



International
Labour
Office
Geneva

**ASIAN EMPLOYMENT FORUM:
GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND
DECENT WORK**

**BEIJING, CHINA
(13–15 AUGUST 2007)**

*Compilation of statements
by selected constituents from Asia and the Pacific,
delivered during the plenary sittings
of the 96th Session of the
International Labour Conference
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Bangladesh

Mr M.A. Iqbal, Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh

The Director-General's excellent Report carries an important message for member States for improving the welfare of our people through job creation and elimination of discrimination. Decent work is important for all of us.

I would first like to brief the Conference on the recent political and administrative changes in Bangladesh following the expiry of the term of the elected Government in accordance with our Constitution, and 11-member caretaker government has been formed to run the Government for an interim period and to hold free and fair national elections. The caretaker government is pledge-bound to create a better environment for such an election. In doing so, our caretaker government has taken initiatives and adopted a reform agenda to free the country from the curse of corruption, extortion and terrorism. As part of our reform agenda, three major constitutional bodies, the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Public Service Commission have been reconstituted to make them effective and credible, we expect to carry through our reform agenda and to hold national elections without any undue delay. Since our membership of the ILO in 1972, we have been constructively participating in all ILO activities. Bangladesh is committed to the implementation of international labour standards. We have adopted a new Labour Code in October 2006 to create a discrimination-free work environment, strengthen congenial relations between workers and employers and increase productivity.

Our Government is implementing the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Law 2006, to ensure the welfare of the workers in the formal and informal sectors. The EPZ Workers Association and Industrial Relations Act 2004, provides for freedom of association and collective bargaining rights in factories of export processing zones.

The new Labour Law will help prevent child labour. In addition, a child labour policy is expected to be finalized within the year. We are implementing the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) since 1994 with ILO support. In addition, we are also implementing a Time-bound Programme for the elimination of the worst form of child labour. My Ministry, from our budget, is implementing phase II of the project entitled: Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour after successfully completing phase I. In our ready-made garments industry sector, a tripartite MOU was signed in June 2006 among the Government, and employers associations and major trade unions for full implementation of the minimum wage for the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. Furthermore, a Social Compliance Forum and crisis management committee are set up for the RMG industry for continuous monitoring and enforcement of the minimum wage and the immediate resolution of any problems that may emerge.

I would like to draw the attention of this house to a very important issue confronting many countries, that of short-term movement of labour from one country to another. A large number of Bangladeshi professionals – skilled or less-skilled – are employed abroad. There is a demand for dedicated workers from our countries. The management of short-term circular movement of service providers requires coordination particularly to optimize the benefits and prevent exploitation and abuse. This is an area where consensus can prove immensely beneficial to both sending and receiving countries. We believe that the ILO has an important role to play in this very complex and sensitive subject.

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Mr J. Alam, President, Eastern Refinery Employees' Union, Bangladesh

At the very beginning of my speech in this plenary session on the report of the Chairman on the Global Report presented before the 96th International Labour Conference I congratulate you and all of your colleagues here in the ILO Office for presenting such a report and express heartfelt gratitude to you all, along with all distinguished delegates, dignitaries from different countries of the world, on my behalf, and on behalf of all working people in Bangladesh. I also express my solidarity to the workers of Palestine and Iraq under foreign occupation for their patriotic fight for livelihood.

I listened to your report with all my attention and also I tried to go through the Report of the Director-General. I find these excellent with all the important aspects of ILO objectives, initiatives to meet them and firm commitment to working to eliminate all sorts of discrimination with regard to employment and occupation, based on sex, race, creed and belief. But it is hardly possible to make a critical appreciation of the Report in the short time allocated for discussion. Hence I intend to make some comments not on your Report but on the future initiatives of the ILO which could enable it to establish a friendly image in the mind of workers of developing countries, like my country Bangladesh.

Although we all are aware of the fact that the ILO, from its very inception, is a tripartite body, which includes workers, employers and the governments, understandably a common belief has developed among the workers that the main objective of the ILO is to safeguard the interest and rights of the working people. It is objectively correct that the other two parties within the ILO are not as vulnerable as the workers. The first party, government, is at the helm of the constituent country, having all the authority to rule the country and make the laws. The second party, employers, have the wealth, and owning the industry possess the right to hire and fire the workers. The third party, workers, is the only vulnerable group with only manpower to sell and only finding strength in organization, unity and solidarity. Hence obviously the ILO is an international forum of the three parties that are not equal in strength, but to date it seems to us that ILO the ILO tends to act impartially in the view of natural justice and equity. Now we are reasonably afraid of the new initiative, according to which from now on the ILO, to implement its Decent Work Country Programme, decided to work with the WTO, IMF and some other world organizations like these.

Unlike the ILO, the working people of the underdeveloped countries have lost their trust in these international organizations, for a number of reasons. Because as per the prescription of these organizations, the so-called deregulation and structural readjustment in developing countries has thrown thousands of workers out into the street, jobless. Many of our viable enterprises were closed down by their prescription. It has already been proved that all their initiatives were aimed at the profitability of the multinational corporations, ignoring the national interest of the concerned constituent country and not in the interests of the workers. Hence we are very much concerned that the ILO may also lose its impartial character of safeguarding the interest of workers of the world by submitting itself to the interest of the transnational corporations.

In this perspective, I would like to reiterate that, the Decent Work Country Programme, or any initiative to eliminate any sorts of discrimination must be taken in consideration with the perspective of the respective society. Because as you also mentioned in your Report, the cause of any discrimination in respect of employment or occupation or in enjoying any fundamental social rights exists in the core of the society. So we must not forget that discrimination in a society is in fact the mere manifestation or symptom of the disease, not the cause. We cannot make an impoverished society lacking the means to meet the fundamental needs of man, with severe exploitation and with a gulf of difference between haves and the have nots, free from discrimination. And hence, to get

rid of it or to eradicate discrimination from society, we have to think how to root out the basic reason for this illness. Without fighting simultaneously to defend economic, social and cultural rights, efforts to eliminate the discrimination in respect of employment or occupation based on gender, caste and creed, race and beliefs will be futile.

Finally I urge to you and the ILO Governing Body on behalf of the working people of the world in general, and the workers of Bangladesh in particular, to initiate the battle to defend the socio-economic and socio-cultural structure simultaneously and to uproot the basic reasons for society lagging behind, that is its poverty in all respects.

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China

Mr X. Hu, Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Security, China

First of all please allow me to congratulate the President on his election to the Presidency of the Conference. I also wish to thank Mr Juan Somavia, the Director-General, for the Report he submitted to the conference entitled *Decent work for sustainable development*.

Across the world, economic globalization is gaining momentum, science and technology are developing at a dazzling speed and the movement of production factors and industrial relocation are taking place at a higher frequency. Peace, development and cooperation are the call of the times. In the field of labour, however, there remain quite a few conspicuous problems and serious challenges, such as how to reduce unemployment, eliminate poverty and protect the fundamental rights and interest of workers to lead a harmonious economic and social development and a sound environment. These are the major issues that constituents of the Organization must take head on and deal with.

China follows the scientific thinking on development in its economic and social development, which is people-oriented and emphasizes all-round, balanced and sustainable development. We will continue to take measures in the following areas to implement the Decent Work Agenda.

Firstly, we will adopt a mutual reinforcing strategy to promote economic growth and employment, secure an economic growth mode that generates more jobs, continue to implement active employment policies and enhance employment opportunities through every possible means. Efforts will be made to improve workers' skills and educational level through more vocational education and training programmes. The year 2006 witnessed the biggest increase in the number of new jobs in China's urban areas – a total of 11.84 million. The registered unemployment rate in urban areas dropped to 4.1 per cent. As many as 9.25 million people received their first professional certificates. Around 300,000 obtained qualifications as technicians and senior technicians in that year.

The second is to accelerate development of the social safety system. The year 2006 witnessed the fastest expansion of social insurance coverage. Over 100 million people were covered by all kinds of social insurance schemes concerning pension, medical care, unemployment and work injury. The Government-funded new type of rural cooperative medical care system had covered close to 700 million people. A new programme was launched at the beginning of this year, which provides basic medical insurance for over 200 million city residents who are not economically active.

The third is to foster harmonious labour relations and earnestly protect the rights and interests of workers. The year 2006 saw the most substantial rise of minimum wages in the biggest number of areas in China. Minimum wages were raised in almost all provinces in China. The average wage of urban workers grew by 12.7 percent. The labour contract system was implemented across the nation. Protection of the rights and interests of 120 million migrant workers was enhanced to create a fair employment environment for all workers. Efforts were made to speed up the relevant legislative work such as the drafting of the Labour Contract Law, the Employment Promotion Law, the Law for Labour Disputes Settlement, and the Social Insurance Law. The ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), is implemented now in China.

The Chinese delegation believes that to promote harmonious and sustainable economic and social development, preserve the environment and attain the goal of decent work, the constituents of the Organization need to take more, and more effective, actions to create an enabling environment for the realization of fair globalization and decent work in a changing world through dialogue and cooperation. To that end I would like to propose the following.

Firstly, the constituents need to work hard to create more productive and decent jobs for workers. The Chinese Government is of the view that employment promotion, poverty elimination and enabling more unemployed persons to be employed should be priorities of the Organization.

