

**„Making Decent Work a Global Goal and a National Reality“
18-20 Sept. 2007, Düsseldorf**

Opening session, Wednesday 19th September 2007

Dr. Toru Itani

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to Düsseldorf today and to bring you the greetings of the ILO Director General Juan Somavia at the start of this important Conference.

It is a particular delight to see so many of you here. At the last count, we had[210] ...participants registered, from....[65] countries from all over the world. Many of you will know that we have been holding these conferences in Dusseldorf once every 2 years for the last 10 years or more, but this is the largest to date!

So thanks to you all who have come here as conference speakers, chairpersons, rapporteurs, Round Table members and all participants, many of whom have traveled 1000s of km to get here.

I would particularly like to thank our partners and sponsors of this conference, for without their help we could not have run this event.

They are:

- the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany,
- the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Portugal,
- BAD/Team Prevent Group,
- DGUV,
- Fraport,
- Messe Düsseldorf, and
- TÜV Rheinland.

A warm thank you to you all.

My colleagues will spend the rest of our time here at this conference today and tomorrow discussing the meaning and value of *Making Decent Work a Global Goal and a National Reality*, and the role that the ILO plays in this process.

In order to make decent work a reality, we need to engage all stakeholders concerned with the implementation of international labour standards – and there are many of them. This means working effectively within the tripartite structure of workers, businesses, and governments, but engaging other stakeholders too, such as manufacturers, architects, suppliers, educational, research and training institutions and so on.

But the challenges before us are immense. True, we have a substantial body of international labour standards now in place, especially for occupational safety and health, but how well are these actually applied in practice? And in developing countries?

So we must focus on the implementation of these standards, and it is here that labour inspectors – or occupational safety and health inspectors – have a crucial role to play. They can achieve an enormous amount through the advice and information they give, based on their collective experience and data collection. But they are also enforcement agencies and they must have sufficient legal powers to take appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

Yet the reality is that some labour inspectorates have little impact - and this is often the case in countries where working conditions are

already poor. Such inspectorates are often under-resourced and burdened with outdated legislation and organisational structures. Unfortunately, these countries often have major economic, political and social challenges to face as well. However, the ILO's aim is to help the inspectorates to modernize as well as to promote good ethical practices.

Employers and workers organizations recognize the need to reinvigorate labour inspectorates too. At a recent ILO Governing Body meeting, the employer spokesperson was speaking about the supply chain and worker protection, and said quite candidly “Investors are not attracted by weak enforcement”.

As you all know, we are here with the aim of *Making Decent Work a Global Goal and a National Reality*. We are about to hear many different perspectives on how to make that happen. I believe we need to work more in partnerships to improve the implementation of global labour standards – and that involves employers and workers organizations, as well as the professions and other stakeholders. I hope that through the various presentations and discussions over the next 2 days, we will all see a bit more clearly what the issues are and how we can work together more effectively at addressing them .

These goals are important because they affect everyone at work.

I hope every one of you enjoys this conference as much as I will.

Thank you.