

**90th Anniversary Exhibition
at the United Nations
New York**

Opening Statement

29 October 2009

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends...

Ninety-years ago, at a time of profound economic and social upheaval, the world community was united in a common purpose: a deep commitment to peace and social justice.

Those men and women took bold and politically challenging steps to create the global institutions that we are part of today. This unique experiment in the history of humankind created the forums that gave voice to the voiceless so that all could pursue dreams of Peace... Dignity... Justice... Opportunity... Equality...

Today we stand at the threshold of another crisis that demands working together on new global policy instruments to secure durable social justice. We commend the UN General Assembly for having designated February 20 as the World Day of Social Justice thereby offering an important platform for unified approaches.

At the ILO, we have not remained inactive. In June 2008, before the global financial crisis, the International labour Conference, composed of representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations

from 182 member States, adopted the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. This landmark Declaration expresses the contemporary vision of the ILO's mandate in the era of globalization. It stresses the vital need for a strong social dimension to globalization in achieving improved and fair outcomes to all. It states in powerful terms that the quest for social justice, which is the very foundation of the ILO, is at the heart of a greener, fairer and more sustainable globalization.

In June this year, our Conference has adopted a Global Jobs Pact. This global policy instrument addresses the social and employment impact of the international financial and economic crisis. It promotes a productive recovery centred on investments, employment and social protection. The objective of the Pact is to provide an internationally agreed basis for putting quality jobs at the heart of the Recovery.

The League of Nations and the International Labour Organization were born of ideals rooted in our sense of humanity that are as strong and as invaluable today as they were then. The spirit of the League lives on in the strength that is the United Nations, and the ILO – through its tripartite structure - stands firmly beside its sister in solidarity to creating a more just and fair world for all women and men.

Dear Friends,

Throughout the 20th and now into the 21th century, the ILO has engaged in setting standards for the treatment and well-being of workers including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, equality of opportunity and non discrimination, freedom from forced labour and from child labour and safe and healthy work.

However, it must be recognised, that even as we gather here today to celebrate our joint 90 years of advancement in the world of work, we face many new and complex challenges. The alarmingly rapid rise in unemployment, the increasingly difficult operating environment for small and medium-scale enterprises, the loss of livelihoods by so many resulting in the growth of inequality, poverty and insecurity, is politically and socially unsustainable.

For people worldwide, and in particular for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, the crisis will not be perceived as receding until they get a decent job and a minimum floor of social protection.. The Members States and the United Nations family of agencies, funds and programmes are in a position to help steer a recovery that responds to those aspirations

The assertion in our Constitution that “...universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice”, resonates in the UN Charter’s determination “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

We look forward to continue this journey together and invite you to join us in preparing for a greener, more balanced, fairer and sustainable global future.

Thank you.