Secondly, we should strengthen the capacity building of the ILO and earnestly help its member States realize the goal of decent work for all. It is our belief that the ILO tripartite mechanism should be strengthened to release the dynamism and vitality of the Organization. We should particularly strengthen and enhance the capacity of the ILO to help its Members, especially developing Members, to create jobs and improve social security schemes. We should also enhance the Organization's capacity to communicate and cooperate with other international organizations to mobilize more resources and undertake more extensive and in-depth technical cooperation.

Thirdly, we should endeavour to increase the skills and quality of the workers in order to better adapt to rapid changes in globalization and industrial restructuring. To that end, all the three parties must work hard to create more vocational education and training opportunities for the workers so that they are able to meet higher standards brought by globalization and technical progress.

China will continue to work together with other Members to contribute to the realization of social equality and justice and the building of a harmonious world.

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Mr L. Chen, Vice-President, China Enterprise Confederation, China

We noted that there are various important subjects on the agenda of this session of the Conference and that reform has been made to the form of the Conference. We appreciate the efforts made by the Director-General and the Office in this regard.

In the current world, the speeding up of economic globalization has brought about new opportunities as well as severe challenges to the social and economic development of each country. At the same time, many new developments and issues are also arising in the field of international labour, such as promoting employment and the eradication of poverty and so on. How to bring fully into play the advantage and abundant experiences of the ILO

and the collective wisdom of the tripartite constituents of member States, to speed up the process of realizing the Decent Work Agenda and fair globalization and to build a harmonious and fair world, these are the important and arduous tasks facing us. Therefore, it is quite essential to enhance our capability. We are happy to see that fruitful discussions have been carried out on strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist Members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization. This will surely play a positive role in further strengthening the capacity of tripartism in member States.

It is very significant for this session of the Conference to hold discussions on promoting the sustainable development of enterprises as a technical subject. Development of enterprises is the basis for economic growth and social progress as well as promoting social harmony. It has been proven by the achievements of China for the last 30 years since the reform and opening up that the reform, creativeness and market access of enterprises constitute the great driving force for economic and social development.

Currently, China is in the phase of speeding up industrialization. To make the economy and society develop in a good and fast way, one of the urgent issues facing our enterprises and entrepreneurs in making strategic decisions is to put into practice the concept of scientific development characterized by people-oriented and comprehensively coordinated sustainable development. This requires us to change our concept of development, to create new modes of development, to enhance the quality of development, and to explore the road towards new industrialization characterized by technology, good economic profits, low consumption of resources, low pollution of the environment and full utilization of human resources. Only by doing so can we lay down a solid foundation for building an harmonious society. We hope the ILO, in responding to the call of this Conference, will further strengthen the research into collection and dissemination of information concerning the sustainability of enterprises and provide more guidance and assistance to the tripartite constituents of member States, so as to make active contributions to the sustainable development of enterprises in various countries.

The China Enterprise Confederation, as the employers' organization representing tens of millions of Chinese enterprises, has always regarded it our own duty to promote employment and economic and social development. To do this, we have been actively engaged in the promotion of employment, eradication of poverty and realization of decent work, as well as the efforts to strengthen tripartism and our own capacity building. We will, as always, further strengthen the exchanges and cooperation with the ILO and employers' organizations of various countries, so as to make joint efforts for the realization of a fair and just globalization and promotion of the harmony, development and prosperity of the world.

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**Mr Z. Xu, Vice-Chairman, All China
Federation of Trade Unions, China**

Mr President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your election as the President of this Conference. I trust that under your guidance the Conference will reach its objectives as indicated in the Director-General's Report delivered to the Conference, decent work as a concept has gained universal recognition. However, strenuous efforts are needed in order to achieve decent work for all. Governments and the social partners must make continuous efforts to defend workers' rights, promote equality at work and eliminate discrimination in employment. The International Labour Organization must also make more support available to its constituents and enable its member States to achieve economic growth and social justice.

Over the past year, our country has made great strides in economic growth and social progress as a result of its continuous efforts to implement reform and open-up policies and its strong commitment to the promotion of a people-centred approach to development and construction of a harmonious society.

The Chinese trade unions have adhered to the path of building trade unionism with Chinese characteristics, and have vigorously implemented their strategy of organizing for better protection, based on the establishment of industrial peace and the adoption of a scientific approach to workers' protection in accordance with the law. To this end, we have made fresh breakthrough in organizing and serving the workers.

At present, the in-depth development of economic globalization has brought about opportunities and challenges to the world of work. Governments, trade unions and employers need to make a joint effort to adapt themselves to the changing world to grasp opportunities and to take up challenges.

Therefore, the Chinese trade unions wish to put forward the following proposals. We should commit ourselves to peaceful and scientific development. Only when development is sustained in a scientific manner can economic growth and social progress be achieved. What we are promoting is a scientific, peaceful, harmonious and common development.

The essence of scientific development is to put people first. The key to scientific development is to achieve coordinated and sustainable development in an all-round way. China will unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development and promote fast and sound social, economic development.

Together with the people of other countries, we will make concerted efforts to bring about a harmonious world that features lasting peace and prosperity for all. We should commit ourselves to building a harmonious world of work. We should press for the construction of a harmonious society, harmonious labour relations and harmonious enterprises. In a harmonious society, wealth shall be generated and fairly distributed among the general public. In harmonious labour relations, social justice and mutual gains shall be pursued and harmonious enterprise profits shall be generated and shared. Development must be by the people and for the people. We should not only facilitate economic growth, but also protect the rights and interests of workers and work hard towards a harmonious world of work. We should commit ourselves to promoting harmonious international labour movements. We live in a colourful world. Differences in development levels and social systems have made the development of international trade unionism colourful and diverse. In this wonderful world, there is not – and will surely never be – a single way of building trade unions. Unions of different countries should proceed from their own national and institutional conditions and choose their own road of development.

The Chinese trade unions maintain that trade unions across the world should respect each other, live in harmony, pursue mutual gains and prosperity for all, learn from each other and draw on each other's experience, and seek diverse organizational modes and production patterns.

Trade unions of all countries should participate in international trade union affairs on an equal footing and strengthen dialogue, exchanges and cooperation on the principle of independence and autonomy.

The ILO has shouldered the arduous mission of meeting the challenges of the world of work. We urge the ILO to attach great importance to its institutional capacity building and its effective decision-making, and to bring more substantial benefits to the working people of all countries.

The Chinese trade unions stand ready to work together with other trade unions in a concerted effort to create a harmonious world of work for all working people.

* * *

India

Mr O. Fernandes, Minister of State (IC) for Labour and Employment, India

While commending the ILO on its performance, I take this opportunity to highlight a very few important issues raised in the Report of the Director-General entitled: *Decent work for sustainable development* and indicate steps taken by India thereon.

The ILO in recent times has been emphasizing the social dimensions of globalization, sustainable development, productive and equitable markets, fair rules and greater accountability to people. India has a well-established democratic system of consulting stakeholders. The National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) of the Government also mandates tripartism and consensus. The goal of India's 11th Five-Year Plan is faster and more inclusive growth, epitomizing the social dimensions. The environment for inclusive growth has been crafted by flagship schemes, such as the Bharat Nirman Plan aimed at providing infrastructure and basic amenities in villages; the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which seeks to provide 100 days of guaranteed unskilled wage employment in 330 districts; the National Rural Health Mission providing primary healthcare; the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan providing free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6–14 years, along with the midday meal scheme which provides cooked food to 109 million young schoolchildren; and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, which provides basic services to the urban poor and to slum dwellers. Various other schemes relating to road connectivity, housing, waged and self-employment, drinking water and the development of backward areas are in operation. These measures are carried out with the active involvement of rural, local governments called the Panchayati Raj, whose 3.4 million elected representatives, nearly 42 per cent of whom are women, make India the most intensely democratic country in the world.

Also, microcredit through immense self-help groups is leading to women's economic empowerment throughout the country. So far as social production is concerned, health insurance, pensions and provident fund benefits are available to workers in the formal sector. A scheme called Rajiv Gandhi Shramik Kalyan Yojana has been implemented as of 2005 as a social safety net for persons who lose their jobs. These persons are eligible for a monthly unemployment allowance for six months, along with medical coverage. Workers belonging to specific segments in the informal sector have access to social security through various welfare funds. We have also prescribed a minimum wage for each trade. A bill to provide social security in a comprehensive manner to the informal sector will be introduced next month when the Indian Parliament reconvenes.

We are seriously addressing the threat posed by HIV/AIDS in the world of work. We have had a fruitful session with the labour ministers and other dignitaries from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries and have agreed to set up a working group to collectively find possible solutions.

The Government has commenced a major plan to upgrade 1,896 Industrial Training Institutes into centres of excellence, in order to produce a multiskilled, world class workforce. My Government has also undertaken a skill development initiative for school dropouts and existing workers in the informal sector, in close consultation with industry,

micro-enterprises, state governments, experts and academia. It is proposed to set up a national mission for vocational training. The Government has undertaken various measures to address gender inequality and eliminate discrimination against women; we adopted a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001, and have adopted gender budgeting so as to create an enabling environment for gender justice and the empowerment of women.

