



**Message by Juan Somavia
Director-General of the International Labour Office
on the occasion of the
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
(17 October 2005)**

The distressing truth is that progress to reduce world poverty has been agonizingly slow. Apart from some hopeful signs, not enough has been done to advance dignity through decent work and developing viable, job-producing enterprises. We must rethink and retool economic and social policies aimed at halving world poverty by 2015.

The key to eradicating poverty is seeing the challenge through the eyes of people. Regardless of culture, community, or context, people the world over are seeking a fair chance at a decent job. This requires job creation, competitive enterprises, respect for core labour standards, affordable social protection and social dialogue between workers and employers, through respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The biggest failure of the current model of globalization is that, in too many places, it is not producing the level of work families need to achieve a decent quality of life in their own communities.

In the last ten years, official unemployment has grown by more than 25 per cent. In the next ten years, we will need to create about 40 million jobs annually simply to keep up with the growth of the global labour force. The task is particularly great for young people who represent almost half of the global unemployed.

We can do better and the global community recently took a significant step in the right direction at September's United Nations World Summit in New York. Over 150 Heads of State and Government unanimously stated that they "strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals." This represents a global commitment at the highest political level to move forward on job creation.

Moving decent work up the global priority list demands new public-private partnerships and much better policy coherence and coordination at every level—local, national, regional and international. The ILO's tripartite constituents consider that it is essential to work together on a positive agenda for balanced, sound, and coherent socio-economic policies that generate good quality jobs and competitive enterprises. This will lead to greater security and a better future for all.

It is possible and within our reach. To get there, we need to summon the national will to reach the necessary agreements as a matter of overriding national interest beyond the fray of day-to-day politics.
