



## **Eighth (special) sitting**

Wednesday, 9 June 2004, 3.45 p.m.

*President: Mr. Ray Guevara*

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. JOSÉ LUIS  
RODRÍGUEZ ZAPATERO, PRESIDENT OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN**

*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

It is a great honour for me to declare open this Eighth (Special) Sitting of the International Labour Conference and to welcome, on behalf of the Conference, His Excellency Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of the Government of Spain.

I shall now give the floor to the Secretary-General, Mr. Somavia, to welcome our distinguished guest.

*Original Spanish: The SECRETARY-GENERAL*

Your Excellency José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of the Conference, dear friends, the International Labour Organization is being paid a great honour this afternoon in being visited by a true gentleman, a gentleman who has based a political career on the respect of the values of others and on dialogue. He has accomplished this with great strength, a strength that lies in his deep belief in humanist values.

Mr. President, you have said, with pride, that you represent a generation of Spaniards who have grown up and been educated in freedom, for whom democracy is their mother tongue. The entire world recognizes that collective strength which has guided the difficult but natural transition of Spain from dictatorship to democracy. Here in the ILO we are extremely proud of having been able to accompany you in those difficult times when democracy was suppressed for your people.

In 1969, an ILO Study Group went to Spain to look at the application of labour legislation in the light of the principles of our Constitution. I would like to believe that this visit was useful and encouraged the emerging labour movement to organize and prepare for the day when it would be able to assume its responsibilities – once democracy has returned to the country.

We are very honoured to welcome at this august tripartite assembly a political leader who represents modernity but also the history and democratic values of a great European nation open to the world – which is Spain today.

The Spanish model, this complex mechanism of social dialogue and agreements that has brought about an equilibrium in social and economic policy, is a source of learning and inspiration for those of us here in the ILO. We are the international expres-

sion of tripartism and therefore I feel I must pay a tribute to those government leaders, leaders of business and trade union leaders who were able to build a consensus at a time when history made that so urgently necessary.

Spanish history has shown that it is possible to become a fully fledged member of the world economy and open up markets, while remaining concerned about social development and social issues. And this concern about social matters is – and always will be – a major task for us all.

Mr. President, in your statement when you assumed office, you recalled the values that had been handed down to you by your grandfather, and you reiterated that improving the social conditions of the most deprived groups in society would be one of the main priorities of your Government. It is for all these reasons that your address to us here today will be of such importance to all of us at a time when the ILO is dealing with issues relating to the social dimension of globalization.

At the ILO, we are trying to lay down the foundations for what we hope will be a worldwide consensus on how to achieve a fairer globalization which will offer opportunities to and provide decent work for all. This is the task facing us now and which will face us in the future; it represents a major challenge for world leadership at all levels – governments, international organizations, enterprises, trade unions, political parties, and society as a whole. The major challenge before us is to reconcile all these diverse interests in such a way as to build a shared and dignified future for all.

The ILO would like to support you in whatever you try to do at a national level, but we would also urge you devote your energy – which has also earned international respect – to the cause of a fairer globalization. I know this is an issue which is dear to your heart. You have shown that throughout your life, you have pursued dialogue with sincerity; you have sought to find solutions to problems with realism and you have upheld the values of dignity, decency and social justice at all times.

You have eight male ministers in your Government, eight female ministers – and that is a clear illustration of the fact that your words are not just words but based on action as well.

I, myself, am a Latin American, and that being so, I cannot but reiterate the major contribution which Spain, once freed of authoritarianism, made to the restoration of democracy in my region of the world. Many of us have experienced the dark night of dic-

tatorship before we returned to democracy but during that dictatorial period we were able to look to Spain as a source of hope and we received a great deal of support from our friends there in our fight to return democracy to our own countries.

We are very honoured that you are here this afternoon. We recognize in you one of the leaders of Europe, a Europe which is determined to move further down the road to globalization while protecting the social dimension, which is at the core of its existence; but also a Europe that does not forget that there are other parts of the world less fortunate, which require Europe's solidarity and support to move forward.