India has always supported the ILO when it has taken up new challenges in the past. I take this opportunity to assure you that India will continue to support the ILO in its future endeavours to promote workers' interests.

* * *

Ms S. Pillai, Secretary, Labour and Employment, India

I compliment the Report of the Director-General for advancing the Decent Work Agenda and tripartism. Especially relevant are the ILO's efforts towards achieving synergy for sustainable development. Promoting and protecting the interests of the workforce remain the cornerstone of the ILO's policies and principles. Hence, the ILO has garnered widespread support for highlighting the social dimensions of globalization.

Globalization has led to a process of increasing economic interdependence between all countries in the developed and developing world. Over a period of time, it has been observed that globalization has had a mixed impact. We therefore have to make a concerted effort to maximize the benefits of globalization and minimize its negative outcomes. This can be done if, as part of the global efforts to promote decent work, we forge closer links with the efforts of the ILO to give an impetus to an inclusive growth strategy and adopt special measures for those persons who would normally be excluded.

At the same time, without growth we cannot generate the resources needed for investment in the social and physical infrastructure, which is why India's current growth strategy and its development plan promote faster and more inclusive growth.

India has a well-established tradition of tripartism and of consulting stakeholders on all important policy matters. India also abides by its decision to work with the international community in the common effort to promote economic and social development and to achieve the goal of generating full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Here, I would just like to raise a couple of issues. The objective of promoting social transition to "green jobs" requires careful thought. While the objective itself is laudable, because it aims at promoting intergenerational equity by protecting the environment, in practice it may be used as a means of erecting non-trade barriers against developing countries. The creation of green jobs is an essential adjunct to sustainable development. The interpretation of the term "green job" is itself varied. While, in the organized sector, it is easy to identify pro-environment measures, the same may not hold true for the unorganized sector. Further, developing countries cannot be expected to leapfrog to green technologies without adequate technical and financial support. We thus have to guard against the tendency to use carbon credits as a tool. Protection of the environment is a significant reference point nonetheless for all development programmes as there are major economic, social and human costs involved. From this perspective, we support the priority issues outlined in the Director-General's Report on green jobs, and the transition initiative, with its focus on social protection, skill training and other measures to facilitate a fair transition.

The issue of wage inequalities is relevant to the goal of profit maximization. While income equity remains an important policy objective in India, some degree of inequality in the present developmental context is inevitable. To redress this issue in India, the Minimum Wages Act 1948, updates the floor level of wages for a large segment of our workforce.

Simultaneously, efforts are being made to increase significantly skill training for the workforce to enhance their bargaining capability. Coupled with the protection given by the State, we expect that wage disparities can be absorbed by greater employment intensity. India's strength lies in labour-intensive modes of production and we have already adopted the ILO core labour standards and have ratified Conventions which are of relevance to us. However, we do not agree with the use of labour standards and carbon accreditation as non-tariff barriers against countries.

On the issue of social justice, we need to consider that priorities will always encounter resource constraints; thus distributing opportunities for access to jobs and decent work would therefore be a better goal. A better labour market assessment across the country presupposes common definitions of crucial concepts such as unemployment and wages. Different definitions often lead to different end results for the same processes, thus making the assimilation of varying labour standards into a single benchmark so much more difficult. A major initiative on the subject across nations would be opportune. It is also necessary to integrate rural and urban development based on the population dynamics in each country.

The sustainability of the reform process across nations presupposes that these have to become home-grown, intrinsic and self-propelled. In the endeavour to realize sustainable development, it is crucial that international agencies cooperate with each other in their specialized areas. We therefore warmly compliment the ILO's initiative to create an enabling environment for this kind of strategy.

* * *

**Mr K.G. Baal Krishnan, President, AIOE,
Council of Indian Employers, India**

This session of the Conference is taking place at a time when the global economy is looking up and likely to register growth of 4.9 per cent, which by all means is a fair growth. Yet global unemployment, which currently stands at around 195 million, is also growing at a rate of 6.3 per cent. If we add the number of people surviving on less than US\$2 dollars a day, which is approximately one-sixth of the population of the globe, the situation is very gloomy. Even in India, the magnificent growth of 9 per cent has failed to make a sizeable dent on unemployment. This disconnect between "growth" and "employment generation" is an issue of overriding concern. This session of the Conference should therefore engage in addressing this issue, which is foundational to the existence of this multilateral institution.

The Director-General's Report this year highlights a dominant concern for achieving sustainable development and examines the relevance of the ILO's conventional tools – decent work, tripartism and social dialogue – in this context. The Decent Work Agenda, which is serving as a framework for ILO activities over the years, is not without operational problems. The question is how to ensure it is put into practice across diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The segmented nature of the economy (formal and informal) makes the task all the more difficult.

In India, 92 per cent of the workforce is in the informal sector, where workers are not organized, the employer–employee relationship is blurred, and more than 55 per cent of the workforce is self employed, although earning a pittance. I am sure this profile of the workforce is common among the countries of the Asia-Pacific and sub-Sahara regions. Participation of this category of worker in the dialogue process is difficult. “Employment generation” and “social protection”, identified as strategic objectives by the ILO, are important tools for sustainable development, hence the need for focused attention.

As already stated, global unemployment stands at 195 million and is growing at the rate of 6.3 per cent. Asia alone has 74 million unemployed people. With the shrinking of the manufacturing sector, the service and knowledge sectors have to share this responsibility. Yet these sectors require high skill levels. The ILO should play a pivotal role in strengthening skills and vocational training programmes across its member countries as part of its initiative to promote employment generation.

Only 20 per cent of the global population enjoys full social protection. Globalization and restructuring of industries have exposed a sizeable workforce to the vagaries of unemployment and social insecurity, which may cause social tension and make economic transition socially expensive. The ILO’s technical support in designing and running social security programmes should help developing economies to maintain socio-economic tranquillity, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The two important agenda items of the Conference, *Strengthening the ILO’s capacity to assist its Members’ efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization*, and *The promotion of sustainable enterprises*, should generate a rich debate and useful conclusions.

We strongly believe that the strengthening of the ILO’s capacity is necessary to improve its effectiveness, delivery mechanisms and service to its Members. Better integration with the other United Nations organizations is definitely a useful step in this context. Of late, the ILO’s increased interface with the IMF, WTO and other United Nations bodies is worth appreciating.

Promoting “sustainable enterprises” is dependent on national policies, entrepreneurial culture and enterprise autonomy. A sustainable enterprise is the key to generating jobs and contributing to the national economy. In order to develop sustainable enterprises, a flexible institutional environment is needed to respond to changing needs. Globalization has increased competitive pressure on enterprises, requiring “industrial restructuring”, skills enhancement, human resource development, and so on. Environmental issues are a critical aspect of sustainable development. Global warming threatens to expose us to unhealthy environmental developments. Skilled migration is an important issue. The ILO should engage itself in this area, where developing countries are facing population growth, and countries such as India have demographic dividends, with 54 per cent of the population below the age of 23 years. Migration policies should therefore be more flexible.

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Mr H.L.G. Dave, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, India

I take this opportunity to congratulate the ILO and its Director-General for giving a new direction to the world of work by taking up the subject of the elimination of discrimination in work, as an extension of its Decent Work Agenda.

India had a glorious past where labour was considered a dignified activity. “Work is worship” was the slogan of our ancient labour. Indian mythology refers to Vishvakarma as the one who invented many skilled labour activities. He was raised to a godly position. The most ancient and exhaustive script of the world, Rigveda, refers to Bribu, the carpenter

leader, enjoying the status equal to that of the king. Thus work can be decent and dignified as well. People should be able to pursue their material well-being and spiritual development together, as referred to in the Report of the Director-General.

Coming to the present times, the decent work gap, resulting in a sizeable section of labour being vulnerable to discrimination, is the greatest challenge faced by the world of work. The Director-General in his Report has rightly stressed the discrimination of women workers. The Report also enumerates migrant workers, disabled persons and tribes, besides racial and ethnic discrimination, as the global groups vulnerable to discrimination. I would like to add to the list some of the widely emerging exploited groups who are subjected to extreme forms of discrimination, especially in the present context of globalization. They are unsecured workers in the name of contract labour, temporary and casual workers and a wide range of unorganized sector workers, workers in agriculture, plantation workers, fishermen, etc. These are sections of workers who do not enjoy protection under any law. They work with discriminatory wages, longer working hours, inhuman service conditions, including forced labours, and a lack of job security, social security, safety and equality. Innumerable studies and reports have come out showing the tragic and discriminatory conditions in which they strive for a livelihood. They are islands of poverty and backwardness in social life. Hence I would request the Director-General to include in the Report, with the required importance, the plight of these vulnerable groups.

The issue of work in the fishing sector, one of the most backward groups, has been rightly taken up for discussion in this session of the International Labour Conference.

Trends of discrimination start from the run for profit in the name of the reduction of labour costs. The Director-General's Report rightly discusses the efforts made to enlighten the social partners about cost reductions while also removing discrimination.

The concept of decent work in its volatile form should be given much more practical shape by distinguishing its essential ingredients. Decent work should necessarily include five basic rights at work, these being decent wages, decent service conditions, social security, safety and welfare.

