

**Welcoming Remarks by ILO Representative for  
Malawi, Mozambique & Zambia, Mr Gerry Finnegan,  
on occasion of launching of “A Guide for Integrating Human Rights into  
Business Management”, ILO Offices, 28.02.08**

Madam Director of Ceremonies, Rosario Fundanga  
Minister of LSS, Hon. Ronald Mukuma MP  
PS, MLSS, Mr Ngosa Chisupha  
Chair, GC Zambia ....  
UN Resident Coordinator, Mr Aeneas Chuma  
Leaders of Zambian business community  
Representatives of Zambia's trade union movement  
Our friends from the media  
Ladies and gentlemen

First and foremost, I want to extend a very warm welcome to you to the ILO Lusaka Office for Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

On behalf of the UN System in Zambia, the ILO is particularly pleased to be the chosen venue for this important launch of the “Guide for Integrating Human rights into Business Management”. The ILO with UNDP and other UN agencies is a member of the UN Global Compact, so it is appropriate that we are all together in the ILO, one of the specialized agencies of the UN System.

As you will be aware, the ILO is a rights-based agency, and its work globally is guided by some 200 International Labour Conventions, and a supportive framework of Recommendations and Codes of Practice. The ILO is a tripartite organization, comprising representatives of member States (in the form of Ministries of Labour), as well as representatives of labour and trade unions and representatives of employers, industry and commerce.

Today, increasingly, we see the convergence of three trends: the globalization of trade and investment; the globalization of communications, and the globalization of human rights. These three trends have led to growing pressure on companies in every corner of the globe to give greater attention to addressing human rights issues. Workers' rights are human rights, and we need to ensure that fundamental workers' rights are protected in this globalizing environment. Women's rights are human rights, and we need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the labour market – and indeed discrimination against people with disabilities, people living with HIV and AIDS, and other vulnerable groups. Children's rights are human rights, and we need to end all forms of child labour in the workplace.

Human rights are enshrined in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which in turn is the important context for the Zambia Decent Work Country Programme, launched here by the Vice President on 4 December 2007, with MLSS.

We often see a media spotlight being placed on companies that engage in human rights abuses. A HR abuse in Cambodia can be posted on the net, viewed globally, and overnight tarnish the global reputation of a company. But we are also seeing more and more companies, as model corporate citizens, taking key roles in promoting and protecting human rights.

Some corporate efforts aimed at addressing human rights issues may be seen as defensive measures, as mere papering over the cracks, or as part of a public relations media campaign. However, we are seeing an increasing number of global and local corporate actors making the affirmative case for substantive human rights programmes.

Social responsibility by business and corporate entities is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. It is about building and keeping the trust and confidence of society and local communities in the way business is operating. It is a matter of hard-headed sound business logic. It is about attracting and keeping the best people to work for you. It is about performance and profits.

The successful and winning companies of this century will be those that not only increase shareholder value, but also increase social and environmental values. There is much that the corporate world can do to cope with, mitigate and reverse the effects of climate change. Increasing attention is being given to new emerging environmentally friendly business opportunities, and to the new employment phenomenon of "green jobs". Business can and should be about adding value, but also about adding values!

International human rights are universal – they do not change based on geography, nationality, religion or culture. For business, human rights issues can be something of a minefield. It is for this reason that this new Guide is most welcome. It provides a coherent Human Rights framework, and highlights the potential interfaces between human rights and business. It is full of useful guidance, information, tips and contacts. It should be on the desk of every CEO and Human Resources manager.

In commending this Guide to you, I also wish to make available to you the accumulated expertise and resources of the ILO, as the specialized UN agency dealing with employment and labour matters. I thank you for your attention.