Sweden has voiced for many years in the ILO, namely that core labour standards is an issue for the wider international agenda. The ILO should take action to coordinate measures under the principle that all relevant international organizations should assume their role in the promotion of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. Development must not be achieved at the expense of the working people.

I do hope that the key result of this Conference will be a strong tripartite message to Governments everywhere to ensure that the principles and rights enshrined in the ILO Declaration of 1998 will be fully respected and that all the core Conventions will be ratified and applied. The suggestions for technical assistance to that end have our full support.

The second issue to which I want to draw your attention is employment. Employment is of crucial

importance in meeting the needs and aspirations of women and men all over the world, in fostering development, in eradicating poverty and in managing the demographic revolution.

We welcome the growing insight that full employment and decent work for all should be made a global goal. The overriding priority for the ILO, in cooperation with other international organizations, should be the promotion of full employment and decent work globally.

The World Bank has launched a research agenda to ensure that employment promotion policies become an integral part of equitable growth and poverty reduction programmes. We would strongly welcome similar enhanced efforts in the ILO and, of course, international cooperation on those issues. We look forward to, and make a plea for, a reinforcement of the ILO's work on employment and the Global Employment Agenda.

It goes without saying that my final remarks will refer to the thoughts of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the resulting report to our Conference. Allow me to start by congratulating the World Commission and its entire secretariat for its work and final report, *A fair Globalization: Creating opportunities for all*.

The ideas and conclusions themselves are not altogether new; what is new is the comprehensive approach. We find the analyses excellent and most of the proposals are relevant and establish a common ground for a global discussion. Several important issues, however, are dealt with in rather general terms, and they require further thinking in order to identify the value added and reach the final extended and consolidated shape for consensus decisions.

We embrace wholeheartedly the framework which states that the governance of globalization must be based on universally shared values and respect for human rights and core labour standards. We emphatically support the quest for democracy and good governance, social equity and equality between women and men and certainly also, the need for coherence and the focus on national action. These aspects are all fundamental building blocks of development. To be honest, I do think that, in one way or another, we all have our homework to do.

The ILO should immediately take forward the rights-based challenges and the vast and complex global employment issues. And together we – Governments, Workers and Employers – need to continue analysing the various proposals and to seek partners for cooperative strategic action in order to assume our collective responsibility in making globalization fair and inclusive.

As we can see here today, a lively tripartite discussion is already under way, and I am convinced that, once again, we will be able to verify that there is no stronger tool for promoting sustainable changes than constructive dialogue.

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Mr. TALIADOROS (*Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Cyprus*)

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I am delighted to have the honour of addressing this august gathering on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Let me begin by saying that it was an excellent idea to place the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization on the agenda of this session of the International Labour

Conference. Let me also thank and congratulate the Director-General of the ILO for sharing, in a frank and open manner, his reflections on the report of the Commission and, in particular, its implications for the ILO.

We share the vision of the World Commission for a process of globalization with a strong social dimension based on universally shared values and respect for human rights and individual dignity.

The ILO, with its strong ethical mandate, its tripartite character and its near-universal membership can, and should, make a significant contribution to achieving the goal of a more equitable globalization, taking into account the Commission's assessment that the problems identified "are not due to globalization as such but to deficiencies in its governance".

The Director-General's Report emphasizes the major challenge highlighted by the Commission to bring scattered initiatives together into integrated national strategies for poverty reduction and decent work and to "promote a coherent integration of economic and social policies which focus on the well-being and quality of life of people".

Social policies in Cyprus have always aimed at achieving social justice, social solidarity and social cohesion in a free and democratic economic system. In response to challenges brought about by demographic and socio-economic changes, as well as our accession to the European Union and globalization, we are modernizing our social policy agenda which underlines the interdependence between economic, social and employment policies. We are fully aware of the need to find the right mix of policies to promote growth and competitiveness and, at the same time, guarantee social protection and solidarity.

In the fight against poverty and social exclusion, we combine the promotion of access to employment with the investment in human resources through the promotion of specific measures, with the support of the European Social Fund, which aim to: enhance and modernize public employment services; strengthen activities to adapt skills to labour market needs; promote equal opportunities for access to the labour market for all, and especially those threatened with social exclusion; promote women's access to the labour market; utilize new technologies within the framework of lifelong learning; and improve and reinforce secondary and technical-vocational education and training.

In connection with the recommendations of the Commission on constructing a "socio-economic floor", Cyprus has taken a number of robust and affordable measures, which I would like to share with you.

The whole working population is covered by a comprehensive state social insurance system. In addition, a system for those outside the labour market guarantees universal coverage for old-age pensions.

Social assistance ensures a socially acceptable minimum standard of living for everyone and special protection for persons who are more vulnerable to social exclusion.

Decent work is a key goal safeguarded by a comprehensive legal framework which ensures minimum standards.

Community initiative and response to social needs are encouraged through the grant-in-aid scheme which provides advice and support to non-governmental organizations for the development of

needed social services and programmes at the local level.

Finally, social dialogue is well developed, and the involvement of the social partners in the formulation and monitoring of policies has become a deep-rooted institution.

Participation in the European Union's employment and social inclusion strategies has contributed to making policy-making even more transparent, to increasing political accountability, to enhancing the effectiveness of national policies, which are required to be based on specific and quantified objectives and targets and to reinforce a culture of evaluation.

On the basis of our national experience, we can only fully endorse the emphasis placed by both the Commission and the Director-General of the ILO on the crucial importance of "starting at home".

We also fully endorse the recommendation to move towards policy coherence among the international organizations. The first step could be the implementation of the Commission's proposal for dialogue and consultations in a globalization policy forum on the social dimension of globalization involving all stakeholders.

Without wishing to make a political statement, as this forum is not a political one, the reference made to the Cyprus issue by the Workers' delegate of Turkey obliges me to point out that the so-called embargos against Turkish Cypriots to which he referred are consequences emanating from United Nations Security Council resolutions and European Court judgements.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has taken a package of measures in favour of Turkish Cypriots, who are by no means discriminated against in any respect. The Government is the first to support the economic development of Turkish Cypriots with the ultimate aim of facilitating the unification of our country.

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*Original Russian: Mrs. KARAGOUSOVA (Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Kazakhstan)*

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Allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to extend greetings to this session of the Conference and express my gratitude to the ILO for the opportunity it has given me to speak.

I share the general opinion of participants of this forum regarding the topicality and significance of the Global Report submitted by the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia.

As we have heard, the processes of globalization particularly with regard to social issues are causing concern and the disruption of the balance which had previously existed, to a greater or lesser degree, at national level.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is an active participant in the integration processes which are under way and is feeling the full force of the many and varied ramifications of globalization.

We are actively working to improve our social security mechanism so that, as far as possible, we can soften the consequences of globalization for workers, protect our national labour market in a context of active migration, overcome excessive disparities in living standards and work towards the eradication of poverty. Kazakhstan appreciates that poverty is a potential breeding ground for terrorism and organized crime. It has a significant wealth of experience that has allowed it to achieve economic growth

while at the same time establishing an effective mechanism of social security. In this work, as mentioned in the Report, we are trying to rely primarily on tripartism and looking for effective compromises which will allow us to comply with fundamental labour rights and freedoms and to ensure the protection of health and safety at work while, at the same time, not damaging the investment climate or curbing the pace of economic growth in our country, which has been quite considerable in the last few years.

The Report and the proposed action plan offer a considerable variety of ways for developing social dialogue, and will allow us to find answers to many of the problems which are facing us now.

The Republic of Kazakhstan was one of the first CIS countries to create a multi-tiered system of collective bargaining in labour relations. In 1995, for the first time, our President, Mr. Nazarbayev, made it compulsory for representatives of the government, unions and employers at all levels to conclude on an annual general agreement. This was the first such regulation in the CIS.

In 1999, Kazakhstan ratified all the fundamental Conventions of the ILO, including the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and, in the year 2000, we adopted a law on social partnership in the Republic of Kazakhstan which forms the basis for tripartism.

We have also taken constructive steps to implement the principle of freedom of association within a system of collective bargaining.

As a result, social dialogue now includes all types of negotiations and consultations and exchanges of information between representatives of the Government, the Workers and the Employers.

Priority areas for negotiation are issues of labour relations, unemployment rates, poverty, wages, security, safety and health at work, social security and so on. Within the last decade, we have therefore been able to ensure relative social stability and consensus.

There has been a considerable drop in the number of industrial disputes and conflicts. In the three years between 1999 and 2001, we saw the number of protest campaigns drop by four-fifths.

Kazakhstan is committed to compliance with the implementation of international standards and attaches great importance to cooperation with the ILO and strengthening that cooperation.

We have adopted a new labour code in Kazakhstan, in close cooperation with the ILO, and this will allow us to improve the nature of our labour relations.

We support the ILO decision to include Kazakhstan in the list of countries which will be implementing the provisions of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, and we are also working on a memorandum for cooperation with the ILO for next three years. We believe that the social partnership mechanism should be extended to the international level to serve as a basis for ensuring social justice in globalization.

The fight against poverty and illegal migration should also be a major aspect of work on globalization. Poverty is an international problem, of course, because the active integration processes confronting the world today mean that, even if poverty has been eradicated in the richer countries, it can still be ex-

ported there again through migration flows, be they legal or illegal. As the Report rightly points out, poverty is always going to be a problem for the whole world and we need to tackle that to achieve stability and peaceful growth.

We support the main thrust of the Report and we hope that more attention will be given to social security, since, as we have heard, the market economy itself cannot be relied upon to uphold the basic principles of social justice.

It is extremely important to pool the efforts of all countries, bearing in mind the solidarity needed, the responsibility that all bear for the consequences of globalization, and the need to ensure that it should be fairer and more humane.

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Mr. PATER (*Minister of Social Policy, Poland*)

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With great satisfaction we have read the Director-General's Report on the work of the Organization for 2002-03. It testifies to the significance of the Organization's achievement resulting from its unremitting everyday toil.

The Director-General's summary gives me the opportunity to also look back on Poland's achievements, with the ILO's cooperation, over the last 15 years.

The Organization was one of the key actors that helped Poland create the structures for social dialogue and helped it lay the foundations for national legislation on collective labour relations. In close cooperation with the ILO, we, the Government, together with the social partners, learnt the lesson of active partnership which have resulted in our ambitious social reforms.

The ILO also helped us establish modern labour market structures which did not exist at the beginning of our economic and social transformation. Now that we are striving to modernize both our labour market and social inclusion policies, we are also tapping into the Organization's extensive expertise.

Hardly a month has passed since our new membership of the European Union. In its programmes of technical assistance, the ILO was very helpful in making our EU membership a reality.

The Director-General's Report also makes us look towards the future – to the challenges ahead of us and our Organization. They now centre around the phenomenon of globalization to which we are trying to find adequate responses, both at national and international levels. While making sure that globalization produces the greatest good for many, we have to ensure that decent employment is a realistic opportunity for our citizens, that social exclusion is prevented or reduced, and that we move from a welfare State to a welfare and workfare society.

These are the objectives of our Organization which can be found in its key programmes. We support them. We see in the International Labour Organization, with its tripartism, great potential for forging the necessary social consensus to achieve those objectives.

We have been very impressed by the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. The Director-General's Report, *A fair globalization: The role of the ILO*, gives due credit to the World Commission's work and invites this session of the Conference to discuss those very topical issues.

We have gone a long way toward embracing globalization and focusing on how to ensure the

fairness of the opportunities it offers. By reducing the physical distance between people, globalization was perceived as expanding the social divide between them. Now, we know that an expanding social gap is not inevitable. If properly managed, the opportunities of globalization will, by far, exceed any incidental dangers.

Good governance is a prerequisite to good management at national and international levels. We believe that every human being has the right to be well governed. I might add that Poland was among the pioneers who introduced that concept back in 1998 in the context of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. We were, therefore, very pleased to see the issue of good governance well-appreciated in the World Commission's report. Indeed, much can be said about improving governance of the global economy. But we have to do our fair share at home, too.

Good governance, built on democracy, social equity, the rule of law and human rights, ensures the high quality of national and local policies and institutions which must be in place if we want globalization to benefit all of our societies.

We should continue to work very hard to improve standards of good governance in our country. We know that we have progressed substantially in that direction over the last 15 years, not least because we have used the expertise of this Organization. We have been impressed by the ILO's support for coherent national policies ensuring the best possible benefits from globalization for all. We also look favourably on the new interesting initiatives in this regard suggested in the Commission's report. We will be following the discussion in this body on globalization very closely.

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Mr. MERITON (*Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Seychelles*)

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I would like to extend my appreciation and support to the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for his well thought-out Report which illustrates the activities undertaken by the ILO in the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda over the last biennium. I indeed treasure the amount of energy mobilized to compile such a thought-provoking document, giving us an insight of the deep-rooted and ever-growing, age-old problems of this world.

The Report invites us to reflect on the pains of the 190 million jobless people and what they have to go through each day in order to survive. These people depend on our support and commitment to enjoy a decent livelihood. We, the ILO constituents, are responsible for charting the course of action to tackle the world's poverty and I entirely agree with the Director-General that the principle route out of poverty is work, and to this end the economy must generate opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, job creation and sustainable livelihoods.

It is abundantly clear that the problem is not at all a short term one, as had been predicted by the proponents of globalization who said that free market trade policies would bring major benefits to developing countries and would eventually be one of the essential elements to eradicate poverty. The developing countries have yet to see this happen.

Meanwhile, history has proven otherwise. Instead of seeing a brighter future, the poor are becoming poorer whilst the rich are becoming richer, simply because the rules of the game favour the rich and are biased against the poorest.

It is time for developing countries to muster their resources and define strategies to forge ahead in this new global setting. It is also time for developing countries to be given the opportunity to trade and work their way out of hunger, unemployment and, eventually, out of poverty. Indeed, globalization cannot be left to set its own course. It must be managed fairly and equitably with set development goals. If sustainable development is to be achieved it needs to be regarded as a process. An improvement in the quality of life depends on radical social transformation.

The complexities of our contemporary world require both new policy initiatives and a radical paradigm shift in the political arena. The best policies need to be complemented by genuine political will, commitment and linkages in relation to job creation and poverty alleviation. It is only in this way that we will be able to correct the decent work deficit, rampant across the world. Able-bodied men and women are struggling to get not only a decent job, but any job. The world situation prevents them making their contribution to society. What a waste of our potential human resources.

At this juncture I wish to commend the Presidents of United Republic of Tanzania and Finland, who co-chaired the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which produced the document charting the way forward to give a human face to globalization. In the same vein, I salute the courage and commitment of the African Heads of State and Government in agreeing to convene the Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa later this year. The Summit, the first of its kind, will attempt to find a viable framework for combating unemployment and poverty on the continent. It is high time that Africa takes control of its own destiny. I am convinced that such an initiative on the part of the African Heads of State will lead to concrete action that will pay dividends.

Allow me to share with you the experience of my small country, the Seychelles, in this area. We have met the targets of most of the eight Millennium Development Goals. Investment in human development has been an essential element of all our policies and national development plans since independence. Access to free education and health services, to safe drinking water and sanitation, active policies to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment for all, have contributed to poverty alleviation and social integration.