It is a fact that there is a fear psychosis among workers everywhere about the onslaught of globalization that brings jobless growth. Every country has felt that the evident face of globalization is massive employment loss, mainly due to the closure of enterprises in the organized sector, and wiping out the village and small-scale industries in the unorganized sector. New employment created is meagre when compared to the massive job losses. In spite of glittering publicity, fair globalization still looks like a distant mirage. Hence international compulsions in new names like social clause, social labelling, performance standard, etc. will be more misused than used. Let us encourage national compulsions through appropriate stringent legislations, government labour machineries, etc.

When we talk about the concept of decent work, spokesmen of globalization explain the position of labour with the undignified term "labour market". This term implies that the worker is a mere commodity for sale in the market. It does not accept the labourer as a human being. We strongly raise our objection to the ILO also repeating the same undignified term in many of its documents. Hence, I would request the Director-General to give direction to the Office not to use the term "labour market" in any of its documents hereafter.

Finally, we welcome the concept of sustainable enterprise taken up for discussion at this session. Sustainable enterprise and decent work should go together as two sides of the same coin. Contented workers, through decent work, are one of the key elements conducive to sustainable enterprise.

Growing recognition of the central role of the private sector should not mean that government intervention is reduced. A more holistic view is required.

In conclusion, if the project of decent work and the action plan against discrimination are pursued with Himalayan vigour, we hope a new beautiful world of work will emerge. I am sure we will succeed in that endeavour.

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Indonesia

Mr E. Suparno, Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesia

On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, I should like, from the outset, to express our congratulations to Mr Kastriot Sulka, on his election to preside over this 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I should also like to convey my appreciation for the Report of the Director-General, which addresses the central issue of equality at work and the challenges associated with it, as well as the Report on *Decent work for sustainable development*.

In this context, poverty eradication, unemployment and development policies, which are some of the most pressing problems faced by developing countries, require our continued action. In doing so, our national tripartite institution has been revitalized by achieving a national commitment. Social dialogue, for instance, has become a day-to-day activity in the process of harmonizing industrial relations, and the bipartite mechanism in the enterprise is being strengthened to reduce the number of dismissals.

Furthermore, the Government has been supporting workers' social welfare gradually by providing low-cost houses, health and children's education services, as well as transportation assistance.

The United Nations have chosen Indonesia as a lead country for the Millennium Development Goals of achieving productive youth employment. At the same time, in the field of training and employment, Indonesia has also introduced a three-in-one concept with the training, certification and placement of manpower.

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago. Many of our community depend on the maritime and fishing sector to obtain job opportunities. Indonesia is currently preparing to ratify the ILO Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, 1958 (No. 108).

With regard to the issue of overseas workers, Indonesia, along with the ASEAN member countries, is committed to promote the Cebu Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers signed by the ASEAN leaders in 2007.

The high level dialogue on international migration and development last year in New York has introduced a link and coordinated efforts in the process of globalization and this might be relevant to continue our discussion in terms of the free flow of capital, investment, goods, services and skilled labour. In this regard, the ILO should take the necessary steps to follow up this matter.

Along with the discussion on enhancing the ILO's capacity, Indonesia is of the view that it is also important to consider continuing our efforts to reform the work of the ILC and other sectoral meetings. In this regard, Indonesia underlines the importance of the ILC closer to the field. Therefore, we are of the view that the venue of the ILC needs to be rotated and to be convened in a developing country. For this purpose and, if it is decided so, Indonesia is ready to host such an important event.

Indonesia remains committed to the responsibility of providing the means for its people to improve their living conditions without discrimination. For this reason, we are currently implementing pro-growth, pro-employment and pro-poor policies as championed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on many occasions.

I should like to close, by strongly encouraging the ILO to continue assisting the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to obtain decent work and to strive for a better future world of work for the people.

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**Mr H. Rachman, Employers' Association
of Indonesia, Indonesia**

High unemployment and poverty are still very prevalent in Indonesia. In order to remedy these adverse conditions, Indonesia needs to take serious action to further a business-friendly environment for investment. Indeed, many companies are still burdened by high costs and low productivity. Therefore, the Government's efforts must be directed at improving the infrastructure and striving for more effective policies and law enforcement. For their, part employers and workers must play their roles in achieving greater sustainability, employability and productivity in business and industry. This naturally includes promoting harmonious labour relations and implementing human rights at the workplace. As we know, the international market and the business world are always very aware of and concerned by human rights issues, especially with regard to discrimination and child labour.

Core policies to guarantee the implementation of human rights and non-discrimination at the workplace have long been provided by the Indonesian Government. Having ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Indonesian Government enacted the Manpower Act No. 13/2003 with specific provisions on equal employment opportunity in its articles 5 and 6. These provisions constitute the basis of the national strategy for equal rights and non-discrimination at the workplace.

Furthermore, guidelines for equal employment opportunity have been developed in tripartite consultations to provide directions to companies on how to implement equal employment opportunity provisions. The Indonesian Employers' Association (APINDO) has taken part in formulating the guidelines and has actively motivated the business community to implement them accordingly. These actions reflect the importance that the Indonesian Employers' Association attaches to the Government's policy with regard to equal employment opportunity, which it considers a top priority.

Indonesian employers also appreciate the need for non-discrimination and the principle of equal wages for male and female workers. Nowadays, companies have implemented equal payment based on productivity and performance. Therefore, being able to assess and measure productivity is crucial for both management and the workers.

Indonesian employers fully respect the principle of non-discrimination, equal employment opportunity and the need to protect children from exploitation in the world of work. These issues have been addressed by the Indonesian Employers' Association by appointing oversight teams and developing strategic plans of action. We have also developed programmes to enhance the participation of women and former child workers in entrepreneurship projects in the world of work.

It is important to acknowledge here the key contribution that the ILO has made to the implementation of human rights at the workplace in Indonesia. Its technical assistance and expertise in the realization of this process are highly appreciated. I therefore hope that the ILO will its work to assist and empower the industrial relations constituents in Indonesia.

In conclusion, I am convinced that the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference will create opportunities to further enhance dialogue between the social partners, the trade unions and the Government in generally solving all industrial relations problems. We hope that, by overcoming the problems of poverty and unemployment and by creating a conducive investment climate, the Indonesian Employers' Association will continue to play a leading role in the future.

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Mr C.H. David, Chairman, Confederation of All Indonesian's Trade Union, Indonesia

I should like to convey my appreciation of the Report of the Director-General which addresses the central issue of equality at work and the challenges associated with it, the Report on *Decent work for sustainable development*.

I would like to take this opportunity to support the Indonesian workers in their efforts to further freedom of association and defend their rights and interests.

Indonesia has ratified eight core ILO Conventions, including the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). But its application is not so easy. Peaceful demonstrations have resulted in trade unionists being imprisoned for allegedly committing criminal offences. Their activities were, however, within the purview of ILO Final Articles Revision Convention, 1946 (No. 80), namely performing union activities in protest against the amendment of Act No. 13, 2003, concerning manpower.

I very much appreciate the ILO's support to release the eight trade unionists on 3 May 2006 and His Excellency Mr Juan Somavia's response to our request.

We also express our gratitude for the ILO's assistance in the settlement of Bridgestone Tyre Indonesia Company, which dismissed four trade union leaders due to union activities. The case is still being handled by the Supreme Court in Indonesia.

On behalf of the Indonesian Workers, I would like to express our thanks to the ILO concerning the Joint USA/ILO Declaration Project with a total budget of US\$1 million to increase the skill and knowledge of Indonesian workers on how to build a democratic healthy and strong union in the workplace, through workers' education and training.

Also, I appreciate the efforts of ILO Norway in cooperation with the ILO, in the field of trade union research and training, and the establishment of a research and training institute.

The great challenges facing Indonesian workers are unemployment, poor education, poverty and the lack of employment generation. The impact of globalization means that Indonesia has to restructure and redesign the industrial sector, industrial relations and the rule of law in all fields and recreate a conducive climate for investment.

In the reformation era, Indonesia developed a democratic life and has now established more than 87 national trade unions. We request the ILO to give higher priority to the developing countries in terms of building industrial relations, giving technical assistance and promoting freedom of association and the rights of workers and their interests.

With regard to strengthening the capacity of national tripartite and sustainable enterprises, the Indonesian workers and employers' associations attending the 1996 session of the International Labour Conference made a statement calling for the more serious implementation of the ILO Conventions in the future.

Finally, may I express the hope that the ILO, together with the United Nations specialized agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will urgently address these problems.

We, the Indonesian workers wholeheartedly support the immediate implementation of this noble goal.

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Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr M. Jahromi, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran

Today, the plenary sitting is taking place in an environment adversely affected by unfair globalization. Peace, security and human rights as critical to any prospects for fair development are absent from many parts of the world and, particularly, from our neighbourhood.

Out there, there are 280 million children who are still working, and around 250 million unemployed in Asia alone, some of them are caught up in the horrendous repercussions of the war in our backyard, as well as in Lebanon and other Arab-occupied territories.

