



**Message by Juan Somavia
Director-General of the International Labour Office
On the occasion of the
International Day of the World's Indigenous People**

9 August 2009

On this Day the ILO reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and realization of the rights of indigenous peoples.

There has been much progress. Still, many challenges remain. The present global economic crisis and the attendant threats of increased and prolonged unemployment and underemployment, poverty and inequality, call for even greater vigilance with respect to the situation of indigenous peoples. They commonly face discrimination in employment and occupation, are deprived of the means to pursue traditional occupations and livelihoods and find only limited alternatives open to them.

Targeted action is necessary to ensure the inclusion of indigenous and tribal peoples in a productive and people-centred recovery. This year the ILO's International Labour Conference adopted a Global Jobs Pact. It proposes a balanced and realistic set of policy measures to respond to the crisis while contributing to economic, social and environmental sustainability. Founded on the Decent Work Agenda, the Pact is centred on employment and social protection while also highlighting the indispensable role of fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue in securing an inclusive recovery. These measures will also necessarily include and benefit indigenous peoples whose skills, knowledge and technologies constitute a rich resource in charting a sustainable future.

Integrated policies for decent work for indigenous peoples, appropriate to their circumstances and developed with their participation, open the way out of poverty. Access to decent work and the possibilities for organization and dialogue which it provides, also better equips indigenous peoples to confront the threat of HIV/AIDS – the theme of this year's observance – by also opening up avenues for access to information, prevention and care and the advancement of the principle of non-discrimination.

A number of international agreements – including the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989 (No. 169), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted in 2007 and the Global Jobs Pact – provide a solid platform for action.

On this International Day, and as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of ILO Convention No. 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples' rights, let us make the values, principles and guidance of these instruments come alive and act in solidarity and partnership with indigenous peoples. The ILO will do its part to promote a better future for indigenous and tribal peoples through the dignity of decent work.

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