



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

12 June 2012

Ending child labour is a matter of human rights and social justice. Step up the fight; do not relent: this is our call as we mark the tenth anniversary of the World Day against Child Labour.

The worldwide mobilization against child labour is paying off with important progress achieved over the past decade. Today there are 30 million fewer child labourers worldwide than a decade ago. The sharpest decrease has been among younger children, in particular girls.

Conventions on child labour are among the most widely ratified of all ILO Conventions. More and more countries have established national plans to tackle child labour or have introduced laws prohibiting hazardous work by children. And in consciousness, policy and practice, crucial linkages are increasingly being made: between child labour and poverty, and between the elimination of child labour and universal access to quality education.

However, the road to full eradication is long and challenging.

The reality remains extremely worrying. The bottom line is that 215 million children are still trapped in child labour, 115 million of them in the worst forms. Our latest estimates indicated an increase of 20 per cent in child labour among young people aged 15 to 17, mainly involved in hazardous work.

On many counts the world is failing short on its responsibilities towards children and young people.

Today, we call on all countries which have not ratified the international child labour Conventions to make a special effort to do so. We call on countries to apply as yet unratified Conventions and we call on all to respect the principles and rights embodied in these Conventions.

We can put together a combination of policies founded on respect for those principles and rights so that children can be free from child labour and have the chance of a better life. Effective education and training policies backed by social protection measures can produce significant increases in school enrolment and a decline in child labour. Decent work for parents means that children are less likely to fall victim to child labour. And better enforcement of national laws, including strengthening child labour inspection and monitoring, enhancing victim assistance and improving prevention strategies are critical to success.

In a world of growing inequality we must link policy agendas with basic standards of fairness and do right by the world's children.

In a world of incredible wealth, the means exist to end child labour.

On this World Day with will and solidarity let us renew our efforts, stay the course, and reach the goal.