The Global Report, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, also reminds us that discrimination and double discrimination, such as that against women of colour, permeates not only the sphere of labour relations, but also that of international relations.

Globalization would truly lead to prosperity for all if all nations were more or less at the same stage of development and could turn to account its benefits equally. Unfortunately, many nations lack the resources, the infrastructure and the capacity to benefit from it now. Even those few among the developing countries who have ventured to bridge their abysmal scientific and technological gap with developed countries, are in certain cases discriminately coerced to relinquish their hard-earned domestic scientific achievements.

We all need to address the challenges of the new millennium including discrimination, inequality, intolerance, unemployment, global warming and the environment, both at national and international levels. We are therefore of the view that

our peaceful nuclear energy programmes, and those of other developing countries in pursuance of scientific and economic prosperity, should not be discriminated against and adversarially confronted.

The purpose of the Global Report is to provide a dynamic global picture. This should enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of the action undertaken by the Organization and the challenges we still face.

We are committed to achieving the objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals. Working towards economic growth, improving productivity, creating job opportunities, our Government has adopted a number of strategic initiatives. By mobilizing monumental financial grants and technical resources, it is striving to ensure equitable and sustainable employment opportunities for all.

To curb one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, we have placed employment at the centre of our economic and social policies. Creating a promising environment for growth, we managed to create almost 2 million new job opportunities within the last two years, and are striving to reduce the unemployment rate to more desirable levels within the next three years. Equal remuneration for men and women, elimination of child labour, promotion of social justice and empowerment of the vulnerable and promoting health and safety at the workplace, are being successfully implemented, too. Freedom of association, youth and women's employment, the promotion of Small and medium-sized enterprises, ensuring sustainability of the enterprises are also on the top of our agenda.

In conclusion, the Report of the Director-General, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, as in previous years, describes the grim plight of people in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the occupied Syrian Golan. According to the Report, separation barrier, the pervasive system of permits and checkpoints and the construction of the wall put in place by the occupying power, have virtually paralysed the daily life of Palestinians. We therefore urge the ILO to provide in the regular budget for its projects in occupied Palestine so as to alleviate part of the current plight of the Palestinian people.

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**Mr A.M. Motamedi, Member, Iran Confederation
of Employers' Associations, Islamic Republic of Iran**

I wish to express my appreciation to the ILO for organizing the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

This being my first time attending the ILO Conference on behalf of the Employers of Iran, it is especially pleasing to witness the tripartite spirit present among Employers, Workers and Governments, and the real substantive discussions under way in the context of different Committees, especially the Committee on Sustainable Enterprises, where I have the honour to participate and make contributions.

As an industrial employer personally, as well as a representative of the some 3,000 other employers and 77 employer-related NGOs of Iran – who's who of titans of private business – I must confess to being really glad to see that an overwhelming consensus exists crediting the entrepreneur spirit of employers as a prerequisite for the creation of meaningful, sustainable enterprises, which is, in itself a precondition for any thriving, prosperous and stable society.

Time and again, when opinions are expressed as about the needs of any nation aspiring for growth and the creation of wealth which would naturally permeate throughout society, the word entrepreneur is pronounced.

In the last two decades plus, we have witnessed most dramatic changes in the workplace covering a variety of basic, practical doctrines of work, but one in particular stands out as perhaps the most potent driver of them all – namely, the enterprising entrepreneur being behind the wheel of progress and growth.

A lot of countries at the same time acknowledge the importance of preserving and promoting the entrepreneurship ambience of their respective economies but are still at the trial-and-error phase, discovering the basic elements needed in the creation of an entrepreneurial, conducive environment.

To assist with the above, I would like to propose a set of rules that any and all countries can draw from and use as a prescription for entrepreneur seeds to propagate and flourish.

Entrepreneurs really exist in most communities, but where we see them surface and actively take part in the development of their respective societies, industrial and others, is where their certain fundamental rights are legally acknowledged, meticulously fostered and zealously protected.

We see these rights and their practical frame of application as a common denominator in the Constitutions of most developed countries, and, where silence prevails in some countries, it could be remedied by a favourable and positive interpretation to create and protect essential enterprise-creating right.

In order to assist with streamlining research and development of what is needed to formulate the required elements, I would like to take the opportunity at this important international forum to put forward the doctrine of the rights of the entrepreneur, or, in practical ILO terminology, the employer's bill of rights. These basic rights are rather simple, and laws and regulations promulgated by Government can rest on them.

Number one: to have the right to form profitable enterprises and business coalitions.

Two: to have the right of free association and freedom to form non-governmental organizations and international nongovernmental organizations for its needs.

Three: to have the right to be free from unnecessarily restrictive regulations and paperwork, wasting time and energy and hurting production and job creation.

Four: to have the right to be free from any laws or government regulation formulated and enacted without its direct participation from outset.

Five: to have the right that no laws or government acts that negatively impact its property rights, capital or intellectual, may be implemented without just and equitable compensation, determined by the related NGOs.

Six: to have the right of self-determination for the best and most productive use of business resources: capital, labour and others.

Seven: to have the right to be free from frivolous lawsuits and counterproductive, punitive government adjudications.

Dear fellow employers, now the ball is in our court. I sincerely hope a great deal of good comes from this, and we all can make a difference.

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Mr N. Borhani, Chairman, Board of the High Centre of Islamic Labour Councils, Islamic Republic of Iran

Before I begin my speech on behalf of the largest workers' organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Supreme Islamic Labour Council, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the ILO, and particularly by Mr Somavia, to improve the situation of workers throughout the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of the workers who, on 1 May 1886 in Chicago, shed their blood to defend their rights in the fight against exploitation and, in so doing, watered the seed that eventually grew into the ILO. Although over a century separates us from this event, we must admit, sadly, that the workers remain a vulnerable and fragile segment of society, all too often suffering the consequences of inter-State struggles and economic sanctions. As a result of its mandate, its importance and its effectiveness, it is vital that the ILO should protect these workers.

Although time is very short here, there are a number of points that I wanted to share with you.

Firstly, Iranian workers request and hope for support from the ILO in order to ensure the implementation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), not only in Iran but throughout all the member States.

Secondly, the Supreme Islamic Labour Council wishes to encourage the amendment of Chapter VI of the Iranian Labour Code concerning union representation and to ensure that it complies with relevant international standards. The Council also intends to work towards the establishment of a national confederation, taking into account the specific characteristics of Iran, bringing together all workers' organizations, both small and large, and all professional guilds. Ultimately, in order to help the workers negotiate and defend their rights as well as possible, the Supreme Islamic Labour Council puts its hope in membership of international workers' organizations. Here, too, assistance from the ILO would be very valuable to us.

Thirdly, the ILO is also setting up training programmes and workshops in order to build up its Members' skills to promote the sharing of knowledge. We hope that Workers' delegations will be able to participate in these training sessions and to derive the maximum possible benefit from the resources made available by the ILO.

Fourthly, generally speaking, employment remains a major concern for a number of countries where, with the increase in population figures, the transfer of knowledge, science and technology, and people's legitimate expectations of obtaining decent work, there is an assumption of a decent wage for decent work. The issue will have to be tackled in a professional way, and the ILO will have a major role to play in giving the necessary directions and guidance for optimal management of human resources, respect for workers' rights and equality at work.

Fifthly, world trade today would have us suppose that access to technology should be equal between countries (that is what the phrase "world trade" would suggest), but instead, it has become a threat to developing countries and third world countries as a result of the interference of certain multinationals in the market and the consequent deluge of imported goods. There is a growing gap between the very rich, who are becoming richer, and the poor, who are becoming poorer. As the ILO exists to guarantee the protection of workers and is therefore a major actor in protecting human rights, we hope that it will draw up coherent strategies and policies in order to commit itself even more to protecting human rights and to put an end to opportunist profiteering.

Sixthly, in conclusion, I would like to thank all the organizers of this 96th Session of the ILC and, in particular, Mr Somavia and the Governing Body of the ILO, and we hope that one day we will see justice for all and equality at work, the liberation of the occupied territory of Palestine by the Israelis and an end to the killings that are taking place in Iraq, Afghanistan and Colombia, among other places. In actual fact, the Iranian workers reaffirm their support for the Colombian workers, who do not enjoy fundamental freedoms. Their representatives are all too often arrested, have their goods seized and cannot bargain to make their legitimate rights respected. We hope that the ILO, together with the international community will be able to put an end to this intolerable situation.

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Japan

Mr H. Matsuno, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

It is a great honour for me to be given the opportunity to address the 96th International Labour Conference on behalf of the Government of Japan. I see this Conference as a forum to exchange our views and to share our commitment to the goal of decent work. I would like to begin by congratulating the Director-General for his Report on decent work for sustainable development. The Report identifies, in a clear and concise manner, key challenges and opportunities for the ILO today in advancing decent work in the context of globalization and economic development.

Let me repeat our Government's continued, full support for the Decent Work Agenda, for the ILO's initiative in advancing it, and for efforts made by the governments and social partners in each member State. Decent work is not a diversion but a reaffirmation in an integrated manner of the ILO's original mandate. In my view, decent work is also a versatile concept.