This has been achieved through our progressive human-centred development approach. However, this has come at a cost and the challenge that we, as a small island developing State, face today is to sustain development and the high standard of living of our people.

It is in this context that our new President, Mr. James Michel, pledged his commitment to the principles of social dialogue, tripartism and partnership in the process of nation-building for the benefit of all.

The success of the Seychelles did not come by chance or accident. It took vision and genuine political will to achieve a feat that, with committed leadership, the right policies and a concerted effort from all stakeholders, many developing countries can also achieve.

In conclusion, I would like to call on all of us, together, to think globally, taking cognizance of spe-

cific local realities and to act accordingly to bring about change. The way forward is through a development that is well managed and will reconcile economic development and social justice, thereby ensuring human dignity, peace and prosperity for all our nations.

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*Original Spanish: Mrs. IGLESIAS (Minister of Labour, Venezuela)*

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On behalf of the people and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, may I extend to all here fraternal greetings, and specifically also to the President, whom we would like to congratulate on his election.

I would like to highlight that the programme objectives which the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, has set out in his Report, are consistent with the objectives set out in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This guides our government action in areas such as promoting fundamental rights at work, creating opportunities for men and women to have access to decent work and income, guaranteeing effectiveness of social protection for all and strengthening social dialogue.

The growing preoccupation with the social and economic effects of globalization require closer supervision of compliance with standards. It also requires a certain amount of creativity in order to move toward constructing a state which can guarantee social justice and which enshrines genuine democracy, the kind which can guarantee peoples' participation in designing government policies that truly meet their expectations and needs in all areas, especially in economic and social areas.

Our Constitution, adopted through referendum, set in motion a process aimed at deepening and broadening the rights of workers, doing so by providing decent, dignified and productive work and social protection for all of our population, all of this based on meaningful social dialogue as an instrument for democracy.

The impact of globalization has left the Venezuelan people with an enormous social deficit. The immense wealth generated by oil and administered over the past century did not guarantee people's access to a decent and dignified standard of living. On the contrary, a high percentage of the population still lives in poverty. These people have historically been excluded from our health and education systems, and from the possibility of earning a decent living through decent work. This is why we have adopted the slogan "to overcome poverty we must empower the poor".

If this situation does not change, if this debt to our people is not cancelled, if we do not see justice done, we will not be able to achieve social peace and stability. We will not be able to govern our country. We will not be able to guarantee sustainable and productive development.

This is why our Government believes that its fundamental mission is to ensure that everyone in Venezuela can enjoy the right to health, education, social protection and employment. What we are trying to do is include those who have been left behind without leaving anyone behind.

In order to achieve this, we have set up a programme with the specific objectives to provide primary health care and services to the poorest neighbourhoods in our country. Up until now, 12 million Venezuelans have benefited from this pro-

gramme. We are trying to teach the illiterate to read and write. More than 1.2 million people learned to read and write in only ten months. We are trying to provide occupational training to a million people out of work and organize them into cooperatives so that they can develop a prosperous and social economy.

All of this is based on meaningful social dialogue in order to build a deep, real and participative democracy, dialogue which directly involves the social partners, workers and employers alike.

In Venezuela, we are convinced that the entire world should move beyond dialogue between the elite, dialogue which reflects less and less the needs of the people. We cannot restrict social dialogue, nor rights nor freedom of association, to conversations at the top while the people, those directly affected by these rights, are left outside closed doors. What we need to do is have social dialogue, rights and freedom of association, which we talk about year after year, take place where the majority wait, outside those closed doors.

We have seen that when we go beyond the confines of the inner circles of the political elite, social dialogue becomes a powerful instrument to protect and generate employment and guarantee respect for rights at work. We have also noted that, when everyone participates, we in fact strengthen our social organizations, both workers and employers, and we legitimize our public institutions.

The high rates of participation of the people in mastering their own destiny is that which has enabled our democratic institutions to withstand crisis situations, among which examples I could cite the *coup d'état*, sabotage of our petroleum industry and lockouts by employers – we have moved beyond all those crises. At this point in time, bodies such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) indicate that Venezuela is one of the countries with the greatest economic growth rates, at 10.3 per cent. But the most significant point is that we have been able to do this without recourse to any neo-liberal recipe. In other words, we have been able to make substantive improvements in our economy, without reining in our social, political or trade union rights. On the contrary these have increased. This is why we restate our confidence that dialogue is the way to overcome difficulties and to strengthen democracy, giving it real meaning and putting it in the hands of the people so that it can become an economic and social democracy, a real democracy.

Finally, we recommit our people and our Government to fight for justice and truth, to defend the sovereignty of all nations and the self-determination of all peoples, to fight for peace in a world which we want to be multicultural, multi-ethnic, multipolar, capable of eradicating poverty and turning it into a thing of the past, something which we were able to overcome.

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*Mrs. GAWANAS (representative, African Union)*

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Allow me first and foremost to express my appreciation to the African Union for having given me this opportunity to address this gathering. I want, in particular, to thank the ILO Director-General for having extended an invitation to the African Union. I also bring you greetings from His Excellency Professor Alpha Oumar Konaré, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union.

This Conference is important for governments, for trade unions and for employers' organizations as it constitutes a platform for dialogue on the many challenges we face, especially in the area of labour and employment, but also importantly in driving forward the social agenda.

As we are gathered here, the challenges of globalization continue to impact negatively on our people, and the African Union welcomes the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization which has the goal of a fairer and equitable globalization.

More than ever before, unemployment, poverty, disease and hunger continue to afflict the majority of the population, especially in the African continent. We may certainly note that Africa is indeed a rich continent, but it is already being said that Africa could be one of those continents that might not be able to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

There is an imbalance in the distribution of economic resources which is undermining social justice and equality. In most societies there is a growing divide between the so-called formal and informal economy, and this divide means that people living and working in the so-called informal economy are the ones who are excluded, are the ones who are deprived of their rights and benefits, and therefore, in its efforts to address these problems, the African Union is advocating social and economic integration among African countries. In its programmes, the Commission will address the twin problems of poverty and social exclusion in order to achieve sustainable social development, guided by the value that the human being must always be at the centre of any development efforts.

It is also in this regard that an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa is being organized by the Commission of the African Union in Burkina Faso in September 2004.

The previous speaker alluded to the fact that it is time for Africa to determine its destination. I want to say that that time has arrived with the formation of the African Union, which has embarked on mapping for itself and for the continent a vision and a mission for the twenty-first century, together with a four-year strategic programme which will help us to lead the way to an integrated, united, peaceful and prosperous Africa. The integrated approach will include the programmes of the African regional economic communities, as well as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a socio-economic programme. In implementing this new vision, the Commission of the African Union will indeed have to work with and be guided by its international partners, social partners, and civil society organizations. The African Union has also put in place two major key institutions, the Peace and Security Council and the Pan-African Parliament. While the Peace and Security Council is expected to strengthen the capacity of the African Union for conflict management, prevention and resolution, the Pan-African Parliament is a crucial step towards enabling Africa to take control of its own political future.

An important issue which is being deliberated at this session of the Conference is that of migrant workers. Labour migration is a current and historical reality in Africa, impacting directly on econo-

mies and societies. However, internal and external migration, driven by various factors including poverty, civil strife and conflicts, has been inevitable. Africa has been deprived of its most valuable assets, its qualified professionals. Africa should therefore struggle to reverse the brain drain if it is to keep pace with development and motivate qualified Africans to remain in the service of their countries. In this regard, the African Union Commission has drawn up a draft policy framework on migration in Africa to assist the sector's management of migration.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on all economic and social sectors, particularly the productive labour force, cannot be overemphasized. It affects mostly young people and women, who constitute the majority of the population of Africa. If the strain continues we will lose almost half of our most active labour force in the next decade, to the detriment of the sustainable socio-economic development of our continent.

The Commission of the African Union has therefore taken on board the issue of HIV/AIDS in the workplace in its programmes and will work in close collaboration with the ILO on that issue. Africa's leadership is also determined to promote access to life saving anti-retroviral drugs and prevention methods. In taking a holistic and integrated approach to achieving sustainable development, the African continent cannot ignore its human and social dimensions, but must ensure that people are at the centre of and are the object of development. In many countries, the crisis in the social sector remains severe and social issues are often neglected, thus threatening the very livelihood of the population.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate that Africa's development challenges cannot be met unless African countries work in effective partnerships, first and foremost with one another, with the international community, with social partners and civil society organizations, to create productive jobs and effective social protection strategies, to address the negative impact of globalization, poverty and HIV/AIDS on African individuals, families and communities, and to meet the social needs and benefits of the people, especially the poor and the vulnerable. This will only be possible if our political leaders manifest and sustain a strong commitment, and receive the support they need from the various stakeholders. This is vital, because, if we allow the development gap between Africa and other continents to continue to widen, achievement of global socio-economic development will remain a dream, especially for the African continent.

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*Original Arabic: Mr. AZOZ (Workers' delegate, Syrian Arab Republic)*

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I would like to congratulate the President of the Conference on his election to steer the deliberations of the current session; I hope that the discussions of this session will live up to the level of challenges facing the world of labour and workers.

This session of the International Labour Conference is an essential turning point, particularly for workers, because their conditions of work are a clear indication of the injustice and deprivation being inflicted on increasing numbers of people and which are generating indignation, thus endangering international security and peace, as well as social harmony.

We believe that the Report prepared by the Director-General of the Organization paves the way for constructive dialogue, aiming to provide decent work for all and help the most vulnerable and oppressed so that the international Organization can fulfil its mission.

The Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work relating to the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), is an appropriate step towards guaranteeing workers' rights to organize and collective bargaining. This is a fundamental right which is key in enabling the working class to deal with the negative consequences of globalization.

The Syrian Arab Republic has ratified this Convention and the other fundamental Conventions of the ILO.

Today, 25 independent trade unions are part of the Syrian Trade Union Confederation which was set up in 1938. We are contributing to the widespread continuing efforts in our country, to develop, modernize, and reform the economy and the civil service begun by President Bashar al Assad and a number of important reforms have been introduced.

A number of laws have been enacted recently aiming to increase workers' wages by 20 per cent and develop the social security system.

Amendments to the labour law and other legislation regarding working conditions will be introduced shortly. We are ceaselessly working to achieve a system of social partnership based on dialogue. We are also making efforts towards balanced sustainable development. However, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Arab region face occupation and embargo. Sanctions are imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic through the so-called Syrian Accountability Act which negatively affects our country's development efforts. Any threat to peace in this region is a threat to peace around the world, as indicated in the Declaration of Philadelphia.

These punitive sanctions and measures have harmed our country. This has also been the case for Cuba.

The Arab region is still suffering a dangerous and explosive situation due to the continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan and south Lebanon, not to mention the US-British occupation of Iraq and the grave practices of the occupation forces in violation of international Conventions and laws.

The workers and people of Palestine whose lands are occupied are still subjected to the most abject practices of oppression, suppression and persecution including physical liquidation which is sanctioned through the so-called Serious Accountability Act approved by the American Congress have affected negatively the development efforts because the need to defend our homeland depletes a great deal of our capabilities and resources.

This hinders and puts a brake on the efforts of national development and the attainment of further

economic progress and hinders the solution of the problems of unemployment and backwardness. The Declaration of Philadelphia confirms that any threat to peace in the region is a threat to peace in the world at large.

The unjust sanctions and punishment has harmed workers in my country, Libya, Sudan, Cuba and led to impeding the implementation of the development plans in those countries.

The Arab region is still experiencing an explosive situation due to the continued occupation of Palestine, the Golan and southern Lebanon, not to mention the United States and British occupation of Iraq, which is in violation of international Conventions and laws.

The workers and the people of Palestine, whose lands are occupied, are still subject to the worst forms of oppression, discrimination and persecution, including physical liquidation which is one of the most brutal forms of terrorism.

These acts of oppression and persecution are accompanied by an expansion in settlement and land confiscation by the occupying forces with the moral and material support of the Americans.

It is paradoxical in this case that, because of the double standards, that are being applied, these victims of aggression and occupation are being turned into aggressors in order to justify the crimes perpetrated by the occupying forces in the name of legitimate self-defence.

We hope that the high-level mission will have the power to assess the situation during its next visit to the region. The high-level mission has already highlighted in its report the fact that Arab workers and other citizens in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan have been living in tragic conditions. They have been exposed to grave violations of their rights and freedoms by the occupiers.

The workers and people of Iraq are also suffering a tragic situation as a result of the current occupation and as a result of the abuse and the crimes being perpetrated against them. The international media have reported on the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by the United States armed forces who claim to have intervened in Iraq to defend democracy.

This oppression has also led to the assassination of high-level Iraqis, the destruction of infrastructure and the denial of freedom. This has led to greater instability and insecurity and could have disastrous consequences with an increase in unemployment and the adoption of decisions prohibiting Iraqi national companies from contributing to the reconstruction of the country.

We hope that the current session of the International Labour Conference will discuss the issues of migrant workers, the development of human resources and other topics on the Conference agenda. We hope that new Conventions will be adopted, that will meet the expectations of workers and peoples at large.

*(The Conference adjourned at 1.15 p.m.)*

## Seventh sitting

Wednesday, 9 June 2004, 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Maatough

### REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (CONT.)

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The PRESIDENT

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We shall now resume all discussions of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

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Ms. BAKOKO BAKORU (*Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda*)

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I join my colleagues in congratulating the President upon his well-deserved election to the presidency of this Conference. I also congratulate the other Officers. I am confident that with their vast experience they will steer this Conference to a fruitful conclusion.

The world today is faced with complex challenges: the impact of globalization, the foreign debt burden, poverty, HIV/AIDS and migration. I wish to express my appreciation for the efforts of the Director-General, who has been particularly alert and has carried out a comprehensive survey and analysis of the situation of the workers. He has correctly identified and prioritized the current important issues, proposed action plans and placed them on the agenda for this meeting. I support the proposals in the Director-General's Report, *A fair globalization: The role of the ILO*.

At the global level, the pursuit of social justice is the primary goal for which the ILO was created. The objective was to ensure better living and working conditions throughout the world, to secure work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. At the national level, this is my responsibility.

In this regard, I reaffirm Uganda's commitment to the respect and promotion of ILO fundamental principles and rights at work. These principles are embodied in the national Constitution and legislation governing the trade unions and industrial relations. Uganda has ratified the ILO Conventions relevant to organizing for social justice, the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154). The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87), is being considered for ratification.

Africa remains the continent with the least favourable conditions. Africa has the lowest investment rate, lowest productivity, heaviest debt bur-

den, highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS, highest incidence of unemployment and highest poverty levels. I want to emphasize two of these, HIV/AIDS and job creation, in relation to organizing for social justice.

Uganda is one of the countries which was first hit very hard by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Twenty years down the road, the country has moved from being the epicentre of the epidemic to a success story, despite limited resources, thanks to political commitment, destigmatization, an open policy on the disease, a multisectoral approach and the "ABC" – abstinence, behaviour change and a condomized policy. We have received support from many friends. Let me express our appreciation to the ILO for its continued financial and technical support. We especially welcome our inclusion in the ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work. Our special thanks go to the Italian Government for funding the national project on the prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS in the world of work. The epidemic still poses a big challenge, but Ugandans have the resolve to fight on.

