



**Message by Juan Somavia
Director-General of the International Labour Office
on the occasion of
World Day against Child Labour**

12 June 2010

This World Day against Child Labour comes at a critical juncture in the global campaign against child labour and the goal of ending its worst forms by 2016.

The message emerging from the ILO's latest Global Report¹ is clear: if current trends continue, the 2016 target will not be reached. A renewed effort to end child labour is urgently needed.

As millions of people around the world get ready for the action of the football World Cup in South Africa, we make an urgent appeal to "go for the goal and end child labour".

Across cultures and continents children will be joining in the anticipation and excitement of this global event, it will be dominating their play time and leisure time at home, in schoolyards and on the streets.

But for some 215 million child labourers – most in hazardous work – who labour long and hard instead of learning and playing, the World Cup is a world away.

Our new global estimates on child labour present a mixed picture suggesting some progress, but also with cause for concern.

On the positive side, among children aged 5-14, child labour has fallen by 10 per cent. The number of children in the same age range in hazardous work fell by 31 per cent. And there has been a 15 per cent decrease in the number of girls in child labour.

The bottom line, however, is that overall, progress has slowed. There has been an alarming 20 per cent increase in the 15-17 years' age group which mainly comprises children who have reached the legal working age but are working in hazardous conditions in one of the worst forms of child labour. The situation is particularly worrying in sub-Saharan Africa where the estimates show an increase over the last four years.

We must sharpen our focus on the goal of ending child labour and ending its worst forms by 2016.

We must accelerate action to reach this goal.

¹ ILO: Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2010: *Accelerating action against child labour*, Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 99th Session, Geneva, 2010.

Is this unrealistic in the face of the economic crisis? On the contrary, ending child labour cannot wait for economic recovery – it contributes to recovery and to sustainable development.

The Global Jobs Pact adopted by the ILO presents a series of policy measures centred on employment and social protection, founded on respect for fundamental principles and rights at work and drawing on the tool of social dialogue, as a decent work response to the crisis. It also contributes to a more balanced framework for development. It specially calls for vigilance to prevent an increase of child labour and for action to eliminate it.

We know what is needed: access to quality education for all children at least until the minimum age of employment; extending social protection that provides a buffer for families and enables them to keep all children – girls and boys in school; and productive employment for adults.

With an integrated decent work approach and a decent work route out of poverty, children can realize their potential; families and communities can enjoy better standards of living and greater stability; economies benefit.

On this World Day against Child Labour, let us go for the goal: an end to child labour and an end to its worst forms by 2016!

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