We are honoured to be the first international organization in the United Nations system that you have visited. Thank you for being with us today.

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*Original Spanish: His Excellency Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (President of the Government of Spain)*

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I would like to extend my congratulations to Mr. Ray Guevara, Secretary of State for Labour of the Dominican Republic, on his appointment to preside over the work of this 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would also like to thank Mr. Somavia for his kind words. I greet him today and I express my admiration for the way in which he is carrying out his office of Director-General of the International Labour Office.

This is the first time that, as President of the Government of Spain, I have taken the floor before an assembly belonging to the United Nations system.

I do so with a special feeling of emotion, only a few metres away from the Salle du Conseil, the symbol of the former League of Nations, where, donated to the Organization by Spain in 1937 and despite the war that was laying waste to my country at the time, are the maxims of Francisco de Vitoria and the frescos of by José María Sert, which were chosen to proclaim the supreme values of peace, justice, respect for international law and the defence of human dignity.

Coming here to talk about labour in a multilateral international organization provides me with an opportunity to express my political concerns in the light of the social effects of globalization, and, more generally, to talk about international governance. Discussing this in a United Nations body involves supporting a multilateral political vision of international relations over the temptations and the realities of unilateralism. The United Nations system opens the path to the institutionalization of international society in a way that goes beyond mere issues of power. And, in today's world, it is crucial that we reform and foster United Nations' activities and models of multilateral cooperation at the global level.

A global cosmopolitan view of international order inevitably involves seeing sovereignty as legitimate authority based on the respect of human rights and democratic values.

The alternative to unilateralism and to neoliberalism entails a more complex vision of global politics and the development of the world economy. Specifically, social advances should be made in parallel to the application, at the international level of the traditional principles of social democracy and by consolidating progress in international multilateral cooperation.

Accepting the role of the ILO in this new world that we live in means accepting the objective of a social dimension in international relations. This is the overriding objective of the twenty-first century. In the twentieth century, we achieved great advances in the area of human rights and we went on to consolidate and extend political and civil rights to peoples throughout the world. It is now time for the twenty-first century to be the century of social rights. It is social rights that provide the basis of a necessary balance to economic development: for development, for the liberalization of markets, for economic cooperation and for an ever-broader opening-up of world economies. For reform to be effective it has to take place in the framework of a global structure of sustainable development, and the most sustainable form of development is that which encompasses social rights and the defence of human dignity.

This Organization has a dual role to play. On the one hand, it sets international standards. On the other hand, it is also a forum for tripartite consultations among governments, trade unions and employers' organizations against the global backdrop of the international economy. This makes the ILO a key institution to provide the necessary social dimension to the global economy and international trade. Its experience over many years in international standards-related activities means that the International Labour Organization has a body of Conventions that establish frameworks of fundamental principles and rights, which are enshrined in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and this serves as a guarantee of that fundamental role.

The principles concerning the Fundamental rights: freedom of association, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination are crucial for a State to be able to participate in the international economy on the basis of social and economic conditions based on compliance with universally recognized principles.

For a European country such as Spain, and from a Government such as my own, which wishes, above all, to foster a strong European political plan as one that recognizes dialogue, union, peace and social cohesion, I would like to remind you all that the Council of the European Union has used the criteria of compliance with ILO social standards as a fundamental tool in evaluating whether or not it opens up to certain markets.

Europe understands that it is not only useful, but absolutely crucial, to apply social standards to globalization, and this shows just how important the ILO is. Striking a balance between market liberalization and the application of minimum social standards and development assistance is obviously not an easy task, but it is one that is necessary and that should be tackled without delay. Market liberalization that does not take the social effects of these processes into account would be as negative as establishing a new form of protectionism under the guise of social rights.

We cannot take an approach that seeks to raise artificially the social costs of developing countries, even under the politically correct cover of combating social dumping.