A combination of migration and HIV/AIDS is devastating. These two factors are competing to drain Africa's already meagre supply of skilled workers. Migrant workers tend to leave their spouses behind to look after the children and elderly, and while at their destination, they seek entertainment from commercial sex workers who often approach them to make some money. Indeed, this is an area that warrants exposure and interest.

There is a need for HIV/AIDS and migration to be tackled together and to increase the scale of responses. We need to deliberately target the mobile and migrant populations, with a focus on preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS through migration. I suggest that governments strengthen their wage policy and, through collective bargaining, improve migration and the working conditions of migrant workers to enable them to keep their families where they work. It is fundamental that we eliminate the separation of spouses.

I therefore call upon the Director-General to increase his concern and efforts to focus on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and migration throughout the world.

Poverty and unemployment are a hindrance to social justice. We welcome the Director-General's Report and objectives for the next four years, as stated in his Global Report, *Organizing for social justice*. We are in total agreement with universal

ratification of Conventions Nos. 87 and 98. The ILO should focus on working closely with the member States to assist them in overcoming the obstacles to ratification.

In order to reduce poverty and unemployment, my Government has reviewed the Poverty Eradication Action Programme (PEAP) with a focus on poverty and unemployment.

Finally, I want to emphasize that poverty and unemployment are more severe in Africa than anywhere else in the world. This is because policies designed to increase employment, as part of economic growth, now have to be implemented in the context of globalization, which does not favour Africa.

Let me emphasize that freedom of association and working conditions cannot be discussed in isolation from the surrounding economic climate and other factors, such as population growth, that have an impact on it. When jobs are few the competition is so stiff that people are prepared to sacrifice good working conditions just to be employed; a bad job is better than having no food on the table.

The defence of rights at work involves the obligation to create jobs, otherwise there would be nothing to defend; we cannot discuss one without the other.

The creation of jobs at home is directly restricted by the denial of access to the world's lucrative markets. While the worker in Africa is subject to full free market principles at home, his or her products have no access to the world's lucrative markets; access is denied through tariffs, quotas and subsidies. The world market does not favour Africa.

Finally, developing countries should get their rightful share of these markets. This is fundamental to working conditions and the corresponding freedoms. I therefore call upon the Director-General to engage all relevant world institutions and not to rest before inequalities in the world markets are totally removed. Poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr. FATTORI COSTA (Employers' delegate, Brazil)*

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May I begin by congratulating Mr. Guevara on his election as President of the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, which recognizes the efforts that he has made, and his experience in matters which must be examined and acted on if we are to ensure a harmonious relationship between capital and labour. I would like also to praise the confederations of industry and commerce of my country for preparing an excellent document to guide our delegation during this session of the Conference.

Over the last few years, technological progress and the resulting globalization have completely changed how we decide what to produce, where to produce it and at what cost, taking account of the markets to be targeted. This process used to take a long time a lot of preparation, but today, with the amount of statistical data available to us and the facilities provided by electronic systems, the task can be carried out much more accurately and in much less time. Just as important for this change has been progress in the areas of communications and telecommunications; at the touch of a button we can send and receive messages which used to take weeks, or even months, to get to their destination. Similarly, a telephone call from home or office puts

us within reach of people almost anywhere in the world, allowing us to exchange ideas and make decisions in a fraction of the time it used to take. Just as extraordinary is progress in the transport of people and products. Nowadays we can move people and products from one side of the world to the other in less than 24 hours. High-capacity ships mean we can much more easily transport large cargoes of low added value, such as commodities, between ports throughout the world.

Ports and airports are now equipped for the rapid movement of enormous volumes of cargo in shorter and shorter periods of time. So that these gains in productivity are not lost in red tape, which would be justifiable in a less-pressured environment, governments and companies are making efforts to eliminate paperwork and rubber stamps except for the absolute minimum necessary to control these operations.

The facilities of communication and transport have radically changed decision-making in business. Companies grow and prosper or fail as a result of their operations. As long as operations in a particular city or country yield good returns, the natural choice is to continue production there, where the potential for profit is greater. And whenever a company transfers production to developing countries, the number of unemployed people in the country of origin increases. This explains why a large number of countries have seen their GDP and per capita income rise very quickly, while elsewhere economies are stagnating or even shrinking.

To reverse this trend, which is becoming more and more serious as businesses become less able to compete in the market and unemployment increases, cosmetic measures will not be sufficient. Labour legislation has always covered new rights, the cost of which cannot be transferred, but which, in many cases, make it unviable to create and maintain jobs because of the bureaucratic burden entailed. What has been ever more difficult is to weigh up the risks of hiring staff, and the higher the risk the greater the difficulty of generating new jobs.

In my country there is a clear dichotomy between technological progress, labour legislation, tax legislation and the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to comply with such legislation. This legislation was necessary and useful in its time but no longer responds to current needs and should be updated if we wish to maintain existing jobs and create new ones.

Our President, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, has very courageously reached an understanding with the financial organizations, contrary to the confrontational stance which many people expected him to take. The results show that he has acted well. We hope to see the same courage in relation to labour and taxation matters in our country.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr. LUQUINDA (Deputy-Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security, Angola)*

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May I begin by congratulating the President on his election to manage the work of this 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

The Republic of Angola is experiencing one of the most important moments of its history. Peace has brought back hope to the country and has created the basis for a new era for our children. Angola is thus in a position to push forward the process of national reconstruction so as to respond to the requirements of economic and social development

and to meet short and medium-term challenges, one of which is to reduce levels of unemployment.

Report III (Part 1B) *Promotion of employment: Policies, skills, enterprises*, which has been submitted for our consideration, gives guidelines for formulating and implementing policies for job creation, and also suggests measures for alleviating poverty. These guidelines are expressed as general measures, and I believe that some of them are already being applied in a number of member countries, whereas others require special skills for implementation, and here we hope for commitment and assistance from the International Labour Office.

The Republic of Angola is no exception to the general rule and is therefore developing a series of programmes to rehabilitate economic and social infrastructure destroyed during the war and to establish others. We are also improving procedures to ensure private investment with a view to creating jobs and reducing poverty levels. In its Medium-Term Programme for Stabilization and Economic Recovery, the Government of Angola has set out conditions as an incentive to speed up the process of creating new economic activity and strengthen relations between the Government and enterprise with transparency, rapidity and efficacy. Their purpose is to significantly reduce the legal requirements for setting up companies in the country.

Very recently, a draft bill was brought before Parliament to provide for a "first job" law and a strategy for its implementation. This bill is aimed particularly at citizens of between 14 and 30 years of age, and will allow responsibilities to be shared with other areas and sectors, with the emphasis being placed upon the integration of young people into the world of work.

The social partners have been asked to give their opinion upon this, along with public and private universities, NGOs and a number of professional bodies. These measures will be complemented by other measures in general employment policy, for example, widening the educational basis by constructing vocational training centres throughout the country. Vocational training, together with job creation will allow many of my fellow citizens to be integrated into the labour market, and consequently will create within them better hopes for the future and enhance the exercise of their citizens' rights.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has now become a world crisis. It is one of the worst challenges ever posed to development and social progress. My Government is concerned by its spread to the workplace. We have already approved legislation to regulate forms, methods, behaviour and the protection offered to workers. The measures contained in this legislation are based upon respect for basic human rights, ethical standards for health, the adoption of practices and attitudes of solidarity, and respect for those individuals who have been infected, and these measures must be observed in vocational training centres and all other workplaces. The Government of Angola is bending its energies towards promoting local programmes which will hold back the devastating effects of this pandemic in our country.

The Republic of Angola endorses the decisions taken with regard to working conditions in the fishing industry with a view to adopting standards which will bring together a range of instruments and allow for a more orderly implementation of legislation.

I would like, finally, to express the wish that the results of the work of this session of the Conference will match the expectations of us all and that, in each of our countries, we will take the necessary efforts to reduce the evil which is such a massive challenge for humanity: unemployment.

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Mrs. THIENHONG (*Minister of Labour, Thailand*)

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Let me first of all congratulate the President on his election to preside over this year's session of the Conference.

I support the Report of the Director-General, *A fair globalization: The Role of the ILO*, which recommends that decent work become a global goal to make a full contribution to the building of a social dimension of globalization. As part of this Organization, the Thai Government has committed itself to putting the spirit of decent work into practice, and we have made tangible progress.

As regards labour standards, a ministerial declaration on maximum wage fixing was issued in April which observes the ratified Maximum Weight Convention, 1967 (No. 127), in a complete manner.

To implement the ratified Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), we have formulated a national plan of action to direct and monitor the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Thailand.

Moreover, our ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), was officially registered last month.

Trafficking and migration-related issues are also of great concern to us. These issues can be best addressed not by a single government, but through engagement and cooperation with other governments. We have signed bilateral memoranda of understanding with neighbouring countries (Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Myanmar) in order to regulate the flow of migrants as well as reducing the number of people at risk from trafficking.

The Thai Government has been promoting employment through national poverty reduction strategies by focusing on the development of the grass-roots economy and community business. The schemes call for, at the grass-roots level and in urban areas throughout the country, the creation of micro as well as small and medium enterprises.

We wholeheartedly intend to provide social protection for all, particularly workers engaged in the informal economy. A ministerial declaration on the protection of homeworkers was issued this April. In addition, the Thai Government has decided to launch a historic unemployment insurance scheme, to take effect on 1 July this year.

More importantly, broad participation and close cooperation of all stakeholders, with mutual understanding and a true spirit of dialogue, are key factors to making our efforts successful. A lot more work remains to be done, but I am sure that we will get there in the end.

I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Thailand, to express our heartfelt thanks to the ILO for its continued supporting role, contributing to our efforts to ensure a fairer globalization for all.

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Mr. DINUR (*Government delegate, Israel*)

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I would like to congratulate the President of this session of the Conference and his deputies on their election and to thank them for their exceptional

leadership of this session of the Conference, which has already resulted in many constructive and fruitful discussions and meetings. I would like also to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr Somavia, on the excellent preparatory work for this session of the Conference.

The State of Israel has great respect for the values of social justice, equality and prevention of exploitation which are expressed in the international labour standards formulated by the ILO.

These values, which have been with our people for thousands of years as part of our biblical heritage, are today included in our national laws and regulations.

The changes set in motion by globalization pose great challenges to these important social values. These changes can only be met by efforts on the part of all the social partners to focus on providing decent work and opportunities for all peoples and countries.

Another important subject dealt with in this session of the Conference is the development of human resources through the promotion of vocational training. The State of Israel lacks natural resources and therefore regards human resources as the principal and most important resource. As a result, in our country, education and vocational training are promoted as the sources feeding those human resources, while highly trained and motivated manpower is seen as an engine which has driven the national economy.

Two fields which in the past functioned separately, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Labour, were recently merged by our Government into one unit.

In the field of industry our task is to develop and promote business and trade while in the field of labour our concern is for promotion of human resources, social protection and increased employment.

It cannot be denied that my country is currently experiencing a difficult economic period in which the employment rate is a relatively high 11 per cent of the potential workforce.

In order to jumpstart the economy, our Government is promoting a policy which includes, among other things, increasing investment in labour intensive industries as well as aiding small businesses, lowering taxes on work income and increasing competitiveness in the economy.

At the same time, Israel also faces the challenge of protecting the rights of temporary migrant workers, including those in irregular situations.

Strict measures have been implemented against employers of undocumented foreign workers as well as against manpower companies which violate the relevant labour laws.

I would like to emphasize that Israel attaches great importance to the struggle to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The Government of Israel has stated its commitment to the principles set out in Convention No. 182 and is now completing the final technical procedures for its ratification.

Although it is our wish that this session of the Conference be free of political statements and arguments, we have, unfortunately, witnessed such confrontations throughout this session of the Conference by representatives from certain countries. We would like to emphasize that the State of Israel extends her hand in peace. It is clear that true peace

will lead the whole region to great achievements and to economic and social prosperity.

I would like, once again, to thank this Organization for its wonderful work preparing this session of the Conference and to express our deep desire that it should be a vehicle for promoting the fundamental values and policies of the ILO.

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Mr. DE GEUS (*Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Netherlands*)

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This year's Global Report describes the worldwide developments concerning observance of trade union rights and, as a former trade unionist, it is a subject near and dear to my heart. Energetic and vigorous union work is of vital importance, as we all know.

Take, for instance, the textile industry, the world's greatest source of employment, but also a sector in which job insecurity is on the rise.

The increasing demand for flexibility results in fewer permanent jobs, more part-time positions, more subcontracting of work, more flexible contracts, a constant expansion of the informal economy, more work from home and also more forced labour. In short, less or no job security, less or no social protection and bad to appalling working conditions.

The fundamental labour standards laid down in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work are more important than ever. Observance of trade union rights is vital.

The Netherlands is an active member of the ILO and a strong advocate of the fundamental labour standards. The Declaration and its follow-up are of enormous importance when it comes to freedom of association and negotiation for the abolition of forced labour and child labour, for equal treatment and pay.

The World Commission's report creates a new momentum for the fundamental labour standards, which, even though they are endorsed worldwide, are still ignored in many places.

Other issues the report of the World Commission raises are labour migration and decent work.

Globalization leads to labour migration. One of the major questions in the coming years will be how we are going to deal with migration, and I am pleased to see this important issue on this year's agenda. This enables us to discuss fundamental and strategic issues regarding this matter. The movement of labour worldwide will become a fact in the future. Together, we have to discuss how we can improve the conditions for migrant workers, as well as the opportunities migration provides for employers, for the sending countries as well as the receiving countries.

The Decent Work Agenda can serve as the basis for promoting more and better jobs for all. The Decent Work Agenda should be a key instrument in the fight against poverty in the world.

To ensure this, the ILO will have to take a more vigorous stance within the United Nations system. The World Commission's report is crystal clear about that. More effective international cooperation and better communication between international organizations is essential. Let us focus, not only on what the ILO could be, but also on what the ILO should be – a strong international player with a clear mission: the improvement of human rights concerning social issues and a guardian and an ad-

vocate for compliance with the fundamental labour standards.

In my view, the fact that the agreements reached at the United Nations Millennium Summit make no reference whatsoever to decent work for all is an omission, because there is no doubt that decent employment is the most sustainable and effective way

of eradicating poverty. The ILO will have to state this message loud and clear during the review of the United Nations Millennium Summit and the evaluation of the Social Summit.

The ILO also has an active role to play in the world.

*(The Conference adjourned at 3.50 p.m.)*

## Ninth sitting

Wednesday, 9 June 2004, 4.45 p.m.

*President: Mr. Wade*

### REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (CONT.)

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*Original French:* The PRESIDENT

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We shall now resume our discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body of and the Director-General.

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*Original Portuguese:* Mr. PAIS ANTUNES (*Secretary of State for Labour, Portugal*)

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On behalf of the Portuguese Government, allow me to congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents of the Conference, on their election at this 92nd Session. I wish them every success in conducting the work of this assembly. Their work is essential to the success of the Conference, and in the light of their record I am sure that this session will produce excellent results.

The Reports of the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body submitted to this session of the Conference bear witness to the wide-ranging activities of the bodies of the ILO in recent years.

On behalf of the Portuguese Government I would like to congratulate the Director-General and his staff for their excellent work to defend better working conditions and uphold the rule of law.