On the one hand, it provides an immutable pillar of the value of work and respect for humane conditions of life. On the other, decent work can take many shapes, responding to the specific social and economic circumstances of each society in this diverse world. Decent work should be applied generally in all aspects of work, including the creation, improvement and transition of jobs such as the transition to "green jobs", which is highlighted in the Director-General's Report, and which is increasingly important in the context of global warming. With this attention to specificity, diversity and general applicability, I would like to make the following three points.

First, is the importance of stronger partnerships between the ILO and other United Nations agencies, as articulated in the Director-General's Report. Naturally, the needs of a particular society can be met more comprehensively through a multidisciplinary approach. Some issues are particularly suited to integrated service with a combination of expertise from different fields. In such coordination, the tripartite structure allows the ILO to play a unique role. Tripartism ensures democratic policy formulation that would more fully reflect the specific local situations. This is what the ILO can communicate to its partner organizations, thereby enhancing synergies which should emerge from collaborations among a variety of United Nations agencies.

Second, the need for the ILO to better respond to the diverse circumstances of its Members. While I have just referred to the advantages of tripartism, I also share the view that the ILO itself must reinforce its ability to deliver a service that corresponds to the

collective will of national tripartite discussions; in other words, better “vertical governance” as referred to in the Office’s report on strengthening the ILO’s capacity.

Diversity also means that knowledge sharing could create positive synergies among member States. The ILO could facilitate such exchange of experiences at the regional or global level.

My third point is a pledge for a commitment to participate in such synergies.

Last year, the 14th Asian Regional Meeting launched the Asian decent work decade and declared that constituents will make a joint effort to achieve decent work throughout the region. As part of such efforts, our Government is prepared to make further endeavours in Asia, with particular interest in advancing policies which envisage coordination between the ILO and other UN agencies.

We also welcome the Asian regional forum that will take place this August in Beijing as an immediate opportunity for an exchange of experiences. We look forward to the discussion, all the more for the region’s richness in diversity.

Let me conclude by saying that our identities and interests are diverse but our hopes converge in one aspiration: decent work for all. Thank you.

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Malaysia

Mr C.O. Fong, Minister of Human Resources, Malaysia

The topic of decent work for sustainable development is particularly timely for discussion at this session of the Conference. Malaysia welcomes the Director-General’s Report, *Decent work for sustainable development*, which discusses essential elements for shaping a fair globalization. The Report, among other things, touches on the issues of a balanced approach to sustainable development, more coherent policies on trade and employment and the promotion of social justice, labour market information, social protection and social dialogue, which are undeniably fundamental to decent work.

Sustainable development should be based on three essential components: the creation of economic wealth, environmental improvement and social equity. All these are essential for long-term sustainability. These components should be built into business strategies and form an essential part of the framework of standards and values in the Organization. The framework has to be aligned with major standards such as the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Practising good governance and running businesses within a framework of standards and values will help the Organization in its efforts to achieve sustainable development.

In the present context of liberalization and changing economic scenarios, emphasis should be placed on consultations among governments, employers and workers. These have a responsibility to ensure social protection and security, especially in the case of restructuring, and to implement active labour market policies such as retraining and lifelong learning to remain competitive. At the national level, integrated Decent Work Country Programmes, developed by ILO constituents, should define the priorities and targets within the national development framework. The ILO should provide in-depth expertise and key policy instruments for the design and implementation of these

programmes, for the building of institutions to carry them forward and for the measurement of progress.

My delegation is pleased with the ILO's efforts and commitments in preparing the Global Report on equality at work. Malaysia agrees that there is a need for better enforcement of legislation and non-regulating initiatives by governments and enterprises against discrimination, and the social partners need to be equipped to be more effective in making equality a reality at the workplace.

Furthermore, failure to deal with discrimination at work will mean that it is more difficult to deal with challenges, especially the social dimension of globalization and the need to accommodate diversity. Discrimination can also perpetuate poverty, stifle development, productivity and competitiveness and ignite political unrest. However, States must be allowed to set their own priorities and plan how to deal with discrimination.

We share the deep concern expressed in the Director-General's Report regarding the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. Violence continues to affect the Palestinian civilians and the situation in those territories remains highly volatile. The destruction of Palestinian houses, property, land and infrastructure is a result of continued Israeli occupation and aggressive practices. The Report noted that economic activities have declined sharply, leading to widespread poverty, precarious employment and unemployment. The high unemployment and poverty rates among the Palestinians in the occupied territories are the direct consequences of the restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on the movement of the Palestinians.

These policies have weakened hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, depriving them of their potential to work with dignity and support themselves and their families. The Israeli actions contravene international human rights and laws that guarantee the right to freedom of movement, the right to work and the right to an adequate standard of living.

In this regard, Malaysia calls on the international community to urge strongly the Israeli Government to cease immediately its aggressive and violent actions against the Palestinians in the occupied territories and to respect international laws.

Malaysia welcomes the efforts of the ILO to intensify its programmes on technical cooperation, capacity building and the promotion of social dialogues to bring peace and development to the occupied territories, with the aim of increasing work opportunities and reducing poverty and unemployment. Malaysia also reaffirms its full support for the peace process and for stability in the occupied territories in order to achieve peace and security in the region.

Malaysia wishes to underline the importance of the ongoing efforts to improve the working methods and procedures of the Committee on the Application of Standards and the expansion of the Committee on Freedom of Association. I wish to reiterate that these Committees must continue to focus on enhancing their transparency, objectivity and credibility in order to carry out the ILO's mandate.

In this regard, Malaysia supports the statements by the Non-Aligned Movement that provide the specific inputs aimed at improving the methods and procedures of the Committee on the Application of Standards and also the justification for the expansion of the Committee on Freedom of Association. We hope that both the Committees and the ILO will address these matters in a constructive manner for the benefit of all Members.

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**Mr S.S. Syed Mohamud, President,
Malaysian Trades Union Congress, Malaysia**

The Decent Work Agenda has been touted as the response of the workers towards the many ills of globalization where there is simply too much evidence suggesting that the majority of the world population has not had an increase of its standard of living in tandem with economic growth rate.

In this time and age, we are still dealing with issues concerning abject poverty, a widening wealth gap, and major medical and environmental concerns. Needless to say, it is the poorer segment of society that bears the greater cost of this.

Players in the international community have signed trade accords, and many other global, regional and multilateral agreements, which mostly support the interest of trade and the protection of those who control capital. The one regret we must all have is that we have done virtually nothing to protect those who really need protection – the poor, marginalized, oppressed and exploited. There are vast amounts of literature which extol the virtues of successful corporations, highlighting the managerial precepts that have made them so successful.

What is the measure of success? I must very humbly ask. Could we consider pressuring people to work longer hours for less pay, sacrificing their family life and working to the detriment of the interests of a larger society, something which should be lauded and emulated?

Pursuing the Decent Work Agenda is a responsibility and duty of anyone, and any institution which has genuine interest of the world population in mind. There is simply no need to compromise or for any negotiation to accede to the demand that people be treated with dignity and respect.

I am sure that everyone here would agree that capital should be working to serve the interests of people and not for people to enslave themselves for capital.

The many rights that have been fought for and we now take for granted are slowly but surely being eroded away. I would use, as one example, the issue of working hours. Many countries have in place as part of the employment legislation that workers should not be subjected to more than eight hours of work per day. What we see today is pressure being inflicted on the government to rely on this, to allow for capital to subject workers to longer working hours.

One may try to argue that such employees have choice. Do employees really have a choice? In reality, it is obvious that employees do not have a choice if they are faced with the prospect of losing their jobs if they do not agree to such exploitative practices. These days the threat of moving to a lower level cost country with a scant regard for the right of workers is always there.

We live in a world where we fight terrorism on one hand even where there is no evidence that terrorist activities have taken place in some instances. When, on the other hand, we turn a blind eye to the atrocities which are committed to children who are forced to work and to other forms of forced work through human trafficking and through continued enslavement and exploitation of the voiceless, the under privileged and the oppressed. The international community has all but ignored the violations being committed against the people and workers of Burma/Myanmar, something which there can be little excuse for. A firm commitment and focus by the international community could address this issue as well as other injustices that exist in the world. The Decent Work Agenda and trade are not mutually exclusive and can operate side by side. I would urge all of you to

ensure that this session amounts to more than a place where rhetoric is announced but to work to effectively implement the Decent Work Agenda.

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Mongolia

Mr D. Damdin, Minister for Social Welfare and Labour, Mongolia

On behalf of the Government of Mongolia and in my own name, I would like to wish every success for the activities of the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Although Mongolia confronted a number of challenges and obstacles in its transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, in its efforts to reform social relations in the 1990s, it was able to successfully overcome these challenges and obstacles and make progress towards economic stability. In recent years our economy has grown steadily, at an average rate of 6 to 10.7 per cent, the inflation rate has decreased, and foreign trade and the overall state budget balance have recorded surpluses.

