

**REMARKS BY  
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II  
AT THE  
91<sup>ST</sup> INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE  
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Your Excellency, Mr. Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your kind welcome. Rania and I are honored to be here at this most important conference at the invitation of a good friend, Juan Somavia. Mr. Director General, your efforts to promote ‘decent’ work; your dedication to human rights; your global vision – these have inspired respect around the world. Allow me to speak for all Jordanians in thanking you – and in thanking all the delegates here – for everything you are doing to create a better future for humankind.

My friends,

Your organization recognizes a fundamental truth about our world: work and working people are at the heart of global prosperity. In our 21<sup>st</sup> Century, attention is often focused on technologies and markets. But let us remember that at best, these are only tools, tools that have allowed the world’s peoples to combine their energies and talents. Freeing that capability has unleashed tremendous creativity and productivity ... and unprecedented abundance. It has been estimated that, worldwide, the goods and services produced in the past 100 years – primarily in the last 50 – exceeded all that humanity had produced since recorded history began. And our future potential is great.

Yet for too many people, far too many, this abundance is a dream denied. One third of humanity has been marginalized by unemployment and underemployment; others are barely subsisting. They suffer the hardships and dislocations of globalization, but they have not yet reaped its benefits. Young people, who desperately need opportunities and hope, see themselves and their societies held back by poverty, health crises, illiteracy, and more. Is it any surprise that these communities can become recruiting grounds for extremist ideologies?

We cannot move forward ... we cannot fulfill the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’s promise ... until we deal with these problems. Nor can we delay. The “war against want” – a war enshrined in the ILO’s Philadelphia Declaration – has a new name today: it is the war against terror. Only by defeating want, can we heal the divisions and despair that feed global violence. This requires sustainable socio-economic development, development that enables all people to

live in dignity. Such development is an important tool in the battle against extremism –as is a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Question of Palestine.

Opportunity is a powerful force in giving people a stake in a peaceful future. It is up to us to create a global growth economy – one that will give people the jobs they need to support their families and improve their lives. There must be safety nets – national and international – that can combat the social and economic imbalances of globalization ... real access to the education and technologies that open the doors to tomorrow ... and, perhaps most important, justice – to show people, especially young people, that ours is a world of fairness and hope.

Jordan has espoused the values that are embedded in the ILO Charters and Conventions. We have embarked on a process of enhancing the productivity of our labour force by adopting bold educational reforms and giving the private sector the prominent role in the design of vocational training programs. We are convinced that our economy will not grow until the productivity of our labour force grows. This is the essence of our national socio-economic agenda. And, we have had positive results as evident in our recent indicators.

And we also take our international responsibilities seriously. I am pleased that Her Majesty, Queen Rania, is one of a select group of heads of state and first ladies, who have taken an active role in ILO's efforts to combat child labour around the world. Jordanians are working hard to ensure that child labour is not a serious problem in our country, and we continue to pioneer preventive measures.

Our strategy has had one goal: to improve the well-being and opportunities of our citizens. Jordanians deserve no less.

We also believe that socio-economic reform cannot be sustained in the absence of democratic consent. This is why we have insisted on political reforms to ensure government transparency and accountability. Jordan recently established a National Center for Human Rights as well as an independent Higher Council for Media. In these and other ways, Jordan has been working tirelessly to create an environment of justice, democracy, due process, equal opportunity and gender equality. And, as many of you know, parliamentary elections will be held next week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would be untrue to suggest that my country, or any country, can make it alone. Today, for developed and developing nations alike, progress on the national level demands progress on the global level as well. Achieving such progress will require a true partnership between developed and developing countries – a partnership based on our common interests, our interdependence, and our shared responsibilities. Only such a partnership can deliver the global justice that is required ... and encourage developing countries to embark upon needed political, economic and social reforms.

The new global partnership faces hard choices for reshaping the national and global governance agenda, for a more equal distribution of benefits. Dialogue must be coupled with action, from both sides. Across the board, we need improved market access, the removal of trade barriers and predictable trade policies. Developed countries must increase the level of direct assistance ... encourage foreign direct investment and technology transfer ... and reduce the debt burden. Developing countries must commit to sound economic

policies, coupled with the right safety nets ... good governance ... and the rule of law. In my region; in every region, we must cooperate, and quickly, to address key issues – political freedoms, improving the role of women, and bridging the knowledge gap.

Jordan will shortly host an extraordinary annual meeting of the World Economic Forum ... bringing leaders together to agree on a shared vision of global cooperation. I hope these initiatives will begin new and intensified efforts ... to restore confidence in our common future ... and enhance global governance.

My friends,

We must also address the urgent need to rebuild and stabilize the Middle East region. Our region sits at a critical crossroads. The credibility, not merely of our own countries, but of the international community, is at stake. Now is the time to work together, to put our full force behind the process that will lead to the hand-over of Iraq to a credible Iraqi government, representing all Iraqis. And now is the time to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Palestinians and Israelis have signed on to the Peace Road Map, a Road Map that addresses the needs of both parties. To the Israelis, this plan offers collective security guarantees by all Arabs, a peace treaty and normal relations with Arab states, and an end to the conflict. To Palestinians, it offers an end to the occupation, a viable state, and the promise to live as a free people.

Last week, at the Aqaba Summit, the parties pledged to make real efforts to move forward. And that process is beginning. But the friends of peace must now stay the course. At the end of the day, we will need the full energies of regional and international leaders, working in real partnership, if we are to achieve a future of peace, security and coexistence.

In this regard, I wish to commend your Convention for its attention this afternoon to the worsening situation of workers in the Occupied Territories. Nothing demonstrates more urgently the need to bring this occupation to an end.

My friends,

Centuries ago, human beings thought the earth was flat. That view did not change until brave souls set out to test the boundaries of the known world.

Today, echoes of that old, flat-earth philosophy remain. We hear them in the complacent voices of those who are satisfied with a two-dimensional world, where a minority sit safely in the center, in prosperity; and billions are forced to live in poverty and violence, out on the edge.

Well, the flat-earthers are history. I believe the future belongs to those who see the world in its full dimensions – an undivided sphere, whose every point is a center; whose every person is entitled to prosper and succeed, in peace and security.

There is an old maxim: “By the work, one knows the workman.” By our work, the future will know our generation. Were we really committed to peace; to equity; to justice? It is in our hands to create what we know is right. Together, in partnership, in mutual respect, I believe that we can.

Thank you.