Throughout this session of the Conference we have heard a number of important contributions on the subject of the social dimensions of globalization. Clearly, globalization raises new problems, with sweeping effects throughout the world.

Faced with these problems that are common to all of us, it is all the more important to be able to rely in our search for solutions on an organization with the scope and prestige of the ILO so as to better uphold multilateralism in the world.

Allow me to point out that the Government of Portugal fully supports the Director-General when he says that the ILO should focus its activities in its areas of expertise – standard setting and supervision of their application. The creation of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization is convincing proof of this. It has been said that global good governance has to be based on human rights; the defence of democratic values is the major challenge of the twenty-first century.

I am thinking in particular of the defence of decent work, of workers' and employers' rights and duties, the defence of more and better investment in

training, the defence of working conditions, job creation and preservation, the defence of children, the unrelenting fight against child labour and constant support for the family.

The ILO is certainly the ideal organization to define and defend the universal values that should underpin what we call globalization. There is clearly an international consensus on the ILO's prestige and competence to adopt labour standards and supervise their application. This is why, on behalf of the Government of Portugal, I would like to remind you that we rely on the ILO, our champion in the fight for these values, including such traditional but no less important issues as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Globalization raises challenges both new and not so new, but we need to find new ways of meeting them. All our States, and employers' and workers' representatives must, with help from the ILO, work together in a concerted effort to defend unrelentingly the values of human life and dignity.

I pay tribute to tripartism, an approach that affords undeniable advantages in the search for solutions, as evidenced by the ILO itself, and Portugal has always upheld this approach. We need to continue to ratify ILO Conventions, whose relevance and importance are undeniable. But this is not enough: in today's globalized world we need to secure their application in practice. This must always be a core objective of the ILO.

To conclude, on behalf of my country's Government I would like to recall that, in the future as in the past, you may always rely on us to defend unrelentingly the values of freedom and human rights.

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*Original French:* Mr. BARDE (*Employers' delegate, Switzerland*)

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The Swiss employers have read with interest the report, *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*. This work was carried out by 26 independent eminent persons, and will be followed up by the Governing Body, with the support of the social partners. As such, this report does not constitute ILO policy, and its recommendations were not unanimously accepted by its signatories. Despite that, many of the ideas which it contains deserve to be explored with the other institutions involved and with due respect for the competencies of each and every one of them. We would hope that the Office will make proposals to the Governing Body on the responses to be made to the various issues raised in this report.

As employers, we believe in the need, both nationally and internationally, for conditions that are conducive to both economic growth and, consequently, job creation. These conditions would particularly involve full participatory democracy, transparency, an independent legal system and respect for the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In a nutshell, they would involve the constant quest for good governance, which is as necessary for ordinary citizens as it is for business and workers.

Switzerland's employers are deeply attached to these principles. We also attach importance to developing entrepreneurial spirit and small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of the economy. These are as important as any rhetorical eloquence.

Free trade and economic integration should also be encouraged, while respecting the identity and specificities of the various parties involved. If anybody doubts the need for free trade and economic integration, they should look at the negative effects of protectionism which, while protecting monopolies, forms a constitutional obstacle to creativity, innovation and open access to markets.

As the old saying goes, globalization means "thinking globally, acting locally". This means shouldering one's responsibilities in respect of economic and social issues, and employers are, of course, ready to do that, on the understanding that it is primarily up to States to set the rules which stem from their own legislation or in accordance with their international commitments. We need to be crystal clear on this point so as to avoid any ambiguity, which will only disrupt the climate and distort relations between the world of politics and the economy.

We live in a world and at a time where image plays an increasingly important role. We should use this to promote our own ideas, but we should also be careful to ensure that this situation does not lead to misinterpretations. As employers, we do not want to make promises which cannot be kept. We prefer to take a specific and realistic approach because that is the best way of, slowly but surely, building the future.

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Mrs. CHRISTOVA (*Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria*)

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Allow me to start by wishing the delegates successful and fruitful work in the course of this session of the Conference in their highly responsible positions. First of all, I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to voice my satisfaction with the comprehensive Report dedicated to such important issues. The topic of the Report and the conclusions drawn explicitly highlight the central role of the ILO in the common process of laying down conditions for establishing a fair globalization. This central role was also noted by our esteemed guest, His Excellency the President of the Spanish Government, in his in-depth comments on globalization policy governance.

The expected long period of adjustment of national economies and institutions to problems on a global scale is a matter of deep concern to the Bulgarian Government. One measure undertaken as a response to this concern is the new social policy model adopted in Bulgaria. The new approach laid down in this model requires coordination between different policies – economic, financial and social.

The integrated approach is grounded on strategically important relations between economic, financial and social institutions. This approach is of the highest importance when solutions are sought and complex political decisions are to be taken.

In this connection, allow me to state that the Bulgarian new social policy model is a kind of preemptive response to the recommendation made in the Report of the Director-General. This recommendation provides for comprehensive, high-level integration in solving diverse economic and social problems on a national scale in the context of a fair globalization.

Of special importance is the conclusion drawn in the Report that, in the course of globalization, the concept of ensuring decent work should become a global goal. Active labour market policies play a key role in laying down the socio-economic framework for the global economy. In this respect, a national action plan on employment for 2004 was adopted in Bulgaria at the beginning of this year. Through employment-providing programmes, it is envisaged that around 112,000 people will gain employment within the current year. Access to legal employment and to social and health insurance is granted, with preference being given to employers who provide jobs for vulnerable population groups. Furthermore, we have fully reformed the social assistance system, which will continue to be guided by the core objectives of improving the targeting and efficiency of the social payments. As a result of all these measures, the unemployment rate, for the first time during the transition, has decreased from 18 per cent in 2001 to 12 per cent (based on April 2004 data).

Human resources development in Bulgaria needs to increase the employability and quality of the workforce. It should be relevant to the demands of the labour market. In this respect, we have launched a broad-scale national survey to identify the specific needs of different enterprises. Depending on its findings, the national vocational education and training system will be adapted to suit these needs. Through ensuring decent work and reliable sources of income, fair and equal opportunities will be provided for everyone.

An important prerequisite for achievement of a fair globalization is the implementation of the principles of social dialogue. The social partners in Bulgaria take part in drafting and carrying out the different components of integrated economic, financial and social policy. In this respect, measures were introduced at the beginning of last year, with the active participation of trade unions and employers' organizations, for compulsory registration of employment contracts. Minimum social insurance thresholds were also introduced by sector and occupation. As a result, over 306,000 employment contracts moved out of the grey economy. The increased revenue amounts to about €240 million. These measures have become an important tool for combating the informal economy and means of protection of workers' basic right to social protection.

Let me assure you now that we consider that the idea of regular organization of globalization policy forums on a tripartite basis would be an excellent ground for comprehensive exchange between all participants.

Thus, cooperation between the ILO member States will be intensified as we travel toward a fair

globalization, including on regional and subregional levels.

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Mr. DE PAYVA (*Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Singapore*)

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The Singapore National Trades Union Congress delegation joins other delegates to congratulate the President on being elected to preside over the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

The discussion on migrant workers is timely. Some 175 million people are residing outside their country of birth or nationality. Each year millions of men and women leave their homes and cross national borders in search of decent work and better opportunities for themselves and their families. Migration has emerged as an important issue of our times with far-reaching implications on our workers and societies.

While international migration can be a positive experience, far too many migrant workers suffer from poor working and living conditions. Migrant workers face the grim reality of being among the world's most vulnerable and exploited people. Their rights as workers are often undermined, especially when they are in irregular situations. Some suffer severe abuse and violence in forced labour and trafficking situations.

The challenge confronting the global community is to make migration work for all and direct it in a way that serves the economic well-being and social justice of workers. Trade unions around the world share the same mission in protecting all workers, both migrants and locals, from workplace discrimination, exploitation, abuse and violence.

The Singapore National Trades Union Congress is concerned about the welfare of all workers. The labour movement has always recognized and accepted the need for migrant workers to supplement and complement our limited human resources and appreciates their contribution to Singapore's development and growth. In fact, a local study has found that every one per cent increase in migrant workers with work permits would support 2.6 per cent more local skilled workers and 1.4 per cent more local unskilled workers in Singapore.

At the Singapore National Trades Union Congress Ordinary Delegates Conference in October 1998, the labour movement called on the Government to strengthen efforts to stamp out the problem of unscrupulous employers who use non-documented workers. Over the years, the tripartite social partners have increased efforts to protect the interests of migrant workers in Singapore.

There are strict regulations, policies and statutory protection in Singapore to ensure the health, safety, accommodation and remuneration of migrant workers and there are stiff penalties to punish errant employers.

Migrant workers can join trade unions in Singapore. They form about 17.5 per cent of union membership with the majority in shipbuilding, construction, manufacturing and the hotel sectors. In certain house unions, the migrant workers' membership can be as high as 70 per cent. Migrant workers enjoy the same union protection, services and benefits as local members. In some cases unions have negotiated lower subscription fees subsidised by management.

Migrant workers in Singapore also enjoy the opportunity to upgrade their skills and improve their career prospects. Many acquire new skills and formal certification of competency in a trade.

In May 2002 a scheme to accredit foreign domestic workers agencies by the Consumers Association of Singapore, a non-profit organization founded by the Singapore National Trades Union Congress in 1971, was launched. Under this scheme it is compulsory for all employment agencies managing foreign domestic workers to be accredited from June 2004 before their licences can be renewed. These agencies would have to show that they have acceptable, fair-trading practices, counselling/mediation system and other good practices provided under the accreditation to safeguard the interests of foreign domestic workers.

The Singapore National Trades Union Congress Migrant Workers Forum is actively pursuing various means and initiatives to further improve policies and programmes aiming to protect the interests and well-being of migrant workers in Singapore. We are calling on the government and employers to ensure the welfare and rights of migrant workers in Singapore and will continue to work together with them for this purpose.

The issues on the agenda of the International Labour Conference address the challenges we are facing today. We look forward to the second round of discussions on human resources training and development with our Workers' delegate, Mrs Haimah Yacob, spokesperson for the Workers' group.

Our economies today are driven by knowledge and new technologies. There is an urgent need to help every individual have at least the basic knowledge and skills to adapt to change and benefit from globalization.

As the presence of delegations representing workers, government and employers attending the International Labour Conference each year attests, we recognize and accept our shared responsibility to work together to achieve sustainable development and decent work for all.

The challenge is to make real and measurable progress. Our workers and their families will experience a better life, not from what we say about what needs to be done, but from what we are able to do together.

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Mr. KANÍK (*Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Slovakia*)

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Allow me to open my address by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the 92nd Session of the Conference of the International Labour Organization and wishing him and the elected Vice-Presidents a successful session of the Conference.

The Slovak Republic, together with nine other States, joined the European Union on 1 May 2004, accomplishing, thus, one of the most important milestones in our history.

Our common goals, the goals of the International Labour Organization and of the EU countries cause us to make an effort to help to create preconditions to develop employment, reduce unemployment and to have decent work, as defined also in the strategic pillars of the ILO.

The advanced economies of the EU and OECD countries, and equally the Slovak economy, fight three elementary problems that create a barrier in overcoming persistent imbalances in the labour market: in particular, the insufficient capacity of economic entities to create productive jobs, limited motivation to become formally employed and distortions and rigidity in the labour market.

In Slovakia, we see these three problems as a major challenge, as principally limiting factors that have, over a long period, inhibited the development of our labour market and, in particular, caused a more significant decrease of the unemployment rates.

For that reason we submitted and adopted in Parliament a principal change in the pension security system last year that is a prerequisite for a reduction in the rate of contributions. Since 1 January 2004, the contribution has been reduced by more than 3 per cent and this trend will continue in the next year.

The second problem, limited motivation to become formally employed, was connected mainly with the demotivating character of social benefits. Minimum difference between the possible social income and the income from regular employment results in a preference for passive reception of social benefits.

We changed the entire social system, introduced activity allowances, made the instruments of the active labour market more transparent and obtainable, all in compliance with the principle of making work pay. With the participation of self-government authorities, civil associations, charities and churches we have scaled up the system of public works. These public works strengthen local partnerships and create a sense of community, solidarity and integrity.

The third problem – rigidity and distortions in the labour market – was caused mainly by inappropriate legislation. That was why we substantially amended the Labour Code. It was an uneasy political struggle accompanied by difficult negotiations with social partners. I, thus, especially appreciate the fact that we have adopted this extremely important law by a consensus of all tripartite social partners.

Also, thanks to the abovementioned changes, unemployment in Slovakia dropped and the trend of decreasing unemployment continues. The new social policy has become a significant incentive for growth in foreign investments and creation of new jobs in Slovakia. Last year, employment grew by almost 2 per cent which is a good indicator of sound development in the labour market.

We are facing serious challenges. Integration within Europe and also worldwide globalization processes places great demands on industrial relations and on labour markets of member countries. I believe that the best path is one of openness and flexibility that respects entrepreneurial spirit, invention and free initiative of the individual. This path, however, also takes into account the need to support, protect and assist those who need it most.

I wish all of you and the participants of the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference many stimulating ideas, constructive discussions and courage, so vital in adopting tough but necessary solutions.

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Mr. THAPALIYA (*Employers' delegate, Nepal*)

It is with great pleasure that I would like to extend hearty greetings to the President and all the delegates at the 92nd Session of the Conference of the ILO on behalf of the Employers' Council of the Federation of the Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the employers of Nepal.

At the same time, on behalf of the employers of Nepal, I take the pleasure of extending my heartiest congratulations to the President and Vice-Presidents

on their election to preside over the 92nd Session of the Conference.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Director-General for his comprehensive Report on the role of the ILO in helping build better working relations in the world. The issue of "organizing for social justice" requires a climate of firm commitment on the part of the employers and the workers to the survival and growth of their respective organizations and the economy as a whole.

We, in Nepal, are continuing dialogue with our social partners. But we have felt that excessive and abusive exercise at rights and freedoms at times causes social instability, hampering investment and the process of growth, thus prevent the rising tide of unemployed workers from exercising their right to work.

I think the migrant workforce is a global phenomenon, in the sense that a developed economy needs more labourers with different skills, while the underdeveloped economies have an abundance of workers with a lower skills level. People move from one level of development to another level where there are opportunities. Employers are accused of carrying out bad practices in their employment of migrant workers, and it is said that, in the most simple terms, it is the employers who gain. This is not always true.

Within given parameters, all of us employers would like to give a fair deal to migrant employees. The problem here, and one with most of us employers have faced, is that migrant workers would like to have the best of both worlds and that raises a conflict situation between the employers and the migrant employees, which the employers being blamed as the exploiters.

On the other hand there can arise conflict situations between the employers and society in general for the employers' hosting of the "herds of unwanted guests". Thus, the protection of migrant workers should be considered through a more holistic approach, with a socio-political and economic consideration, rather than just on emotional issues.

The traditional welfare-based philosophy may not work in the changing context of globalization, requiring workers to be retrained regularly in order to enhance their employability within a broad, flexible employment mechanism. For this, the concept of human resource development has to be redefined, both philosophically and with regards to its value deliverance.