Some issues related to the Millennium Development Goals remain to be resolved, as GDP per capita continues to be low. Unemployment and poverty rates remain high. Mongolia has therefore developed and started to implement specific development policies and programmes which take into account both external and internal factors as well as its commitments made before the international community with regard to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Thus an economic growth support and poverty reduction strategy has been developed and approved. Furthermore, the national development strategy has been elaborated as a long- and medium-term comprehensive policy document for Mongolia. In accordance with the Mongolian decent work action plan for 2005–08 adopted by the Government, the country programme for decent work has been developed in cooperation with the ILO in order to provide technical and methodological support in implementing the action plan. The Government of Mongolia pays great attention to the promotion of tripartism and social dialogue and to ensuring public participation in the implementation of this programme, which aims at reducing unemployment and poverty and promoting decent work through efficient use of support and technical assistance from foreign countries, the ILO and other international organizations along with domestic resources.

Enactment of state legislation on the informal sector by the Mongolian Parliament creates an enabling environment for making concrete progress to ensure fundamental human rights at work, to create jobs and adapt various forms of employment, to advance the social dialogue mechanism and to improve social protection in Mongolia.

The Government of Mongolia has ratified the basic ILO Conventions in order to ensure fundamental principles and rights at work within the framework of the international normative system. It has accepted the amendment to the ILO Constitution which was adopted at the 85th Session of the ILC in 1997 and has submitted it to the Parliament of Mongolia for ratification. With the ratification of ILO Conventions Nos 29 and 105 on forced labour in 2005, Mongolia joined the list of countries that have accepted and ratified all eight core Conventions. Furthermore, preparations are under way to ratify other ILO Conventions, such as Convention No. 160 on labour statistics, Convention No. 187 on the promotional framework for occupational safety and health and Convention No. 102 on social security.

The ratification of the social security Convention will promote the reform of social welfare and insurance schemes in Mongolia and will provide an essential framework for the establishment of a development-oriented social security system. The improvement in national legislation so as to raise it to the level of international standards is one of the core conditions for promoting decent work. Therefore, as a member State, the Government of Mongolia pays particular attention to further improving the legal framework for the implementation of ratified and soon-to-be-ratified Conventions. In cooperation with the ILO, amendments to the law on the labour force and on the law on occupational safety and health are being drafted in accordance with international labour principles. I would like to express our appreciation to the ILO for its technical assistance in drafting the abovementioned legislation.

The IPEC programme, encouraging productive and decent work for youth, promoting the employability and employment of people with disabilities through effective legislation and social dialogue, is now being successfully implemented in Mongolia. The conclusion of the first two phases of the IPEC programme has contributed significantly to the implementation of public policy on children's issues, so as to enhance public awareness of child labour and to accelerate national incentives aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour. There is an apparent need to broaden the scope and efficiency of our cooperation in the future, especially since the Government of Mongolia has proclaimed 2007 as the year of great endeavours and a year of creation of new jobs. This will serve as a concrete step towards implementing the Decent Work Agenda, with strengthened collaboration among governmental and non-governmental organizations in the private sector.

In conclusion, within the framework of our national development strategy, a wide range of policies – such as implementing the country action plan for decent work, facilitating employment, improving labour statistics, strengthening social dialogue and reforming the social security system – will be systematically undertaken. Cooperation among member States, technical assistance and support from the ILO will certainly play a very important role in this effort.

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Nepal

Mr R. Lekhak, Minister of State, Ministry of Labour and Transport Management, Nepal

On behalf of the Government of Nepal and on my own behalf I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, on your election to the Presidency of the Conference. My delegation is fully confident that your able leadership and wisdom will steer the Conference to a successful conclusion.

I have brought with me the sincere greetings and best wishes from the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, a veteran trade unionist and an icon of the Nepalese democratic movement. I also take this opportunity to extend my profound thanks to the Director-General of the ILO, a great friend of Nepal, for his recitation of respect and regards to the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal. I congratulate the Director-General for his Report, *Decent work and sustainable development*, which encompasses in its depth and width the core fundamentals of a just, democratic and sustainable society.

Let me briefly highlight some of the historic changes taking place in the political landscape of my country, Nepal, which will have a definitive impact in the areas of work, employment and production. Following the monumental success of the historic People's Movement in April 2006, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the Government and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), an interim Constitution promulgated, an interim Parliament formed and an eight-party interim Government put in place, inducting the former rebel party into the Government. The decade-long violent conflict was effectively ended.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement places a special emphasis on the maintenance of industrial harmony, the right to collective bargaining, social security, the amicable settlement of industrial disputes and respect for fundamental ILO principles at work. Further, in the interim Constitution of Nepal, the right to employment and social security and the right to form trade unions have been enshrined as fundamental rights for the first time in our constitutional history. The Constitution places the State under an obligation to increase opportunities for employment and income generation by enlarging investment in industry, trade and export promotion while at the same time ensuring the occupational rights of the workers. Trade union leaders have been nominated as members of the interim Parliament. For the first time in the history of the country, a Labour and Industrial Relations Committee has been created in Parliament to look into labour-related issues.

I would like to reiterate our deep and abiding commitment to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Nepal has already ratified six out of the eight fundamental ILO Conventions. The ratification of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), is under active consideration by the Government of Nepal and will soon be submitted to Parliament for final approval.

The National Plan of Action for Decent Work has been framed and significant policy measures have been devised in the areas of migration and HIV/AIDS in the workplace. After about three years, the Government has approved and implemented the new minimum wage. Now we are in the process of formulating new labour legislation based on the principle of flexibility and social protection.

Economic liberalization and globalization have completely changed the global economy and the world of work. Capital, technologies, goods and services have global mobility without the barriers of national borders. This has created unprecedented challenges and opportunities for all countries – challenges and opportunities which are unevenly distributed. The reality is that the weak and lower-income countries are trapped in a vicious circle of poverty, marginalization, stagnation and unemployment. They are in greater need of support and cooperation. Therefore, our collective efforts should be directed towards promoting an inclusive and fair globalization, enhancing high, broad-based and sustainable economic growth and gainful decent employment opportunities. Labour migration is another prominent issue of interest. In many cases, migrant workers are working in vulnerable conditions. Our focused attention is required to protect the rights of workers working outside the country as well.

The Government of Nepal is fully committed to eliminating all exploitative forms of child labour. The National Master Plan on Child Labour 2004–14, is also under implementation. The master plan has set a time-bound goal to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2009 and other forms of child labour as a whole by 2014. The ILO/IPEC Time-bound Programme has assisted us in implementing the first phase of our Time-bound Programme on the elimination of child labour was completed last year. Extension of the programme for the second phase would further strengthen our capacity to deal with the problem.

Let me also take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the ILO for the technical cooperation that is being provided to Nepal. At present, we are in a special situation of a post-conflict peace-building process. Our needs are enormous and people's aspirations are high.

Finally, I would like to express our firm commitment to eliminating child labour, strengthening tripartism, enhancing social dialogue and mainstreaming labour standards and rights at work in the ongoing peace process. I call for the ILO to play a vigorous and supportive role in helping us to achieve these goals.

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**Mr A. Shrestha, Third Vice-President,
Federation of Nepalese Chamber of
Commerce and Industries, Nepal**

I am privileged to make my short remarks before this eminent presence of delegates at this session of the International Labour Conference. This is a very important forum where we come together to express views, concerns, and matters of interest, as well as discussing the issue of socio-economic development. I strongly believe that the views expressed, the concerns raised here, and the discussion that takes place, will certainly help us to understand the underlying problems and help the ILO to develop and shape new policies and programmes which are essential and relevant to deal with the new challenges.

The Director-General's Report and the issues raised in it have drawn our attention. The Report has focused on various issues, with special focus on fundamental principles and rights at work. The Report points out many sectors that lag behind in terms of complaints regarding standards and improvement in working conditions and the quality of working life. Why is that so? It is because countries have their own specific conditions and do not have similar capacity for addressing the problems they face.

It has been found that over the years, countries have achieved significant development in the promotion of labour standards, improving working conditions and enhancing the quality of life for working people. However, in the changed business environment, businesses are facing problems in sustaining themselves while meeting the increased demands of workers. Failure to improve the situation is affected by various factors. However, it is not worth considering only one side of this. It is more important to understand the dynamics and the factors responsible for this and the problems being faced by business.

Most of you are aware of the situation we are facing in Nepal at present. We are passing through a period of transition which, on the one hand, provides ample opportunities while, on the other, creating immense challenges. However, we have been making efforts to address the socio-economic issues despite our various problems and the adverse business environment.

I would not like to repeat in detail the developments we have made, as our Government delegates have already shed light on those aspects. At present, our primary concern is to sustain existing employment and create conducive empowerment, while maintaining industrial peace and employment generation. The employers' organizations of Nepal are working together and actively involved in promoting good industrial relations, reducing gender disparities, eliminating child labour and developing better working conditions. A legal body is being established to work on legislative reforms, as well as to help industries and enhance the complaints procedures, labour laws and the regulations.

Youth unemployment is one of the crucial issues in Nepal. Taking into account the youth situation in the country, we have already started some work on it and are planning to implement a project on youth employment in cooperation with the ILO. We believe all these efforts are directed towards developing a decent work environment in the country.

The changed business environment and various influences have put pressure to make changes and employment adjustments. It has become necessary to review policy and legislation. In this regard, the impetus has been given to social dialogue, with the Government and trade unions.

