



# World Day Against CHILD LABOUR

## 12 JUNE 2015



International  
Labour  
Organization

### Report of the High-level Panel Discussion held on World Day against Child Labour

(Geneva, 12 June 2015 - 13.00 – 14.45)



To mark the World Day Against Child Labour 2015, a high-level panel discussion took place in the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room at the Palais des Nations. The theme of the World Day was “**No to child labour, yes to quality education**”. The discussion was opened by the ILO Director-General, Mr. Guy Ryder, and involved the following guests:

**Mr. Kailash Satyarthi**, Co-winner of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for his work on children’s rights

**Ms. Lorena Castillo de Varela**, First Lady of Panama

**Mr. Alfonso Navarrete Prida**, Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico

**Mr. Salissou Ada**, Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Security, Niger

**Ms. Jacqueline Mugo**, member of the ILO Governing Body and Executive Director of the Federation of Kenyan Employers

**Ms. Sharan Burrow**, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation

The discussion was moderated by **Ms. Conny Czymoch**, an international moderator and journalist.

**Ms. Czymoch** welcomed participants and introduced the guest speakers. She acknowledged the presence of H.E. Mr Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez, President of the Republic of Panama. In introducing the panel discussion, she referred to the twitter feed displaying tweets in support of World Day, noting that **Malala Yousafzi**, co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize with Kailash Satyarthi, had tweeted “How to free 170 million children from child labour?” Ms. Czymoch remarked that no-one could oppose “No to child labour, yes to quality education”. The real question is – how fast can we achieve this? She said it’s like the finishing line of a marathon towards which everyone in the room was running. She put to the ILO Director-General the question – just how can we keep up the speed in this marathon?

**Mr. Guy Ryder** welcomed everyone to the event, remarking that he had never seen quite so many people come to celebrate the World Day Against Child Labour event in Geneva. The Human Rights Council room in which the event was being held is rich in symbolism. The right to be free from child labour is a human right, and human rights lie at the core of the ILO’s work. The fact that 168 million children are still in child labour gave us 168 million reasons to be present. But this number has decreased by one third since the start of the century, demonstrating that what we are doing is working, that we really can make a difference, but we have to do still more and better. The World Day theme this year, Mr. Ryder explained, is the role of education, which must offer a credible alternative to child labour. Too often, schools are too costly, too far away, or offer irrelevant curricula and poor quality jobs for teachers. 1.7 million more teachers are needed. Teachers must receive proper training, be respected and be given decent conditions of work. Poverty must not be allowed to breed resignation to and acceptance of child labour. A key challenge in the post-2015 era, he argued, is to pursue an integrated approach, which embraces development policy, decent work, social protection and quality education. This approach will guide the ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) for the years ahead. He emphasized the ILO’s commitment to continue to support constituents in their efforts to advocate for the right policy choices and action, and called on the audience to renew its support for a reinvigorated IPEC, to set out to achieve together the goal of a world without child labour.

Asked about his efforts to secure inclusion of the elimination of child labour in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and what drives his sense of urgency with regard to this goal, **Mr. Kailash Satyarthi** stated that it is a moral obligation to act now. Each child counts and cannot wait. He referred to a school visit in Geneva earlier in the day when he had related to the students his recent conversation with a child working on a cocoa farm in Côte d’Ivoire, who had never tasted chocolate and said “it is too late for me”, and with children rescued from child labour in Colombia and India who, when told they could go to school, replied “it is too late.” He questioned why children are working when hundreds of millions of adults cannot get jobs. He emphasised how quality education for all children is vital for sustainable development and the knowledge economy. He stated that, as education and child labour are closely interlinked, it is imperative to fight on both fronts simultaneously and to ensure that strong language on child labour, forced labour and education is included in the SDGs. He stated his conviction that sustainability is based on 4 “Ps” – people, planet, prosperity and peace – and concluded by saying that we must make sure that all children have access to education and that these 4 “Ps” are respected.