I am sure all of my colleagues here are very well aware of the present conflict in Nepalese society. The biggest impact in such a situation comes in the economic sector and employers are always the first line to face it. The employers of the developing countries are, in a way, shouldering a burden by training people for their counterparts in the developed countries. Though society gets foreign exchange earnings, the burden on the employers is relatively high due to the training and retraining of employees and the quality and competencies lost because of that. Thus, in a conflict-ridden society, as we have experienced, uncompetitiveness may come not from the internal weakness of the management but as a result of external conflict itself.

I think that, in a society like ours, the ILO should explore the possibility, of perhaps increasing its role in human resources development.

We, the social partners, and the Government of Nepal are serious about programmes such as elimi-

nation of child labour, the Programme on Decent Work, competitiveness and productivity, which is the main concern of the ILO.

The Nepalese employers continue to dialogue with the Government and several international agencies in order to build suitable mechanisms for the necessary assistance to the conflict-affected enterprises. At present, the framework of social safety requirements must be broadened and supplemented or complemented by the conflict safety requirement of the employers.

At FNCCI we are very appreciative of the Director-General and the support we have received from the ILO over the years, and we look forward to increased fruitful cooperation. We need the good wishes and cooperation of all our friends to emerge from the situation that we are in.

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*Original Spanish: MR. IYANGA DJOBA MALANGO (Deputy-Minister, Ministry for Labour and Social Security, Equatorial Guinea)*

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I would like to begin by conveying the warmest greetings of peace and solidarity on behalf of the nation of Equatorial Guinea and its President, Head of State, and Founding President of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Greetings to all men and women throughout the world and particularly the nationalities represented in this Conference, as we are committed to finding solutions to improve the world of work and to rise to the great challenges that are faced by citizens throughout the modern world. Their fate does not depend only upon domestic policies in their respective countries of origin, but also upon decisions that frequently are taken far beyond their own borders.

As we enter into the discussion on the Report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Report of the Director-General, may I begin, personally and on behalf of the delegation that accompanies me, by associating myself with previous speakers in expressing our sincere congratulations to the President for having been unanimously elected to preside over this 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference. We are certain that, under his guidance, wisdom and energy, the work of this session will be hailed a success. These congratulations are extended also to the Vice-Presidents and to the Officers of the Conference.

We have read with care the Director-General's Report, devoted this year to an analytical assessment of the activities of the Organization in the biennium 2002-03. Equally carefully, we have read the other documents that are before this session of the Conference. We must pay tribute to the Director-General and to his colleagues for the quality of the documentation and for the effort that has been made by the International Labour Office to fulfil the strategic objectives of the Organization and the various declarations on the principles of the Organization and the core rights in the workplace. We also pay tribute to the ILO for implementing the mandates received from the Governing Body and the directors of the ILO during the period under consideration.

For reasons of protocol, and because of limited time, I shall refer only to certain aspects of this debate which we would like to highlight. Equatorial Guinea is a State that is committed to universality and solidarity. Not only are we doing all we can to fulfil our commitments as a Member of the Interna-

tional Labour Organization, but we are also involved at the international level, as evidenced by the payment of our financial contributions and above all by the fact that we have ratified all of the Core conventions of this Organization. We are also represented at almost all of the organizations of the United Nations System and at the interregional, regional and subregional organizations in our immediate environment.

In this sense, and following the path traced out by the Director-General when he presented the programme assessment for the biennium under consideration, we can say that, in terms of labour standards and basic rights and principles in the workplace, we have ratified all of the instruments on fundamental rights at work i.e. those on freedom of association, forced labour, gender equality, abolition of forced labour and child labour, discrimination in its various forms, etc., and we are promoting compliance with the obligations enshrined in these international instruments and in other constitutional provisions. With the support of the International Labour Office, we are bringing our legislation and our practices into line with the provisions of these international instruments, with a view to meeting our international commitments to decent work.

With respect to employment, the Government has created a climate that is conducive to capital investment, both national and foreign. This climate entails the adoption of standards that promote investment and create an environment of peace, political stability and concord, which will be attractive to the investor and will protect his investments. We invite any businessman of good faith to conduct his business in Equatorial Guinea, where he will be received with open arms. I must make an appeal and denounce the negative attitude of those who claim to be businessmen but who wish to perpetrate terrorist acts and wish to destabilize the country. I refer, for example, to the attack of 6 March 2004, which was led by a group of mercenaries of various nationalities. Thank God, and thanks to the cooperation of the countries that are the friends of Equatorial Guinea and the efforts of our own security forces to loyally carry out their duties, timely action was taken to prevent this attack from causing a blood bath in the peaceful country that is Equatorial Guinea.

Consequently, I say to this Organization that, convinced of the need to promote lasting peace, at the global level based on social justice and with a single tripartite structure for the whole of the United Nations system comprising representatives of workers, employers and governments, we condemn these acts, which contribute neither to the economic growth needed to promote employment nor to social peace and nor to the security of the people, as recognized by this Organization and all of the organizations of the United Nations system.

We have selected the path of the ILO and we are committed to moving forward. However, our work is not all that straightforward because, as you know, we are a developing country with a major shortage of the human resources that are needed to manage our own development. Nevertheless, we are considered to be a medium-income country because of the presence of oil. The oil industry has inherited an infrastructure that is in a very poor state or inexistent in certain cases.

I would like to conclude by wishing every success to this 92nd Session of the Conference in the hope

that its conclusions will lead to a better and more human world with greater solidarity. The delegation of Equatorial Guinea will do everything it can to support the objectives of this Conference.

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*Original French: Mr. WIJFFELS (representative, International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions)*

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My speech is not aimed at making comments on the excellent Report of the Director-General. However, I would just like to note that his observations and recommendations are completely in line with our own thinking and our intention to fully commit ourselves to the political process we entered into with the ILO on 27 May 2004 when, upon the invitation of the Director-General, we held the annual General Assembly of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions here at the ILO headquarters.

Our concerns are the same as yours. Your ambitions are the same as ours. You have the privilege of bringing together on a tripartite basis the representatives of governments, employers and workers. We are lucky enough during our councils, held on a national basis, to bring together the social partners and various people responsible for civil society. The advice we give to governments is the result of patiently listening to others, conducting joint analyses and seeking compromises, or rather the most acceptable approach for the greatest number of participants at our councils; this advice also gives the social partners the challenge of basing their activities on the common good, without exclusivity and without a monopolistic form of thinking. We think that we are a representative component of organized civilian society.

Because of this characteristic and this responsibility, in 1999 we decided to attempt to develop internationally what we know how to do on a national basis, namely to promote and practice social dialogue.

As we stand today, we represent 50 institutions from all continents; from the Economic and Social Council of China to, most recently, that of Brazil; from the Korean Tripartite Commission to the National Economic and Social Council of Algeria. We have decided to work together in the international association, which has asked me to come here and address you today.

Working together means listening to the priorities of all, from the North and South, on issues of common interest. It means seeking a common way of analysing the situation, and trying to establish a common line of action for major subjects specified by the United Nations.

The year 2004 is witnessing the beginning of cooperation between the ILO and economic and social councils and similar institutions throughout the world. As regards all the difficult subjects that we must deal with, such as globalization, migration flows, child labour, and the economic and social promotion of women, our councils, to help with the initial stages of your work, can communicate the results of our work, and following your decisions we can do our utmost to ensure their effective implementation.

In conclusion, I came here, on behalf of our international association, to say that, in this context, we are entirely at the disposal of the ILO.

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Mr. AMAN (*Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh*)

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We warmly congratulate the President and other officers of the Conference on their election. We are confident that under their avid leadership the Conference will be a success. I assure you of our full support and cooperation.

We thank the Director-General for his Report, *ILO Programme implementation 2002-03*, which provides a comprehensive and focused report of the progress made during that period. We have followed with admiration his efforts to bring labour and employment issues to the forefront of the global agenda. The Director-General deserves our sincere appreciation. We are confident that during his second term as well, he will guide the Organization with his usual dedication and commitment in addressing the challenges to labour issues.

The ILO has improved its ability to focus available resources on key objectives and programme priorities. Technical cooperation and technical assistance are the primary means for the attainment of ILO objectives. It is important that these activities be strengthened in our countries. We ask the membership of the ILO to make sufficient resources available to meet these needs.

I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization for its timely, comprehensive and objective report. The Director-General of the ILO also deserves our special thanks for his efforts in setting up the Commission, selecting its members and for facilitating their task.

While the latent potential of globalization may be immense, as noted in the Report, its benefits are not shared equitably. This is particularly true for disadvantaged countries, such as least developed countries. We believe coordinated efforts are required to bring about fairer rules for international trade, investment and finance. It is imperative that the interests of the least developed countries, the weakest link in the chain of development, be protected through provision of special and differential treatment. We fully endorse the launching of Policy Coherence Initiatives, as recommended in the Commission's Report.

For Bangladesh, poverty alleviation is dependent on sustained growth and employment generation. This requires both national and international efforts. Decent work should be made an element of the global agenda. May I at this stage, refer to the ILO's Decent Work Pilot Programme in Bangladesh. I would like to thank the Director-General for inclusion of my country in the project. Given the large-scale unemployment and high level of poverty in the country, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is of special significance for Bangladesh. I am happy to note that the ILO is working closely with my Government in implementing this Programme.

The issue of movement and natural persons is of particular importance for a labour-sending country like Bangladesh. We believe labour, an important factor of production, should have the mobility that other factors of production enjoy, but with clear rules and regulations. The services sector is emerging as one of the most important sectors within our economy, and internationally as well. The greatest potential benefits to both originating and destination countries lies in the movement of natural persons as service providers. We are happy that the ILO has placed due importance on this issue. We believe

that there is a clear need for a multilateral framework which would provide uniform and transparent rules for the cross-border movement of service providers.

In close cooperation with the ILO, and with support from our development partners, we have achieved considerable success in eliminating child labour from many industries. Our experience in eliminating child labour from the garments sector is now considered as a model. The Government of Bangladesh, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, is committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour. Under her direction, innovative schemes and alternative solutions such as special financial incentives to encourage increased enrolment and stop children dropping out of school on economic grounds.

In conclusion, our lack of resources has prevented us from taking many other measures, such as social safety nets. We hope that, with progress and economic growth, we will achieve our desired goals.

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*Original Russian: Mr. GRYSHCENKO (Employers' delegate, Ukraine)*

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It is a great honour for me to address this Conference on behalf of the Ukrainian employers, and to express my gratitude to the President of the Conference, to Mr. Juan Somavia and to the organizers of the Conference for the excellent working conditions and the atmosphere of constructive dialogue which undoubtedly will help us reach a positive result.

In examining the issues on our agenda, I note the importance of the analysis of the level of implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We believe that, for the effective application of the provisions of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), we must set priorities which will allow us, within the framework of the activities of the ILO, to further develop the right of organization of workers and employers.

Most important for us is the task of creating a united, strong and representative employers' group at national, regional and sectoral levels. This is a very difficult task, because, just 12 years ago, there was only one employer in Ukraine — the State. The word "employer" did not exist in the vocabularies of official or political figures.

Ukraine shares the concern of the world community with regard to the spread of AIDS. We are grateful to the International Labour Organization for its constructive work in Ukraine to minimize the consequences of the AIDS epidemic. Ukrainian employers are interested in ensuring equal rights for workers. This is reflected in the Labour Code that is currently being drawn up. We are also interested in defeating any further development of this disease.

In order to arrive at a solution to the problems facing us, we require a rational compromise on the part of the social partners. We are deeply convinced that the most important thing is the process of social dialogue. This means the search for a balance of interests which will foster economic and social progress.

We note the extreme effectiveness of the measures which are being undertaken in Ukraine under the aegis of the ILO. We are and will remain grateful for the technical assistance and corresponding consultations of ILO experts as regards the application of Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO in the Ukraine and in studying employment

issues in the development of the labour markets, in fighting poverty, and in stemming the trade of and trafficking in human beings.

In this context, the employers have high hopes from new programmes of cooperation between the ILO, and the Government and the social partners. One such programme was initiated during a recent meeting with the Confederation of Swiss Employers.

The last year has been extremely important for us and included a special event — the accession of the Federation of Employers of Ukraine into the International Organisation of Employers. This gives us the possibility to take direct part in drawing up international standards in the area of labour relations and opens up great possibilities for our development.

An array of issues are of interest to us today. The most important of these include the accession of Ukraine to the World Trade Organization, the fact that the borders of the European Union now reach to Ukraine, Ukraine's integration in the world economy and participation in the international distribution of labour, implementation of international legal regulations, standards and certifications.

However, the process of globalization is a nuanced one. We understand very well that the integration of Ukraine into the world economy means that not only will markets be open to us, but that we will simultaneously need to take a series of measures in order to protect domestic production.

The end of the twentieth century was known for the fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the Iron Curtain that had closed society, and now the world has become a more open place. After a number of years of crises, the Ukrainian economy has undergone a resurgence. Ukraine has the same area as France and is genuinely interested in the possibilities offered by European integration — all the more so because we realize that the geographical centre of Europe is, in fact, in Ukraine.

But we note certain trends resulting from the approach of the EU borders that are a cause for concern in our country. Are not the many instances of discriminatory action on the part of various European institutions with respect to Ukraine signs of the introduction of a new iron curtain by the European Union which could close the great Ukrainian people out of the European family?

This is of great concern to employers. The discriminatory conditions for accession to the World Trade Organization, as well as other elements which I shall not mention, hinder Ukraine's economic development and cause continuing poverty and the growth of unemployment.

We call upon the International Labour Organization to begin a separate examination of the issues, which should focus on these processes and try to attenuate the economic consequences for neighbouring countries of the European Union. We also call upon the international community to study how to better distribute employment opportunities, labour resources, flows of labour migration and the well-being of nations as a whole.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr. VAZ DE ALMEIDA (Minister for Labour, Employment and Solidarity, Sao Tome and Principe)*

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It is a great pleasure and honour for me to add my voice to that of the distinguished delegates and illustrious guests present at this assembly and convey, on my own behalf and on behalf of my delega-

tion, my congratulations to the President on his election to chair the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference. My congratulations reflect the growing political will of my Government to increase the strength of its existing relations with the ILO.

I should like to take advantage of this unique opportunity to offer a few thoughts, however brief they may be, about the brilliant presentation given by the Director-General. The subjects dealt with include various labour matters and are extremely significant because they list questions which arise at international level on present and future problems concerning the well-being of the member States of the ILO.

This year we have had the opportunity to think about topics such as freedom of association, trade union organization and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Notwithstanding the numerous difficulties facing Sao Tome and Principe, we still devote particular attention to the matters raised in this first-class Report presented by the Director-General of the ILO.

With this in mind, and in order to take account of the clauses in laws 4, 5 and 6/92, on strikes, trade unions and regulations for individual labour conditions respectively, which are in force in our country, the Government of Sao Tome and Principe ratified the Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), in June 1992. As far as freedoms and rights are concerned, our Government, in article 35 of Law 1/2003 on constitutional review, enshrined the right to freedom of association, whereby citizens have the right, without any prior authorization, to establish associations as long as this does not contravene the law of the land or call into question the Constitution or national independence.