Labour relations systems need to be based on freedom of association and collective bargaining. We need systems where social costs are in propor-

tion to the economic situation of the country but also take into account the decisions of the social partners expressed through free negotiation.

The ILO is celebrating its 85th anniversary and, throughout this period, it has never set aside its two principal characteristics: to act as an instrument for world peace, and to do so through the fight for social justice.

In the past 85 years, the world has, however, changed. Our Organization has become universal in character and has left behind it the ideological divisions of the Cold War. But today we are faced with equally major challenges, particularly those that are linked to globalization and the liberalization of trade and universal respect of for human rights and the development of less developed countries.

Social values and aspirations, relations between citizens and States, and also relationships between various countries and regional blocks, are subject to conditions today that simply did not exist when this Organization was born and as it developed.

In the economic context, there have been radical changes in the multilateral situation and conditions. New technologies and scientific progress are now driving the world's economy. They have condensed time and space, they have revolutionized trade and they have cast doubt upon certain social achievements. Furthermore, governments and public authorities have been obliged to revise their role.

The globalization of trade, although full of development possibilities, paradoxically today takes us back to the position we were in 85 years ago, in that it confronts us with new forms of what long ago used to be termed "the social question".

Poverty is gaining ground and this must be repealed; it mainly affects women in all regions of the world.

The disgraceful exploitation of child workers is, unfortunately, a topical issue (especially in certain regions of our planet) which should trigger a collective revolt against such a contemptible practice. The dominant themes of the last decade have been sustainable development and, in particular, environmental protection.

Despite all these changes, the ILO has lucidly, determinedly faced up to this trend in the United Nations system and it is consolidating new methods for optimizing the role of international tripartism in the gradual restoration of rights at work. At this point, I would like to make special mention of two outstanding initiatives: the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and, the launching of a far-reaching international debate on the social dimension of globalization.

I think that the political points I touched upon a few minutes ago dovetail perfectly with the decision taken in 2001 by the ILO's Governing Body to establish a Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. This Commission's report and the debate which began on its conclusions a couple of days ago, on 7 June, in this Conference inspire us with hope that we can count on having some standards whereby we can further defend our position.

I believe that the report of the World Commission provides us with some very useful ideas on how to develop a strategy.

First, it is important to build a social dimension of globalization by strengthening systems of good governance and this task will be the LEITMOTIF of international discussions over the next few years.

My thoughts on the globalization of the economy and its social impact are predicated on the belief that "decent work" must become a major global objective and not just a goal of the International Labour Organization

I also believe that the ILO could heed the call of the Commission to improve participation in and the accountability of the multilateral system by mobilizing tripartite partners all over the world, thereby ensuring that we contribute fully to building a social dimension of globalization.

We want, we advocate, a process of globalization which does have a social dimension based on shared universal values and respect for human rights and human dignity, a fair globalization, an inclusive globalization which is governed democratically and provides opportunities and tangible benefits for all countries and all persons throughout the world.

Attention has often been focused on solely endeavouring to ensure that markets operate effectively, but very little attention has been paid to what globalization means for individuals, families, local communities or identities, or to the possibilities and risks it poses to attaining greater gender equality in the world. It is, however, necessary to remember that the potential benefits from the current process of globalization are enormous. It can promote open societies and economies. It offers more opportunities, freer trade in goods and wider exchanges of ideas, knowledge, culture and persons and it reflects humanity's aspiration to work together in order to build a fairer world.

This form of globalization not only presupposes international flows of capital assets and funds, although these are the factors which move fastest, frequently without control, social accountability or democratic governance; it also presupposes international flows of the labour factor. This is where immigration comes into play. Immigration, like other elements of globalizations, implies challenges and opportunities. There is no doubt that if we are to derive greater benefit from these opportunities and mitigate their possible costs, migratory movements will have to be channelled and managed according to the receptive capacity and the needs of the labour market at a given time in the county of destination, so that migrants are offered decent working conditions complying with the international labour standards.

Immigration should be seen as an opportunity for host countries, which an efficient, go-ahead government must turn into growth and progress.

