



90 years working for social justice

As the ILO celebrates its 90th anniversary, plans are already under way for the 100th. The ILO's Century Project aims to ensure that the ILO reaches its centenary with as complete an understanding of the success achieved to date and the conditions for that success, as well as the challenges and difficulties faced.

What is it about anniversaries that make people want to count things? In the ILO's case it is noticeable how many life-changing events are linked to the decades. They include:

1919 Founding of the ILO, created by the Treaty of Versailles along with the League of Nations.

1939 As war drew near the ILO planned to move. It traversed the Second World War with its principles, methods and goals not only intact but reiterated and reinforced.

1949 Decision to start technical cooperation – in the words of then Director-General David Morse, this “proved to be the first steps in a really radical transformation”.

1959 Opening of the first field office in Africa.

1969 The ILO is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

And so on. Breaking the mold, the Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was adopted in 1998 – but 1999 saw the first Director-General from the Southern hemisphere take office – and yes, he is the ninth. Director-General Juan Somavia lost no time in outlining a ground-breaking vision for the ILO: the concept of “decent work”.

As the Decent Work Agenda gathers momentum and is increasingly recognized throughout the world, the ILO celebrates its 90th anniversary in the midst of a seismic shock to the world's economies: the global financial crisis. Once again the ILO's core message of social justice takes on new resonance, as the world struggles with the results of an “unbalanced, unfair and unsustainable” globalization.

The ILO Lusaka Office will celebrate the ILO's 90th Anniversary on 28th April, 2009 at Lusaka National Museum. The celebrations will be combined with Occupational Safety and Health Day (OSH) commemorations. The occasion of the ILO at 90 anniversary will be addressed by high

level representatives from the Government, the employers' and workers' organizations and the ILO. The exhibitions will be organized by companies showcasing best OSH practices together with the ILO's projects and their partners and beneficiaries. Look out for more ILO @ 90 awareness messages, articles and programmes in the local newspapers and on ZNBC during the period of 18-28th April, 2009.