At the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference, we took the opportunity to announce publicly our commitment to the ratification of several further Conventions which have been adapted in our own legislation. Today, at the 92nd Session, we are proud, although it has cost us a huge effort because of the lack of sufficient staff in the first instance, to inform this body that the Government has succeeded in completing some of the internal procedures imposed by the Constitution of the ILO in order to ratify ten Conventions: the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184), the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155). We realize that, to meet all our obligations as a Member of the ILO, we still have a very long way to go, and we are fully aware that our labour regime still has many failings. In order to counteract this, we have drawn up a general bill on labour which will be submitted for discussion by all the institutions concerned and subsequently for approval to the national Parliament. We

also plan to revise our laws on trade unions and on strikes.

It is a pleasure to inform this august body of certain measures which could be considered as having been successful with respect to institutionalized social consultation in our country. The cooperation between the various parties involved has been remarkable and noteworthy. All economic and social matters and issues connected with the life of workers in Sao Tome and Principe have been discussed in order to seek consensual decisions. Collective bargaining is still a very new practice for us and we have not seen much success so far because of the lack of diversity in our companies.

All the actions mentioned above, in addition to the tripartite composition of Sao Tome and Principe, are clear signs of our respect for tripartism as instituted by the ILO.

To conclude, I would like once again to call for the technical cooperation of the ILO in order to improve the effectiveness of work at ministerial level and to express a vote of confidence in the quality of the work which remains to be done. We await impatiently the conclusions of this meeting which all delegations will pass on to their respective governments.

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Mr. KEARNEY (*Representative, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation*)

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The ILO deems decent work essential for sustainable development, poverty reduction and the preservation of human rights in a globalizing interdependent world. Decent work is more than a dream for millions employed in the textile, clothing and footwear industries; an unachievable dream in the face of falling wages, deteriorating working conditions and growing exploitation.

Unsustainable development – today the textile, clothing and footwear industries are in turmoil. Millions of jobs are on the move as nations race to undercut each other by ignoring the implementation of labour standards in the quest for a share of world markets. Bangladesh is set to lose more than half of its 1.8 million government jobs because of trade liberalization at the end of this year. Bangladesh's Government has not raised the minimum wage since 1994, does not enforce its labour legislation and has not permitted trade unions in its export processing zones. But rather than protecting the country's industrial base, the absence of decent work is undermined and makes development unsustainable.

Poverty reduction – nearly every nation in Central America is heavily dependant on the garment industry for manufacturing employment. The workers in the sector say that their communities are now worse off than before industrialization. Interestingly, malnutrition among women garment workers is greater than among any other group in the region.

Preservation of human rights – in reality, freedom of association, a key human right, does not exist in many nations. Take Sri Lanka Workers at Workwear Lanka are workers who have been threatened, abused and fired for attempting to form a trade union. Take Uganda. In spite of a 100 per cent membership in a number of factories, unions have been denied recognition for more than ten years. The consequences are dire. At Apparel Tri-star (Uganda) Ltd. workers are virtual prisoners, denied permission to leave the work site, pressured to work when sick, physically beaten by supervisors, fired

when they become pregnant and subjected to sexual harassment. Female workers are having to share toilets and even their dormitory beds with their male counterparts.

Take Haiti. This week workers at the Ouanaminthe Free-Trade Zone are on strike because of inhuman treatment, including violence, intimidation, harassment, forced stripping of women union leaders, beatings, kidnappings and non-payment of wages. Nearly all these cases involve export processing zone enterprises and the national governments concerned are either too inefficient, too incompetent or too uncaring to enforce international labour standards or even their own, usually inadequate, national labour legislation. Often governments connive with the exploiters. Such governments' in action not only hurts their own workers and communities, but in a globalized interdependent world impacts on workers everywhere.

Take Indonesia whose Government has taken steps to enact and implement up-to-date labour legislation.

Now, both foreign and domestic investors say they are no longer optimistic about maintaining or creating jobs, because they are being undercut by numerous other Asian nations where labour legislation is weaker and largely unenforced.

Why does a brand name like Nike have to develop an infrastructure for the application of international labour standards through its supply chain? Nike should not have to do the job of the Government of the People's Republic of China. And The Gap should not have to substitute for the inadequacies of the Government of El Salvador on labour issues. If governments were doing their job, voluntary initiatives to avoid sweatshop labour would not be needed.

When governments commit to decent work, the impact is dramatic. Until last year, there was not a single trade union with a contract in any of Guatemala's 350 garment factories. But following The Government's intervention in two problem companies – Choi Shin and Cimatextiles – it took only six weeks to secure trade union recognition, resolve the problems that existed at that time and conclude a good modern contract. Clearly, determined government action can deliver decent work.

The ILO campaigns for decent work will only succeed if it has buy-in from member States. The ILO urgently needs to embark on a new campaign which might be titled "Governments, wake up". Such a campaign would aim to compel governments everywhere to ratify the core Conventions of the ILO, enact and implement the necessary supporting legislation and generally promote decent work.

Governments which fail to respond cannot be permitted to undermine the efforts of their neighbours. The ILO will need to move from persuasion to sanction if it is to enforce sustainable development, secure poverty reduction and preserve human rights worldwide.

In a globalized interdependent world, enforceable global rule and labour standards are essential. And the international community must ensure that individual governments promote and enforce decent work or otherwise forfeit their country's access to world markets. That might finally make every government wake up to the current criminal neglect of workers' rights in sectors like textiles, clothing and footwear, in so many parts of the world. Then, de-

cent work could cease to be merely a dream and become a reality.

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Mr. PODDAR (*Employers' delegate, India*)

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I congratulate the President on his election to preside over this session of the Conference, which is going to be historic for debating the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and assessing its impact. We have tremendous faith in his wisdom to steer the debate to a meaningful conclusion.

I would also like to compliment the architects of the Report, who very painstakingly mirrored the face of ongoing globalization in a bold manner.

There is candid acknowledgement that the rules of globalization are unfair and support only a few industrialized nations. This is an endorsement of the stand taken by us at the WTO and other forums. Trade of manufactured goods is liberalized, whereas agriculture remains protected. Similarly capital and technology can travel freely across the globe but the movement of labour is restricted. This hampers development of those economies for whom agriculture and skilled workforce are the only comparative advantages.

Global trade has expanded faster than global GDP over the last two decades, yet, it is not uniform. The share of the low-income countries in global exports is only 3.4 per cent whereas the high-income countries accounted for 75.2 per cent. Even the FDI inflow into the 12 developing countries during the 1990s has been in the order of 74.7 per cent, while the rest of the 176 countries had to be content with a meagre share of 25.3 per cent.

It is heartening to see that globalization has lifted 200 million people from the depths of poverty in East Asia, yet nearly 550 million people are living below that line on less than US\$1 a day and nearly 1,100 million people are living in absolute poverty, globally. Globalization has failed to change their lives. Global unemployment has also increased to 186 million by 2003 with higher incidents of unemployment in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. These indicators pose a challenge to the process of globalization, which has to provide a socio-economic floor and a human face to the global economy, as we are reminded of by the Declaration of Philadelphia that "poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere". This is the time, globalization needs to be given a new face.

I was very happy to hear Mr. Somavia, on the opening day of this session of the Conference. I entirely agree with him that there cannot be globalization without localization. We need a good national government to deliver, but we also need a transparent and efficient global government to provide a bridge to the future.

Economic development has to have a social face. This is finely ingrained in our value systems. I am tempted to quote Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, when he addressed the Fourth ILO Asian Regional Conference in 1957, and I quote, "In India, we are very much concerned with increasing our production, because unless we produce wealth we shall not have any means for the betterment of man. But in the production of wealth, we can never forget the social or the human aspect of the process; even if we should forget, conditions will remind us, because the people are politically conscious and will not put up with many things that they might have put up with in the past."

How true his vision was can be seen in the recent elections in India – the present Government won the election on the agenda “Globalization with human face”.

To maintain the human dimension and attend to the negative fallouts of globalization, particularly in the developing and underdeveloped countries, strong backup support of skill development, employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes are critically important, and the ILO’s role in this is significant.

The cross-border movement of people has seen a spurt during post globalization, since globalization has failed to generate jobs where most of the people live. It is therefore necessary to build national and international policies, regulating cross-border migration which can serve as a force for growth, development and well-regulated globalization with equal opportunity.

Globalization has spurred business process outsourcing to achieve, inter-alia, efficiency, and attempts to stop BPO or restrict immigration of skills through legislative measure would further distort the process of globalization. What we need is to fine-tune the process to make it more participative and not to be selective. I am sure the debate would resolve these contradictions to smoothen the process of globalization for the future.

Before closing, I thank the ILO for the Global Report, which is excellent, but falls short of recommendations and does not indicate clearly where to go from here. I think the debate will draw a road map and concrete conclusions will emerge for its implementation.

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Ms. LUCERO (*representative, Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists*)

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It is indeed a distinct honour and a rare opportunity to address this august body of the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference that you have kindly accorded to us in the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions, (BATU) the regional organization in Asia of the World Confederation of Labour, for which we sincerely thank you.

On behalf of the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions, I extend our fraternal felicitations to everyone, and assurance of our full cooperation in the daunting task of jointly reviewing and evaluating our past endeavours, and hopefully learning from these experiences to be able to plan and plot our joint and concerted actions in future toward a better world of work for all.

The first Report of the second cycle of the Global Report, presented by the honourable Director-General under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work entitled *Organizing for social justice* is an exemplary work in the field of research and analysis, an exposition of competence and objectivity, and a reliable reference and guide material for all social partners in our quest for a more just and humane society.

In close cooperation with, and active participation of, the responsible men and women of the ILO Office in the Asian region, and their technical expertise, my organization, enjoying consultative status with the ILO, has conducted several consultative and strategic conferences with its key leaders and militants in the region during the immediate past year. In two of its recent meetings, in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, top national leaders from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Pa-

Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Hong Kong (China), Taiwan and South Korea, have come together to engender further awareness and common understanding of the fundamental rights at work, providing a venue for systematic information, education and communication, and strategic actions for an organized and coherent region-wide response to cross-cutting issues concerning the Declaration and the Decent Work Agenda.

We are glad to share with you that the multilateral dialogue among social partners has been successfully employed in these activities, and the results are more than the widespread understanding and trust among them, that further led to sincere commitments to best respect and make use of these principles and rights for a total and sustainable socio-economic and political development for all.

Pursuant to the popular decisions of these evaluation and monitoring meetings, several projects and activities were designed and implemented to follow up implementation and ratification of ILO Conventions, through the BATU norm and socio-economic development programmes in collaboration with our partners.

Advocacy on current issues affecting the Declaration and calls for action are regularly published in our newsletter, *Vision and Milestone*, circulated to all its affiliates and partners on such issues as the assassinations of our trades union leaders in Cambodia and India, as well specific repressive working conditions and violations of the right to freedom of association of workers in the various countries in the region. The cause of migrants, the labour situation in multinational enterprises and export processing zones, and the precarious working conditions of those in the informal economy, have always been among the issues on the immediate agenda and have been the focus of concerns. We have endeavoured to document and objectively analyse the sad plight under the present realities that has engulfed our workers, especially the women, which is more kindly characterized as bereft of social safety nets in our globalizing, neo-liberal world economy, as well as the consequent decline of membership in trade unions. The BATU delegates are one in expressing our solidarity with you in the task of building on the progress that has so far been achieved in the promotion of freedom of association and rights to collective bargaining in a changing global context. We endorse the recommended objectives of the ILO for the next four years on universal ratification of the ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, updated action plan, building up the institutional framework and strengthening advisory and advocacy activities.

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*Original Lao: Mr. PHENGKHAMMY (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Lao People's Democratic Republic)*

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On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, allow me to express our honour in participating in the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference in 2004.

I would also like to extend sincere congratulations to the President and the Officers for their election. I am convinced that under their capable and experienced guidance, this Conference will successfully achieve its objectives.

The recent spread of avian influenza and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) negatively affected socio-economic development and impacted on the livelihood and health of the population in the region, as well as in our country. To address this

crisis, our Government applied certain procedures and measures in coordination with other countries in the region, and endeavoured jointly with the World Health Organization and other international organizations to restrict and bring remedies to the situation. These diseases have now been eradicated from our country.

To further work towards the general goals set out by our Government within a timeframe of 5 years (2001-05), emphasis is being placed on the implementation of major programmes, such as the poverty eradication programme, the shifting cultivation stabilization programme, and the opium production eradication programme, among others. The successful realization of these programmes requires financial and human resources. Therefore, labour skills and vocational development, especially in the case of former shifting farmers and opium producers, are of primary importance for our country. Nevertheless, the Government's judicious policy and support from friendly countries and international organizations have allowed us to progressively advance our endeavours. Among these, the International Labour Organization has provided support and assistance in many projects relating to training, seminars, prevention of exploitation, trade in women and children, and others.

In the current process of globalization, science and technology have developed rapidly, thus allowing countries to introduce modern progress for national development more rapidly. However, this also represents a challenge for us and, more particularly, for developing and least developed countries. This globalization process calls for enhanced mutual consultations, cooperation and assistance. The Lao People's Democratic Republic will continue to apply its policy of cooperation with the ASEAN countries, neighbouring countries, friendly countries around the world, international organizations, governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, to acquire the necessary funds and experience for the qualitative development of Lao labour, and for further national socio-economic development to enable the country's gradual integration with ASEAN countries, and the region, and lift the Lao People's Democratic Republic and its people from the ranks of least developed countries and out of from poverty, by 2020.

I am convinced that, with the ILO's extensive experience in extending assistance to its member countries around the world, further and wide assistance will be provided, more particularly to its developing member countries, with increasingly successful results.

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Mr. ZHARIKOV (*representative, World Federation of Trade Unions*)

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The World Federation of Trade Unions welcomes the fact that the current session of the International Labour Conference focuses attention on programme implementation, the social dimension of globalization, rights at work, as well as the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories.

Despite the solemnly declared intentions and programmes of action, adopted at the Copenhagen and the Millennium Summits and the efforts of the ILO, the social and economic situation in the world is not improving, but worsening. According to ILO statistics, unemployment in 2003 was the highest ever registered and poverty is spreading and deepening. Up to 80 per cent or more of employees in most

member States do not have the possibility to establish trade unions and to negotiate collectively.

Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 are not observed by a number of employers and Governments. The gross violation of trade union rights in many countries continues. A large majority of the giant transnational corporations prevent their employees from exercising the right to freedom of association, and in many cases, trade unions established by employees are not recognized.

In the name of globalization, liberalization and privatization, strategies are imposed to wipe out almost everything that has been gained by trade unions in the last century. The IMF, World Bank and WTO continue to promote policies that amount to neocolonialism.

While occupation and genocide in Palestine, in the occupied territories of the Syrian Golan and in the south of Lebanon continue, causing brutal violations of human and trade union rights and freedoms, which is the focus of the Report of the Director-General to this Conference, another Arab State, Iraq, is being occupied in violation of international law. The occupying forces are suppressing the rights of workers and people, and are even resorting to torture.

Defying the opinion of the overwhelming majority of United Nations member States, there has been an increase in the cruel, unilateral sanctions that are being used against Cuba and Syria.