Asked about Panama’s experience in eliminating child labour, **Ms. Lorena Castillo de Varela** stated that the progress was mainly due to the government, workers and employers working together in a tripartite alliance. She explained that there are places in rural areas where children have to walk four or more hours to get to school. She stated that the Government of Panama has implemented programmes to provide breakfast and lunch to children in these schools. She explained that the Government relies on the information provided by teachers and religious leaders to identify the children who are working. Many children work in coffee plantations and move from one farm to another. These children also cross the border into Costa Rica, which makes it very difficult to track them. Ms. Castillo de Varela highlighted the importance of education in eliminating poverty, stating that “one child denied education equals one family unable to escape poverty”. She underlined the importance of teaching children about their rights. She closed by saying that with the world facing wars and many other social and political problems, it is unacceptable to have schools that are not up to standard. Now is the time to stop child labour. It is never too late.

During the Conference, the Government of Mexico had announced ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 on minimum age and **Mr. Alfonso Navarrete Prida** was asked about the steps being taken in his country to ensure children stay in school and to combat poverty. Mr. Navarrete Prida stated that, in Latin America, child labour exists wherever poverty exists. He noted that child labour is a multi-faceted issue which requires a multi-

sectoral policy response. He spoke about the reforms implemented by the Government over the past two years, including reforms oriented towards increased productivity and the protection of vulnerable groups, including children; and education reforms to open schools twice a day and move them closer to workplaces, as well as scholarships and programmes to improve living conditions for families. He noted that labour inspectors now have access not only to workplaces but also to private homes, so that they can better identify where children are working and why. Thanks to these reforms, in the past two years child labour had decreased from 3 million to 2.5 million and he stated his conviction that these reforms will help the country grow at a sustainable rate. However he concluded by stating that Mexico still has 2.5 million reasons to continue to work towards the elimination of child labour.

**Ms. Jaqueline Mugo** was asked about how Kenyan employers were persuaded to “adopt” schools. She explained that employers have been working with the government and workers’ organizations for the eradication of child labour since the very beginning of IPEC. The type of work has evolved over time, and now the legal and policy framework is in place. But 1 million children were still out of school. Employers saw their role as supporting government efforts. They wanted to promote corporate social responsibility and give back to society. It was against this background the Federation of Kenyan Employers so started the “Adopt a School” programme. Employers’ support for schools was an investment in social capital which also helped to build the skills that business needs to boost productivity. She said the programme has been a great success, focusing on disadvantaged communities in isolated arid and semi-arid areas, under the umbrella of IPEC’s “Tackle” project. Ms. Mugo cited two examples where employers had restored or created new schools, taking on the building infrastructure, text books, income-generating activities for families such as milk production, training on child rights, school feeding programmes and other activities. The work enabled employers also to engage with the local leadership on relevant issues, including ensuring that any light work by children is undertaken outside school hours. She expressed her pleasure that the work by the Kenyan employers was being recognised.

Responding to a question on ITUC’s stance on child labour and quality education, **Ms. Sharon Burrow** stated that we know what works, and that freedom from child labour and the right to education are fundamental human rights. She questioned why, in 2015, we still do not have universal public education for all; why, when child labour is outlawed, does it still exist around the world; why, when it would amount to just a few percentage points of GDP, we cannot provide social protection for all; and why do adults still lack access to decent work. Ms. Burrow underlined that these are also the ITUC’s policy prescriptions and that, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they form the basis of a humane society. Ms. Burrow emphasised the need for greater urgency to address child slavery and child marriage which represents another significant barrier to education. She stated that while the MDGs took us a big step forward, the SDGs have now opened up a global consultation process. She expressed her agreement with Kailash Satyarthi on the SDG target on child labour and underlined the need for decent work and a social protection floor to make this goal become a reality. She stated her conviction that, if the world has the will to achieve these goals, then it can be done. She urged those present to call for all children to be free from child labour, to have access to school and for their parents to have decent work – it is the shared responsibility of us all.

The **Ambassador of Norway, H.E. Steffen Kongstad**, was the first participant to take the floor. He started by highlighting that the education sector faces challenging times; more girls need to be in school, and 250 million children leave school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. Hence, education is Norway’s top development priority. A conference to be hosted in July will focus on two main outcomes: establishing a commission on financing for education, and developing a set of principles, and possibly a fund, for education in crisis and conflict situations. Nearly 40 countries have signed a Declaration under which they agree to apply new Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. He supported the ILO’s efforts to provide a specific focus on the relationship between child labour and education.

