



**Remarks by Juan Somavia
Director-General of the International Labour Office
to introduce
H.E. Benjamin W. Mkapa
President of the United Republic of Tanzania
to the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization
at the 289th Session of the Governing Body of the ILO
(Geneva, 24 March 2004)**

President Mkapa,
Dear Friends,

This morning we begin a long anticipated discussion of the [Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization](#). We will analyse its approach and recommendations and start thinking about its significance for the ILO.

It raises many challenges for our institution. Maybe the most important one is the proposal that decent work, bringing together our four strategic objectives of rights, employment, protection and dialogue, should become a global goal – not just an ILO goal.

The idea of the Commission was born here with you—and its Report offers a rich source for inspiration, dialogue and, indeed, action at the national and international level for many actors of our emerging global community.

In terms of ILO action, its follow-up is in your hands on the basis of the discussions at the International Labour Conference next June. I will present to the ILC my views on the implications of the Commission's Report for the ILO. Your analysis these next two days will be of great importance in preparing my communication.

Within the Governing Body, avenues for decision or follow-up action can be found in at least three spaces; the Strategic Policy Framework, the present and future programme and budget, and the policy discussion and action through this Working Party.

I can think of no better way to launch our discussion than with our guest, His Excellency President Benjamin Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania, the first African Head of State to address the Governing Body.

Mr. President, thank you for your courage. It wasn't easy to accept the decision to Co-Chair the World Commission. Indeed, it was a political risk. Success was hardly assured given the nature of the difficulty and the complexity of the issue.

Thank you for your dedication. For President Mkapa, this was hardly a ceremonial post. You were always there – through long hours, tense discussions, fundamental issues.

President Mkapa is a bridge-builder. He finds the common ground to better the life of people. And, in truth, his people are not simply those of Tanzania or even Africa. He speaks for the excluded and marginalized everywhere. He speaks for fairness, democracy, peace and social justice. That was again demonstrated in his powerful address on child labour during the 2001 International Labour Conference.

His straightforward style is grounded in wisdom, intellectual energy and a common-sense understanding of people's lives, their struggles, their hopes. That passion to connect, communicate and convince perhaps reflects his previous life as an inquiring journalist. And that ability to connect with the concerns of individual women, men and children is reflected in so many ways.

Mr. President, Africa is leading us in a new direction. The African Union has agreed to convene a first-of-its-kind Presidential Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation later this year. The decision is recognition at the highest political level that without jobs, efforts to reduce poverty won't succeed.

This echoes the Commission's Report, which puts its trust in dialogue, reinforces tripartism, and establishes decent work as a global goal.

In the end, the Report tests the capacity of every international organization to rethink its role for the twenty-first century. The ILO should welcome that challenge.

President Mkapa once said: "Our world is composed of givers and takers. The takers may eat better. But the givers sleep better."

Perhaps we gave him a few sleepless nights. But we rested easier knowing that, together with President Halonen, we had leaders with the courage and vision to guide our Commission on the right course.

President Mkapa, we are honoured to welcome you here today to officially present the Commission's Report.