What is wrong with this world? The increasing mass actions of people and trade unions throughout the world in recent years provide a clear answer. People no longer demand only declarations, but real solutions to the mounting problems. They no longer believe mere promises and declarations. They resolutely condemn unilateralism.

We support the main directions of ILO activities, especially the decent work for all campaign and the measures to follow up the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

As was stressed at the World Trade Union Forum, recently held in Mumbai, India, trade unions are keen to build a trade union coalition to protect the rights and interests of working people, and to contribute towards a greater consensus within the ILO on major issues. Progress in this direction depends also on the elimination of the double standards that are applied in certain cases, and on attempts to utilize the ILO for political aims, which has nothing to do with its mandate and nature. It is also essential that the ILO adopt a sharper, stronger position towards the policies of neo-liberal globalization and the results of such globalization it should also extend its influence on the economic institutions in the direction suggested by the World Commission on Social Dimension of Globalization.

We suggest that the ILO compile a trade union development index assessing the extent of implementation of core Conventions in order to carry out a precise assessment of the non-implementation of these Conventions. The ILO should urge employers and, in particular, transnational corporations to assess in their annual reports the extent of fulfilment of ILO Conventions by their affiliate enterprises in different countries.

We also reiterate our view that it is necessary for all those concerned to make efforts to ensure that real social dialogue in the ILO will include all trends at the international and regional levels, reflecting the principles and practices that are in

vogue in all United Nations agencies, to ensure that all regions and interests are adequately represented.

It is also essential that the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) develop fair cooperation with all trends in the trade union movement, especially with regard to projects and courses for workers' education.

It is also necessary to ensure that the ILO committees are protected from efforts by certain countries to impose sanctions on countries that do not reflect the policies of neo-liberal globalization.

Before concluding my speech, I should like to say that all we need today is to unite our efforts to change the negative course of global development. This is not just a matter of argument, but a matter of interest to us all, and we have to fight for that.

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Mr. KAIRELIS (*Government delegate, Lithuania*)

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First of all, I would like to congratulate the President on his election and on his successful Chairmanship of this session of the Conference.

Lithuania welcomed the Strategic Policy Framework and budgeting set out four years ago, which identified four priority objectives for the ILO and the strategies required to achieve them. It is of great satisfaction to note, as we can see from the Reports of the Director-General and the Chairman of the Governing Body, that this was the right direction to choose – the Strategic Policy Framework has become the essential tool in the good governance of the Organization and the result-based management of the Office. Results for the reporting period show impressive achievements in its implementation.

The campaign for ratification of the eight core labour Conventions had produced the desired result – the ratification rate increased significantly. In this context, I am pleased to note that Lithuania is among those 103 countries that have ratified all the fundamental labour Conventions.

However, the increased number of ratifications is not an accurate reflection of the situation. Unfortunately, the standards supervisory system continues to identify violations in some regions of the world, and the ILO must pay more attention to these facts.

We endorse the efforts of the Governing Body concerning the development of the more effective tools that are needed to support standards-related technical assistance and promotional activities, and we share the opinion that they have to be discussed with the social partners and the governments of the countries concerned.

Concerning the adoption of new labour standards, we appreciate the first attempts to consolidate various standards in the same area. We are following with great interest the progress being made on the proposed consolidated maritime Convention and we are looking forward to the results of the High-level Tripartite Working Group on Maritime Labour Standards.

A special concern of the Lithuanian Government is employment and job creation. It is clear that, without employment, neither decent work nor prosperity can be achieved, nor living standards improved. Therefore we welcome the fact that the ILO created the Global Employment Agenda at the end of 2001, as a tool to integrate efforts to promote productive and decent employment in each country. It was very useful for the development of our national policy, leading to a significant decrease in unemployment.

We welcome also the shift in the ILO's policy towards social protection issues, especially a partnership with other institutions and organizations and the development of practical tools. We think that building a network of partner institutions and a knowledge base will further serve the implementation of strategies on social protection.

In supporting the ILO's all strategic objectives, Lithuania is committed to promoting and strengthening social dialogue and tripartism. A well functioning social partnership is a necessary precondition for successful realization of socially balanced solutions. We are convinced that the ILO, as a unique tripartite organization, will advocate to its constituents further strengthening of the social partnership.

In setting up an independent World Commission in 2002, the ILO showed its understanding of the great importance of the social dimension of globalization for the international community.

The report of the Commission has a wide response and no doubt will serve as a basis for broader discussion on the issue.

I am pleased to inform you that the Lithuanian Government, with the support of the ILO, in May this year held the Regional Tripartite Meeting with the participation of the Nordic and Baltic countries and as the honoured guest of the Meeting, of the Director-General, Mr. Somavia.

The participants of the Meeting shared their views on regional aspects and challenges of the social dimension of globalization, focusing on possible action to be taken nationally and internationally in pursuit of greater benefits of globalization. National governance of the processes is essential within each country, but joint international efforts and cooperation between institutions capable of influencing globalization processes, are also urgently needed.

We are looking forward to the ILO giving further guidance on the way to initiate further steps indicated in the Report.

As a member of the Governing Body of the ILO, Lithuania shares the opinion that the Governing Body has successfully fulfilled its tasks during the last year and invites it to further identify clear priorities, going forward.

Let me conclude by offering our best wishes to the Director-General, the Governing Body and the Office for further success in running the Organization, and in being flexible enough to respond to the challenges of the fast-changing working world.

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*Original Spanish: Mr. FERNÁNDEZ FAJALDE (Minister of Labour, Bolivia)*

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I would like to begin by extending our greetings to the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference. We recognize the major importance of this event, because, throughout history, the most sensitive issues for the human being have been those related to labour, social rights, equal distribution of wealth and the quest for social justice.

In this connection, the dynamics of social trends, especially in Latin America, are now tending to change the features of injustice that occurred as a consequence of a distorted vision of a globalized world and the application of an economic model that, based on an orthodox and rigid perception of a market economy, have only led to the pauperization of major social sectors, increased unemployment, greater job precariousness, the abandoning of the

protective nature of the right to work and, consequently, to a heightening of poverty levels.

In these circumstances, which have been seen so dramatically in my country, and despite the deep-rooted social conflict that we are currently grappling with, the Government of President Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert has decided to promote as a government policy far-reaching efforts to ensure that dialogue and agreement are the most appropriate mechanism for resolving the multi-faceted problems that exist in Bolivia today.

Accordingly, the Minister of Labour of Bolivia has proposed to give priority, as a fundamental part of his mandate, to the creation of a National Council for Labour Relations, tripartite in structure, stable in operation and permanent in the exercise of its responsibilities.

This objective, which is being fostered with the basic support of specialists and advisers of the ILO, is designed to become a valid mechanism for the strengthening of social dialogue in Bolivia.

We are convinced that it will only be possible to reverse the deterioration of conditions of employment and the exacerbation of poverty if substantial changes are made to relations between State and society. Therefore, it is important to establish a forum for institutionalized understanding between workers, employers and the State.

In parallel to this, another of our priorities is to do all we can to eradicate the worst forms of child labour, because besides being a consequence of the acute impoverishment of the most vulnerable sectors of Bolivian society, it is a phenomenon that, because of its dimensions, damages the deepest feelings of solidarity. Therefore, every State must guarantee its children unlimited access to education. This must be a central objective in order to prevent thousands of children in Bolivia's case, about 800,000 – from entering the labour market at a tender age.

Reversing this social trend is an obligation of the State and of society. Therefore, in Bolivia, we have been promoting the eradication of child labour through the inter-institutional commission and sub-commissions that are responsible for the progressive eradication of this form of labour in regions where sugar is cane harvested and in the western mining zone.

These objectives are being supported by efforts at various levels of Government to generate decent and permanent employment. The lack of such employment in the past has been a crucial factor in heightening the social crisis.

Incentives to micro and small enterprises in the form of systematic economic benefits from the State are designed to ensure that important segments of our society, in addition to finding a source of employment, can also harness their own creativity and express that creativity through the organization of productive units.

We are simultaneously developing plans to promote the national handicraft industry, as handicrafts are such a rich expression of our cultural heritage and an important source of employment. For the development of micro and small enterprises and handicraft labour units, in connection with training programmes, the State has made a proposal to create better conditions of credit and to create markets to guarantee that these productive activities do not run the risk of seeing their prospects frustrated.

On the basis of these efforts by the Ministry of Labour to tackle the most urgent problems in Bolivia, and despite the difficulties that we are facing today in the light of the obvious social conflict, which is a situation that we hope will be improved against the backdrop of democracy and tolerance, we urge the support and assessment mechanisms of the ILO to continue to lend us their support in the achievement of our institutional and governmental objectives, because, basically, we need a new scenario to solve our social problem. This scenario must be based on democratic dialogue, integral globalization, consensus-building and consultation. This is a new way of making progress in this new millennium in terms of labour relations, under the auspices of tripartism.

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*Original Arabic: Mrs. MINT BILAL OULD YAMAR (Minister of Public Services and Employment, Mauritania)*

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In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! It is indeed a great honour for me and the Democratic Republic of Mauritania to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election to preside over the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, and I wish them every success.

I would like to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO and I welcome the efforts that he has made in order to produce this excellent Report.

The workers are at the heart of the concerns of the President of our Republic and it is during his mandate that we have laid the foundations for sustainable development, to encompass all dimensions of development: political, social, cultural and economic. Desirous of achieving these objectives, the Government is ensuring the monitoring and application of this ambitious development plan that is part of a global strategy to combat poverty, associated with a far-reaching campaign to disseminate knowledge in order to improve living standards. All that has been achieved in a short period of time has enabled us to improve the living standards of our citizens and of our workers.

For these reasons, employment and the struggle against illiteracy, poverty, disease and unemployment are at the heart of our Government's policies.

In the struggle against illiteracy, for example, a large-scale campaign has been launched which encompasses both the private and public sectors. The aim is to improve workers' living standards and to increase their productivity.

Desirous of improving the situation of workers, the President of the Republic has decided to raise wages by 28 per cent. This increase has followed a series of wage increases that we have carried out in previous years. Furthermore, in the near future we are going to ratify a special regulation for labour inspectors in order to guarantee their neutrality. The aim is to apply the provisions of the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), ratified by Mauritania.

In the framework of efforts made to combat poverty, through the intermediary of the Commission on Human Rights, our country has embarked on the struggle against poverty through the integration and financing of numerous projects aimed at containing poverty in certain targeted areas.

The improvement of labour legislation ranks high on our Government's list of priorities. Our country has recently adopted a new Labour Code following the ratification of all the relevant core Conventions.

As far as freedom of association is concerned, we are trying to ensure trade unions a favourable environment which allows them to exercise their rights in a pluralist democracy with greater freedom.

Lastly, as far as human resources are concerned, we have launched programmes whose priority objective is to strengthen existing training structures, to make vocational training more widely available and to improve its quality. We are determined to achieve this objective.

We would also like to stress the need to improve the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories.

There will be many obstacles and stumbling blocks along the way, but we are determined to achieve our objectives. We are determined to win this battle in order to ensure a better future.

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Mr. SCHERBAKOV (*representative, General Confederation of Trade Unions*)

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Let me first of all warmly congratulate the President on his election to this important position and wish him every success in leading this session of the Conference.

Today we are discussing the results of the work of the ILO in the past biennium. This period was complex and filled with events through which the ILO had to fulfil the strategic objectives that it had set itself. Familiarity with the Director-General's Report demonstrates that, on the whole, the ILO managed to deal with an enormous volume of work. We highly value the consistency and perseverance with which the ILO has put into practice the Decent Work Agenda, which, as noted in the Report, can truly be considered "a concept that has relevance for the new millennium."

The General Confederation of Trade Unions fully agrees with the main guidelines and objectives of the ILO's work as highlighted in the programme against poverty. For CIS countries, where 29-49 per cent of the population live below the poverty level, this programme takes on a special significance.

We consider it fitting that one of the most important areas of the ILO's work is the development and improvement of standard-setting activity and strengthening of monitoring of the implementation of international labour standards, as well as the systematic implementation of the provisions of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The increasing number of ratifications testifies to an understanding on the part of the international community of the significance of ILO social and labour standards. As an unstinting supporter of ILO campaigns for the ratification of key ILO standards, the GCTU actively promotes their success in the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In fact, an overwhelming majority of CIS countries has already ratified practically all of the core Conventions. But we must not stop here. We must ensure their implementation and provide special assistance to those trade unions and workers in regions undergoing transition.

However, ratification of international labour standards is not an end in itself. We must ensure strict compliance, and such compliance must be reflected in legislation and in actual policies. This is, first and foremost, related to the issues of the protection of the rights and interests of trade unions.

It is extremely important that the Director-General address the issue of social dialogue as a necessary

factor in social and labour relations. Everyone agrees that for such success, strong, independent social partners are required. We believe that the ILO could pay even greater attention to the issue of strengthening the positions of the social partners in the CIS countries. Naturally, most important to us is the presence of independent and representative trade unions. However, we should not forget about responsible employers' organizations, without whom we could hardly hope for a successful social dialogue. The GCTU, for its part, is ready to help the ILO Subregional office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Moscow with this work.

We agree that the annual presentation at the International Labour Conference of reports on the application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations provides us with a tremendous amount of additional and useful information, which allows us to create a large database. We believe that it would be a good idea for there to be discussions following the reports leading to concrete conclusions or recommendations. This would greatly help in the monitoring activities of the ILO.

In conclusion, let me say that we highly value the initiative taken by the Governing Body of the ILO in creating the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. This competent body can undoubtedly make a significant contribution to the successful implementation of the Decent Work Agenda.

The informative report of the Commission is, without doubt, valuable to trade unions and deserving of careful study. We count on the continuation and further development of ILO's activities.

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Mr. SAED (*Workers' representative, Palestine*)

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I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this Conference.

I come from a country that is small in terms of surface area, but big in terms of its human and religious significance and heritage. Our country is the focus of attention of millions of peace-loving individuals.

And yet, peace is still a distant prospect, with the Sharon Government in power, a Government whose agenda is reduced to a hit list, the construction of settlements, the annexation of land and the means of imposing cruel and savage measures against the Palestinian people.

Since September 2000, this Government has declared an unrelenting terrorist war that has inflicted human and material losses on the Palestinian people, with Palestinian workers and their families the hardest hit.

Thousands of children, workers, women and leaders have lost their lives or been injured or arrested.

The Palestinian economy is in a disastrous state. The Israeli Government has occupied many Palestinian towns, villages and camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It has destroyed water and electricity supply networks, houses, factories and farmland. The most recent of these operations was the attack on Rafah on 18 May 2004. A total of 220,000 Palestinians formerly employed in Israeli enterprises have lost their jobs. The same number who once worked in the Palestinian territories are now unemployed. According to United Nations statistics, over 2 million Palestinians are affected by unemployment and poverty, representing an unemployment rate of over 70 per cent of the population.

The workers lost over \$1.3 billion over this period. What is worse, the Sharon Government has built a segregationist separation wall on Palestinian land, seizing more land and turning Palestinian towns into huge ghettos.

We therefore urge the international community to study the Palestinians' basic human needs in order to generate decent jobs for workers and reinvigorate the Palestinian economy, which has been devastated by the occupation.