I would like now to turn my thoughts, to three aspects of globalization: international financial flows, transnational business activities and the development of information and communication technologies.

The increasing power of transnational enterprises, international financial flows and the revolution in information and communication technologies have certainly created unprecedented development opportunities, but they have not yet reached many regions of the world. Many regions watch from the sidelines as others benefit from the changes taking place.

It has been calculated that the goods and services produced throughout the world over the last 100 years, and principally in the last 50 years, are more than humanity has produced since the beginning of history. Our potential is enormous but a comparison of realities today yields some shocking findings:

some countries are immensely rich while others are virtually beggars. One-sixth of the world's population lives in abject poverty, not even knowing whether they will have anything to eat the next day. Many people earn scarcely a dollar a day, yet there are countries whose per capita income is US\$30,000, or US\$82 a day.

I do not think that the needs of free enterprise force us to choose between economic efficiency and social justice. No such dilemma exists. There are many examples of policies that manage to combine both, but, without a shadow of doubt, the area of education speaks volumes here. An education system that includes the teaching of languages and new technologies and promotes equal opportunities at the same time as it enhances competitiveness and the potential for growth, results in a fairer, more productive society.

Our challenge, and this is something we are fully aware of in Europe, is not to defend a model that may require changes. We need to find effective answers and we need to adapt labour legislation, institutions, social dialogue practices and collective bargaining to the demands of an economic competitiveness in which innovation and knowledge reign supreme.

I am firmly convinced that the answer to such a complex challenge calls for a dedicated effort in social dialogue on a tripartite basis. This requires a certain amount of daring and a willingness to compromise. Without this willingness for dialogue, which is at the heart of this Organization, and without an interaction of responsibilities between the institutional protagonists in political and social life, without this awareness that the collective good and the notion of public service must prevail over individual interests and strategies, I believe that we will significantly reduce the probability of being able to contribute to building truly cohesive societies.

We must also not forget that new players are playing an increasingly important role on the international scene – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in particular. The ILO, with its tripartite tradition, its vast experience and its ability to understand day-to-day reality must take upon itself the role of the pioneer and, in particular, it must develop new ideas and redefine its role within the international community.

Intergovernmental cooperation needs to take place in common accord with the new players in the world economy in various sectors, particularly with the WTO, the Bretton Woods institutions and the whole United Nations family.

As regards the WTO, there is a certain synergy between the objectives of the multilateral trade system and those of the ILO. The opening up of trade has been a powerful means of economic growth and prosperity. The improvement of living standards throughout the world constitutes an important contribution to social progress.

Liberalization does lead to job creation, and all in all, generates advantages for the population at large. However, there are also negative effects for many directly involved stakeholders. It is therefore up to the State and international organizations to help these individuals with specific measures. The World Employment Report 1998 showed that those countries that are most open to international trade also have highly developed models of social redistribution.

But we cannot just leave it to the States to act individually. We should also globalize our response – the social response to globalization. We need to ensure effective cooperation between the WTO and the ILO. This rapprochement should enable us to develop an open discussion on the common ground between trade and international labour standards: new rules, extended rights, social guarantees – in short, dignity for workers all over the world

Furthermore, we require instruments which enable us better to use our knowledge. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up is one of these, because it promotes this activity.

Our ultimate objective is to assure each country that respect for fundamental social standards is a comparative advantage that testifies that the national economy is working effectively and that constitutes a decisive step to combining economic policy with social policy.

The international community must respond more effectively to these questions than it did during the Great Depression. It can do so with the considerable skills of the international organizations and the growing moral authority of organizations such as the ILO, which is in a position to provide the right answer to our question

Spain's relationship with the ILO is a long one. Of the past, I would like to recall the contribution of the ILO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in restoring the freedom of association that was suppressed by the Franco Government. A decisive part in re-establishing the freedom of association that the dictatorship crushed was played by a person who is well known in the Organization: Francisco Largo Caballero, the Minister of Labour of the Second Republic, whom I would like to honour today.