The **Ambassador of Brazil, H.E. Regina Dunlop** stated that Brazil has put in place a number of measures to fight child labour, including social protection programmes to enable parents to have adequate incomes and avoid resorting to child labour as well as education programmes. She recalled the III Global Child Labour Outcome Document which calls for measures to promote decent work and the full and productive employment of adults, and measures to increase access to free, compulsory education. However she wondered why, when families have adequate incomes, child labour sometimes persists?

A **representative of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)** stated that while Latin America aims to be the first region free of child labour, it is experiencing a slowdown in the rate of reduction. The representative referred to the regional initiative to tackle child labour, agreed by Latin American and Caribbean countries, which would promote the integration of child labour issues in policies on agriculture, social protection, etc. The representative asked the panellists what steps are needed to tackle child labour through quality education, when many children are both working and going to school.

A **representative of the U.S. government** took the opportunity to announce the intention of his government to award two new grants – the first was a USD 9.8 million grant to the ILO to combat forced labour, including children of families in forced labour, through action at national and global level; the second was a USD 10 million award for impact evaluations to understand better the most effective ways to eliminate child and forced labour. He raised the important question of how to get children interested in attending school, especially those who had no familiarity with education; what are the best strategies to incentivize education and make it relevant to children’s needs and circumstances?

In response to the questions raised, **Mr. Alfonso Navarrete Prida**, stated that education is key as without it, child labour will increase. He noted that data from ECLAC and UNICEF has shown that child labour is not the solution to households’ economic problems; rather, it creates long-term problems. He called for a holistic policy response, combining labour and education reforms with finance and tax reforms - the latter being key to generate the revenues needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty and child labour. He called for policy support to small enterprises, including credit and training. He thanked the ILO for the support and guidance provided in these areas, including by sharing good practices from other countries.

**Ms. Lorena Castillo de Varela** stated her belief that Latin American countries have much in common and practices that have been adopted in some countries can be shared and applied in others. She noted that, in Panama, child labour had declined from 50,000 to 26,000 which was made possible by involving all sectors of society, including the private sector and NGOs. She referred to the importance of empowering individuals to become agents of change and to find their own solutions to their problems.

When asked about the investment needed in education, **Mr. Kailash Satyarthi** stated that an additional 22 billion dollars annual expenditure would enable all children to go to school, the equivalent of just four and a half days of global military expenditure. He stated that only 4 per cent of total ODA goes to education for children and less than 1 per cent of humanitarian aid. He noted that many governments spend only between 1 and 3 per cent of GDP on education and called for education to be a much higher priority in development agendas and budgets. Mr. Satyarthi referred to the success of “child-friendly villages” piloted in India and in Nepal, for which four conditions must be met: 1) the withdrawal of all children from child labour; 2) the enrolment of all children in school; 3) the creation of an elected, inclusive children’s parliament; and 4) the recognition by the local elected leadership of the children’s parliament, so that the children’s and village parliaments work hand in hand. This model could be widely replicated and scaled up, as children are the best judges of their own needs and priorities. He emphasised the importance of community and children’s participation in tackling child labour.

**Ms. Corinne Vargha** then announced the launch of the Forced Labour Protocol ratification campaign: “50 for Freedom”. She noted that the Protocol had been adopted nearly a year ago to the day: there could be no better day, and no better witnesses than those present, to launch the campaign. The headline campaign goal is that 50 countries ratify the Protocol within the next three years. She referred to the testimonies given today, which underlined why it is so important - for the 5.5 million children and 21 million adults in forced labour - to tackle the problem urgently and effectively. Ms. Vargha noted that many of those in the room had already signed the board in support of the campaign, which would be unveiled shortly. She acknowledged the first ratification of the Protocol by the Government of Niger, and thanked Mr. Salissou Ada for joining the campaign launch.