We call on all international bodies and all governments to support the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection set up by the ILO, to which we extend our gratitude, in view of the gravity of the situation, so that we can reduce unemployment, alleviate poverty and attain our goals. I do not think the assistance required will cost more than the price of a few tanks and F-16s, which only sow death and destruction.

The Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, thanks to your support and encouragement, was the first to launch an appeal for dialogue with all the parties to the conflict in the Middle East. This is why we have adhered to every peace initiative from the Madrid accords to the Road Map. It is obvious, however, that the Israeli Government does not want peace; on the contrary, it is constantly torpedoing peace, by flouting international law and denigrating all the human values on which the international community is based. And that is the democracy of Israel, whose airplanes are bombing our people and whose tanks kill women and children who go out in the streets to demonstrate against the crimes of the occupying forces.

Today, we cherish the hope of obtaining your support in putting an end to the inhuman practices of the Israeli Government and make a stand for right and justice by putting a stop to the bloodshed and massacres that are swelling the ranks of the innocent dead. Our people are the victim of the most heinous crimes known to the modern world.

We hope that this tragedy will end one day so that our workers and their children and grandchildren can live in two independent States that will coexist side by side in peace, in accordance with Resolutions Nos. 187, 191, 242 and 338, adopted by the international community.

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*Original Hungarian: Mr. GASKÓ (Workers' delegate, Hungary)*

First, I would like to congratulate the President on his election, and to wish you success for this session of the Conference.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to take part in the 92<sup>nd</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference and to represent the Hungarian trade unions and the Hungarian workers at this session of this prestigious Conference.

We consider the Report by the Director General to be very valuable as it mentions innumerable issues that are still of particular importance for Hungarian workers. One such issue is the accomplishment of the ILO's most important basic principles and I would like to touch upon that subject.

While Hungary has ratified the ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), I must, however, say that Hungarian legislation and judicial practice more recently has resulted in the fact that protection of union officials is currently not fully achieved in Hungary. That is the case even though the laws of Hungary, the Constitution and the Labour Code in force ensure operation

of trade unions and protection of trade union officials. The relevant provisions of ILO Convention No. 98 have been adopted in the Labour Code. On the basis of the current legislation, the employer is obliged to cooperate with the existing unions, and elected trade union officials are entitled to protection under labour law. Protection under labour law means that the consent of the higher-level union is required if an official is to be laid off by ordinary dismissal. Extraordinary dismissal requires the higher-level trade union body to be notified, and it is entitled to reject the dismissal at its discretion.

While formerly employers used to dismiss officials without the prior consent of the higher-level trade union body, that practice has now changed. Today, the management goes to the courts to uphold its economic interests in order to compensate for the lack of the legal declaration which is required for the dismissal and has been refused by the higher-level trade union body.

Unfortunately, the courts normally supply these declarations as, in their opinion, the arguments of the employer outweigh the importance of ensuring trade union rights.

As the result of that practice, the protection of trade union officials is not enforced, most of the lawsuits ending with the dismissal of the senior union officials.

The union official is suspended from work for the time of the lawsuit, which weakens the union during a legal dispute which may easily drag on for years. This situation does not support keeping up a working day-to-day relationship with members and is an obstacle to the work of the union.

Because of this detrimental practice, protection of the unions' interests is rather limited in Hungary, due to the current legislation.

That is not the only way some companies have hindered the operation of unions. It is difficult to enforce the laws intended to guarantee the conditions of operation of unions and for mandatory co-operation.

I believe that Hungarian legislators should consider whether current legal regulation on the protection of trade union officials really achieves its goal. In our opinion, it does not, because the laws that should be serving the purpose of protecting trade union officials do not, in reality, deliver what they promise. We therefore suggest that they be reconsidered with a view to strengthening the protection of the interests of union officials.

I hope that the ILO's consistent efforts and wise decisions will help to resolve that problem and in that hope, let me thank you for your kind attention.

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*Original French: Mr. PETCU (Workers' delegate, Romania)*

At the beginning of my statement I would like to congratulate the President of the Conference very warmly on his election to this important post and I would like to express, on behalf of all Romanian workers, the conviction that this session of the Conference will be a success under his Presidency.

I am also very honoured to convey the congratulations of Romanian workers to the Director-General for the excellent Report before the Conference.

I would like to describe to you some of the concerns of Romanian workers, some of the problems they are faced with and some of their aspirations for the future.

The Labour Code, which was adopted by the Parliament of Romania in December 2002, came into

force on 1 March 2003. This Code expresses the deepest form of tripartism and reflects the clear choice of all the social partners in Romania to progress in practical stages towards the values laid down in the Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization, in the directives of the European Union and in the good practice of modern democratic societies.

Although the Romanian Labour Code does promote such values, it has been and continues to be the target of destructive attacks which, unfortunately, are launched by some multinational companies which also operate in our country, and these companies in turn are associated with countries that have exemplary democratic systems. The Foreign Investors Council in Romania is leading this assault.

Working hours, workers' right to be protected against any abuses committed by their employer, the right to in-service vocational training and the right to the presumption of innocence are values which are being challenged by foreign investors, who are constantly putting pressure on the Government of Romania in order to prevent the ratification of the relevant sections of the Labour Code. The trade union confederations of Romania are opposed to these destructive procedures, as they informed international forums including the International Labour Organization, at the beginning of this year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the bodies of the ILO who have supported us in order to devise, defend and promote the Labour Code.

In our country, the right to collective action is guaranteed in the Constitution and in law. Unfortunately, the mechanisms laid down in the law on labour disputes and certain ambiguities which are still present in this law mean that exercising the right to strike is a lengthy and expensive exercise, rendering this law practically meaningless.

Once again we urge the Government of Romania to take all the necessary measures to speed up the amendment of this law in order to harmonize it with the provisions of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and with the Revised European Social Charter. The trade unions of Romania are ready to perform their constructive role as partners in this area as well. In the Romanian private sector and in the private sector where the employer is foreign, workers' rights to freedom of association are limited. There are not many situations in which one finds trade union members or organizations in these enterprises and often workers are intimidated if they express the desire to join trade unions. One finds similar situations in all sectors, but especially in the private banking system, insurance companies, and also in commerce.

Consequently, we would like to express our surprise, at the very least, that in the structure of the Romanian police, a sector which has been demilitarized for at least one year, not even a nucleus of a trade union has appeared. Romanian workers have proved that they represent an active constituency within the general United Nations system and the ILO system and they realize that they have to fulfil all the obligations which result from this. Romanian workers are also involved in a national effort to approach European standards in order to join the European Union according to the timetable which has been drawn up, in other words in 2007.

You can rely on us in all aspects of support and promotion of the ILO's values in the fight for sus-

tainable development and in combating poverty through work and in the fight for a peaceful world.

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*Original French: Mr. NDITABIRIYE (Minister of Labour and Public Service, Burundi)*

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I would like to start by extending my congratulations to Mr. Milton Ray Guevara on his election as President of the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference. I have no doubt that under his leadership the work of this session will be entirely successful.

In this speech I shall confine myself to a few thoughts on the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which was presented by Their Excellencies Mr. Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Mrs. Halonen, President of Finland.

When this report was presented to the Governing Body of the ILO in March 2004, I had the honour of addressing Mr. Mkapa, and pointing out to him that for him it was the start of another major task, the huge responsibility of convincing his peers and the leaders of this world to make a personal, sincere and durable commitment to bringing about effective change to the face of globalization. In fact, as the report clearly points out, globalization must be seen through the eyes of the men and women who judge it on its ability to provide them with opportunities for decent work and to meet essential needs, such as food, water, health, education, housing, as well as a viable environment for present and future generations.

It is felicitous today to note the commitment of President Mkapa and President Halonen to mobilizing the international community to ensure that it abides by and implements the conclusions and recommendations of this report.

I am certain that the international community will follow the conclusions and recommendations of this report, as they are so very relevant. The main question is whether they will actually promote their implementation.

Permit me to ask you all whether you really believe in this or whether you are just pretending to believe, in order to appease your consciences? I am not asking you to reply, but I would like you to try to put yourself in the place of the populations and countries which have been victims of globalization, to try and analyse their perception of certain values, such as solidarity, equality, human rights and human dignity, which are the common foundations of the aspirations of all humankind, on which the governance of globalization must be based.

For numerous workers in poor countries, the analysis is very simple and can be summed up in just a few thoughts that a poor worker might address to a rich worker: apply good governance to repay the debts that are stifling you thanks to the generosity of the rich countries. In case you haven't realised, this is what solidarity between poor countries and rich countries is. As far as equality is concerned, everyone gets what he or she deserves: prosperity for the rich, hardship for the poor.

If you are hungry and, moreover, there are too many diseases such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, etc., you are perfectly at liberty to die in the name of respect for human rights. All that anyone is asking you to do is to die with dignity. You may be suffering from a lack of national skills: Well you must invest in education and skills, and to help you with this noble but expensive task, we will organize

a brain drain and we will hire a charter plane to repatriate the illegal illiterate people.

You may find these statements somewhat shocking, but tell me how can man with a capital "M" accept that huge fortunes exist alongside total misery? How, in these conditions, can Man clear it with his conscience when he goes into churches, temples, synagogues and mosques to tell God that he loves Him and he loves his fellow men?

To my mind the face of globalization will not change if there is not some fundamental change in man. That, as I see it, is the moral dimension of globalization. Let us nonetheless remain optimistic.

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Mr. TILAHUN: (*Employers' delegate, Ethiopia*)

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It is a great honour for me to address this 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, on behalf of the Ethiopian Employers' Federation I wish to convey my congratulations to the President on his election.

On the issue of labour standards, the speed of economic, social and political transformation in Africa, which affects the lives of millions of our people, continues to be slow, and thus still requires the continued effort and attention of Africans and their supporters. Business has to flourish, people have to be employed and earning for us to talk about an improvement in labour standards. One area of focus: capacity building of employers' institutions, would enable them to enhance their skills in the area of their ability to transform the economy, and to undertake effective social dialogue with their strong social partners, including government.

Implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is part of the ILO Decent Work Agenda, which we committed ourselves to last year at this august Conference. But for us to provide decent work and implement the ILO Declaration in a sustainable manner, as employers we first need to be engaged in a sustainable economy that can withstand the impacts of globalization and free competition on an uneven playing field. As also pointed out last year, employers need the support of their social partners to maintain check and balance in the economy so they can freely compete globally. The support of the ILO on entrepreneurship development access – to the world economic market – and management skill upgrading programmes are some that my delegation wishes to underline in the context of effective economic management in developing countries, including my own country, Ethiopia.

Having realized this underlying fact, the Ethiopian Employers' Federation places considerable significance on maintaining international labour standards, as only labour makes a difference. The ILO Conventions and Recommendations have been the guiding principles at all stages of our programme when dealing with labour issues with social partners. One of the notable measures taken in Ethiopia is the issuance of a new Labour Proclamation No. (377/2003) which governs employment relations and establishes an effective labour administration system. The revision of the labour law is a major step towards ensuring harmonious industrial relations by providing mechanisms for resolving labour disputes and for the provision of minimum labour standards.

The lack of social protection is one of the core problems and affects over 90 per cent of our population. Except in the civil service and few private businesses, the majority of employers do not

businesses, the majority of employers do not have social protection schemes for their workers. The lack of social protection is unfortunately an integral part of our poverty. In this regard, though re-established very recently, our Federation is taking radical reform measures in line with the government development strategy, and has channelled its resources and energy into development activities with a view to achieving rapid economic growth and alleviating poverty.

Another equally important matter indicated in the Report of the Director-General is strengthening tripartism and dialogue. Social dialogue has been and will continue to be the most indispensable instrument in the progress of human civilization. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the Tenth African Regional Meeting, that was held in Ethiopia only last year, has helped a lot in promoting a smooth relationship between the social partners. We believe that the continuation of such Regional Meetings is a good platform from which to engage effective social dialogue.

Another important item placed on the agenda of this session of the Conference is the creation of decent employment opportunities for our people. This will remain a big challenge for the social partners in the developing world. Investors will need an attractive business environment and incentives to invest, and thereby for business to flourish, which is crucial for job creation and decent working conditions.

It is high time for all of us to join hands and work together on the winning formula to implement the strategies in the Report, the vision set by the ILO. I would like to express my Federation's firm commitment to advocating and implementing the strategies indicated in the Report. Let me once again thank the ILO for providing our Federation, with both technical and non-technical assistance and once again highlight the need for the ILO to continue supporting our Federation to enable us to discharge our responsibilities.

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Mr. MARICA (*Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, Suriname*)

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Let me start by congratulating the President upon his election to preside over this session of the Conference, and by thanking him for giving me the opportunity to address him and the other distinguished delegates at this session of the International Labour Conference.

Once again, as ILO members States, we are presented with a Report of the Director-General that gives us satisfaction in what the ILO has achieved so far. We are confident that the ILO will ultimately succeed in achieving the four strategic objectives set out by the Director-General.

As the Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment of Suriname, it gives me great pleasure to announce that Suriname is committed to implementing the strategic objectives in its national policy.

In this light, the ratification of three ILO instruments was just recently approved by Parliament, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which is one of the core labour standards concerning child labour.

The other two instruments approved for ratification are the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and the instrument for the amendment of the ILO Constitution.

In compliance with the strategic objective to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue, Suriname ratified the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). In general, principles regarding tripartism are very widely acknowledged and deeply respected in Surinamese society. Preparatory actions of the Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment have been successfully finalized by the establishment of tripartite consultation.

The Act proclaiming the long-awaited constitutional tripartite Social and Economic Council was recently adopted in Suriname. This Council will provide a forum enabling the three social partners to jointly advise the Government on the highest level on broad economic and social policy matters, and gain consensus on such matters, which can lead to national agreements between the three social partners.

In our efforts to create equal opportunities for men and women, to secure decent employment and enhance productivity, the Government of Suriname has joined the Programme for the Promotion of Management-Labour Cooperation executed by the ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean. In this regard, a successful workshop on productivity enhancement was conducted in April this year in Suriname in which all social partners participated. The recommendations that came out of this meeting are high on the agenda of the Government.

Looking at the agenda for this year's session of the International Labour Conference, I noticed that attention is given to migrant workers. Suriname is confronted with many challenges in terms of managing the flow of migrants. Suriname, as a sending,

transit and receiving country, is faced with the full spectrum of regular, irregular, skilled and unskilled migrant workers. I am pleased with this general discussion and I am looking forward to the development of a plan of action which will enable us to deal with this issue.

On behalf of the Government of Suriname, I once again renew our commitment to the principles of decent work proclaimed by the ILO, and the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work.

But allow me to state that although serious efforts are being made by the ILO and the international community to create decent work and eliminate poverty, these efforts will be worthless if the so-called benefits of globalization are not equally distributed. As you know, developing nations do not experience or enjoy those benefits. I therefore make use of this august assembly to call upon all nations that are in a position to positively influence this process to do so, since having equal benefits is the only sustainable way to resolve today's economic problems.

**RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR  
CONVENTIONS BY BELGIUM AND SWEDEN**

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*Original French:* The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

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I am pleased to announce to the Conference that on 9 June 2004, Belgium deposited the ratification instrument of the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174), and Sweden deposited the ratification instrument for the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184).

*(The sitting adjourned at 7.30 p.m.)*

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