Of the present, I would like to recall our commitment to the Organization, expressed by the ratification of and compliance with Conventions and by the development of the many forms of cooperation that I propose to broaden and extend.

The future of the ILO and its role in a new world order that fosters the social dimension of globalization, social rights in the twenty-first century, as I have already stated at length today, is a key aspect of my political vision of international affairs. I would therefore like, once again, to express my thanks to this noble institution for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this vital discussion.

I would like to devote my last word to expressing my solidarity and to ask for your support. As you all know, the terrorist attacks in Madrid on 11 March resulted in a tragic loss of human lives. Recently, the Spanish Government decided to express its recognition to the victims as workers, because we feel that they were all united by the fact that, in one way or another, they were working for society. It is for all of these victims of terrorism whose working lives were cut short that I crave the recognition and solidarity of the participants in this session of the International Labour Conference. Recognition and solidarity, I would extend to all those who are suffering from the effects of violence, poverty and war, especially the citizens of Iraq. Recognition and solidarity must go hand in hand with a commitment from all of us, from all delegations, from all government representatives, from all employers' and workers' organizations, a commitment to the principles of freedom and equality among all human

beings, a commitment to end war and terrorism, a commitment to human dignity and the safeguarding of life and limb.

I am saying this at the International Labour Organization, an institution, whose purpose it is, as part of the United Nations system, to send out a clarion call for the strengthening of a universal vision of human civilization.

Because an institution like this which knows no borders between different languages, cultures or peoples, an organization united around one of the most precious rights which gives dignity to the human being, in other words work, represents a call to overcome differences. May dialogue which undoubtedly is a working tool of this organization be the main source of inspiration for a new world order. Dialogue emanates from reason and reason is always based on ethical principles and values of fellowship. Where reason and dialogue reign, where a forum is built, rights will always be improved, the lot of the most humble will be improved and there will always be a readiness to acknowledge that improvements can obviously always be made to the history of humanity, given our experiences in the twentieth century and the great suffering of so many people.

In the former building of the International Labour Organization which today is the headquarters of the World Trade Organization there used to be an inscription which said "He who wants peace, paves the way to justice." And I believe that this is the best rule for the ILO and for all of us to follow and the best way to express our collective commitment.

I represent a government and a country which is committed to defending the rights and dignity of workers throughout the world. I represent a government and a country which has as its overriding objective to bring peace and solidarity to the world. I represent a government and a country which believes in the United Nations, which believes in the ILO, which will do its utmost and which will display its ability to believe in utopia in order to strengthen the United Nations, a shared view of the world and workers' rights in all four corners of the

world, since we are convinced that by doing so we will leave a legacy of great dignity on earth and of far-reaching improvements in the twenty-first century.

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*Original Spanish:* The PRESIDENT

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I thank the President of Spain, Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero for that address which was permeated by a desire for peace and social justice. We know that he has a very, very heavy agenda and an extremely tight schedule and that he has only been able to spare one or two hours to come to Geneva and to address this Conference.

On behalf of all the delegates here at this 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to express our very deep gratitude, not only for your splendid address, but also for the effort which you made in order to find the time to come and address this Conference and honour us with your presence. I am certain that I am expressing the feeling of all the delegates attending this Conference when I say that we believe that the effort you made to come here this afternoon is an eloquent illustration of the commitment of Spain as a country and of yourself, as the President, to the ideals of the International Labour Organization.

As a Dominican and as a Latin American, I am particularly proud that we have been able to have you as a guest this afternoon and that I was here as President of this Conference.

Spain is not only the mother country of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America; it is also an example of tolerance; an example of democracy; an example of solidarity, of virtue and of dignity. And every country of the Spanish-speaking Latin America has it as a model. It will, I hope now, be our voice in the European Union to thank you for your generosity in sparing the time to come here. Thank you for your address, many, many thanks and could I ask all delegates once again to applaud our distinguished guest before he leaves.

*(The Conference adjourned at 4.30 p.m.)*

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