**Mr. Salissou Ada** recalled that both forced labour and child labour are social evils that must be tackled. Referring to Niger’s Constitution, he stated that fighting forced labour is a priority for the Government. He pointed to the fact that certain forms of slavery, including in domestic servitude, prostitution and child begging, still exist in Niger and that the Government is working to tackle the problem. He stated that the Penal Code criminalises human trafficking and forced labour. Article 337 sets out the penalties for those who violate

the law. Niger set up a National Commission to tackle the remnants of forced labour and discrimination in 2006, as well as a national coordination body and national agency to fight human trafficking in 2012. The ratification of the Forced Labour Protocol underlined the Government's commitment to tackle these problems and it is pleased to be the very first to ratify the Protocol. He set out the Government's next steps in this regard, including the launch of an awareness raising campaign and a tripartite unit to tackle the worst forms of child labour. He concluded by stating that the ratification of the Protocol will reinforce what the Government has already been doing for many years to tackle the problem.

Asked by the moderator how easy or difficult was it, from an employer's perspective, to reach children in forced labour, **Ms. Jaqueline Mugo** responded that child labour and forced labour are often hidden away in supply chains. Employers have a responsibility to undertake due diligence and identify areas of risk, especially with third party contractors, and be fully aware of what is happening in their business. No employer would support forced labour anywhere in their business; they apply careful rules to make sure this does not happen. She looked forward to working together to realise fully the aspirations and spirit of the Forced Labour Protocol.

Regarding the ITUC's campaign on forced labour and workers' rights, **Ms. Sharon Burrow** referred to the strong agreement that exists between the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the ITUC on what needs to be done to protect these most vulnerable workers. She did not agree that these workers are always invisible. She had been shocked herself not only to see so many workers in forced labour under very oppressive conditions but also to discover that they are contributing to mainstream companies. She stated that the problem does not exist only at the extreme end of supply chains - it happens also where we can clearly see it. She said she had three requests – 1) for governments to ratify the Forced Labour Protocol and transpose it into national law; 2) for corporations not to do business or invest in countries where modern day slavery exists; 3) and finally, for everyone not to ignore the "invisible" workers: women who are enslaved in domestic work and who, when they do manage to get their case to court, are victimised rather than assisted. She declared that none of us shares a value set in which this is acceptable, and urged for much more and urgent action to tackle this problem.

The Moderator asked what must be done to reach those child labourers who are never seen at all. **Mr. Satyarthi** drew the audience's attention to one of the most invisible forms of modern day slavery, which is the large and growing scale of trafficking of girls from rural to urban areas, driven by a feudalistic mind-set. Such slavery creates inter-generational poverty and it is unacceptable that this is allowed to co-exist with civilization. He said that we know now how to eliminate such practices; we must lose no time in scaling up the good examples that are out there.

**Ms. Conny Czymoch**, gave the floor to the ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, to "take away the battle cry", with a quote from a children's film:

*"It started out as a feeling,  
Which then grew into a hope.  
Which then turned into a quiet thought, which then turned into a quiet word.  
And then that word grew louder and louder, til it was a battle cry..."*

**Mr. Guy Ryder** stated that this battle cry is best summed up in a tweet received from a child, which read "Don't remember us just for today." He urged all present to keep with them the sense of urgency, referred to by many today, and as they leave the room to remember the 168 million children in child labour. He emphasised that we must all feel angry and indignant about child labour and forced labour, indignant about a global system in which 200 million adults are unemployed while 168 million children are in child labour. He stated that we have been given clear ideas as to how to make change happen, referring to the need for alliances, both of organizations and of policy. He underlined the need to mobilise resources for IPEC and around the Sustainable Development Goals, expressing his thanks to the United States government for the two new grants which they had announced. He concluded by saying that just as those who worked to abolish the slave trade, and not those who stood aside and did nothing, are remembered now, so in the future will be remembered those leaders who most actively fight child labour and forced labour today.

### **“50 for Freedom” Forced Labour Protocol ratification campaign**

During the period of the International Labour Conference more than 2000 delegates and observers had signed a board indicating support for the ILO’s “50 for Freedom” campaign. At the conclusion of the discussion members of the Panel joined the ILO Director-General in formally unveiling the board and launching the ratification campaign.

### **Unveiling of “50 for Freedom” Forced Labour Protocol ratification campaign board**