Distinguished delegates, efforts to establish industrial peace are our major concern. It is widely accepted that labour flexibility is required to ensure industrial growth and to respond to the global forces and emerging trends. Therefore, I would like to ask the ILO to look on the various issues that countries are facing across the globe and give its extensive support.

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**Mr K.N. Dahal, Acting President, Democratic
Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions, Nepal**

It is my great pleasure to participate in the 96th Session of the ILO Conference as a delegate on behalf of Nepali workers. I would like to congratulate the President and the Director-General of the ILO for steering this Conference successfully.

A year back, Nepali people achieved victory over the autocratic regime of the King and restored full-fledged democracy in Nepal. To achieve this victory, more than six million people participated in demonstrations throughout the country, a majority of whom were workers. Twenty-one of the demonstrators, half of which were workers and unionists attained martyrdom, over 5,000 sustained serious injury, (over 2,000 were workers), and thousands were arrested and detained. Trade unions played a vital role in making this historic movement a success. We achieved this result with the strong solidarity of democracy-loving countries and institutions, in particular, the ILO and the trade union community of the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our tribute and gratitude to the entire ILO family and the international trade union community which supported us in the time of difficulty.

After the restoration of democracy in Nepal, the Parliament made a historic declaration. This declaration, often called the Magna Carta of Nepal, formally ended the old concept of having the King in Parliament. Similarly, the Parliament also allowed senior officials to join unions.

Following the historic declaration of the Parliament, the Government of Nepal and the Maoist Party entered into negotiation to end the decade-long armed conflict. On 21 November 2006, the Government of Nepal and the Maoist Party inked the comprehensive peace accord which effectively ended the decade-long armed conflict.

On 15 January 2007, the Parliament dissolved the old constitution and promulgated an interim constitution. The interim constitution incorporated workers' rights as fundamental rights and makes a provision for the establishment of a labour commission.

On 2 December 2006, four Nepali trade union confederations, (the Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions, the Nepal Trade Union Congress and the All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) a Maoist trade union) made a ten-point declaration in the presence of the ILO Country Director to respect each other mutually and maintain congenial industrial relations. The declaration provides a sound basis for solidarity among the trade unions in the country and expects all parties involved in it, including ANTUF, to respect and honour the spirit of the declaration.

Although the armed conflict has formally ended, it has still not been resolved completely. We are in a transitional phase. People, representing different ethnic groups, castes, classes and regions, are demanding their participation in the development of the new Constitution as well as in the State structure. I expect that political peace will be established completely after the election of the constitutional assembly, but we have to work hard to establish economic as well as industrial peace.

In Nepal, more than 90 per cent of workers are working in the informal economy. There is no provision for workers' registration or social protection. Workers are not even getting a minimum wage. Because of globalization and a decade-long conflict, the formal sector has been informalized. We can see tremendous effects of this armed conflict on the working people. Women and children are among the most serious victims of the armed conflicts. The incidence of child labour seems to have increased. Unemployment and underemployment is high. Besides those working in India, more than 1.5 million Nepali workers are working in different countries as migrant workers. They are not receiving economic and social protection from the receiving countries.

After the restoration of democracy, we are now in the process of reconstruction. After the promulgation of the interim constitution and the formation of a new Parliament, we are now in need of reforming our labour market. This process has to cover the social transformation of education, technology and the economy. Free and compulsory education can support working children for their better future. Knowledge about new technology will increase the skill of workers. Social protection is the key issue for the working people. Without workers' participation in the decision-making process, we can not think about social justice and good governance. Without the provision of social security for all, labour market reform is impossible. Without increasing workers' skills, employment generation is not possible. Without respecting the rights to organize and bargain collectively, industrial peace will not exist. Without fair globalization, workers' dignity will not be maintained. Without unionizing workers who are working in informal economy within the trade union movement, workers' voices will not be strong. Without a united voice of trade unions, workers' demands will not be fulfilled. Without accepting decent work and a poverty reduction, the socio-economic conditions of working people will not be improved. Without addressing post-conflict situation properly, sustainable peace and better industrial relations will not be maintained.

Considering these issues, I heartily request the ILO family, the international trade union community, governments and international financial institutions to support Nepali workers for the creation of more decent jobs, for social justice and social security for all, for the elimination of child labour, for addressing issues of women and men workers who are working in the informal economy, for workers' participation in the decision-making process, for management of post-conflict situations, for improvement of the situation of migrant workers and for protection of the right of association and collective bargaining.

Thank you very much for listening.

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New Zealand

Ms R. Dyson, Minister of Labour, New Zealand

I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his Report to the Conference entitled *Decent work for sustainable development*. The Report is a valuable stocktake of the issues, challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. It is particularly important as we seek to fully embed and position the ILO's Decent Work Agenda towards achieving equitable and sustainable development at the local and global levels.

New Zealand strongly supports the theme of decent work for sustainable development. Sustainable development is a major policy plank of our Government and underlines, and is reflected within, our approach to a wide range of issues.

We believe that, in undertaking these important discussions, it is crucial that we consider the goal of sustainable development in a broad fashion. In other words, and as the Director-General notes, in a way that encompasses and integrates social, economic and environmental considerations.

In influencing and participating in this process, we believe that the ILO should focus and look to build on its unique and particular strengths. That is, what the ILO does best: technical excellence in labour issues; labour standard setting; and tripartism.

We had demonstrated our support of the Decent Work Agenda through the launch earlier this year of a tripartite decent work web site which charts New Zealand's progress towards the decent work objectives. I would like to mention three other areas where the Decent Work Agenda has been promoted in New Zealand, along with another initiative to ensure that such moves are sustainable.

Our Government, not only as a regulator but as a provider and a procurer of services, is fully committed to the promotion of collective bargaining. We have recently moved to tackle endemic problems of low pay and high turnover of staff in our domestic support and residential aged care sectors through collective bargaining. This move will result in benefits for workers, employers and their aged and disabled clients. Secondly, we have continued to increase the minimum wage every year. Thirdly, we have legislated so that vulnerable workers whose employer will change when a contract for work is won by another employer, cannot be re-employed on lower wages or conditions. But my point on these and other initiatives is that they must be sustainable, and therefore the value of the work that our lowest-paid and most vulnerable perform must be increased. If we add value to the work, our Decent Work Agenda will be sustainable.

A critical part of the ability to deliver this agenda is the budget for the ILO. New Zealand supports the ILO in continuing to scrutinize the increased demand for ILO services, to prioritize its work and to provide evaluative information to allow assessment of the value of new proposals and existing work. We agree that the common and global goal of decent work for all is a vital part of the international development agenda and an essential element in shaping a fair, and therefore sustainable, process of globalization.

The ILO is already well positioned to work towards this goal through its unique tripartite structure and approach to social dialogue, a strength that should not be underestimated. In New Zealand we continue to look at ways to encourage tripartite participation across a range of economic and social policy initiatives. We strongly support the ILO's model of social dialogue as an important part of policy development, social inclusion and institutional capacity building. New Zealand welcomes increased dialogue and collaboration between the ILO and other key multilateral actors, both within and

outside the United Nations system. Increasing policy coherence in the international arena is essential in order to ensure that we efficiently and effectively work towards the goal of decent work for all.

I note the Report's discussion of the linkage between trade and employment-related issues. New Zealand recognizes that economic and trade agreements are not ends in themselves. The ultimate purpose of trade liberalization is to improve living standards in the countries whose governments have negotiated them. For this reason we have a well-established trade and labour framework which seeks to better integrate labour standards within trade agreements. This framework guides our approach to these issues, both multilaterally and bilaterally.

In conclusion, the New Zealand Government is committed to working with and within the ILO, if it moves to effectively position itself to address the challenges and opportunities inherent in the multilateral arena and working towards the development of decent work for sustainable development. We look forward, as a country, to participating actively in this important dialogue.

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**Mr P. O'Reilly, Chief Executive Officer,
Business New Zealand, New Zealand**

I would like to concentrate in my remarks on the part of the Director-General's Report that concerns sustainable enterprises. The notion of sustainable enterprises is one that has gained increasing attention in recent years, but in reality the need for sustainability is far from new. The whole idea of good business is to sustain and grow your enterprise.

Some companies will inevitably fail. That is because the very essence of enterprise is that business entails risk: usually with your own money, if you are a small enterprise, which the vast majority of businesses are.

Since there are bound to be some failures, reasonable social protections are necessary, as the Director-General's Report points out. Those protections should provide a bridge to new employment and retain social cohesion, while not becoming an end in themselves.

But the fact that some enterprises will fail is no reason to abandon faith in the free market, as the Director-General appears to have done. So I have real concerns with some aspects of the Report.

Sustainable enterprise and development is first and foremost the product of successful entrepreneurship. Sustainable enterprises are private sector creations, which require sensible underpinning policies to survive. It is therefore good to see, by contrast, the ILO's Report VI on the same subject, and the draft conclusions of the Conference Committee itself, which recognize the importance of enterprise as a principal source of growth and employment.

Report VI acknowledges that "regulatory policy-making presents a conundrum", with constant demands for protective regulation that "can impose excessive costs and constrain productivity". But all too often, the view of the ILO can appear to be that any labour regulation at all is a good thing, when in reality labour regulation, like all regulation, needs to be well thought through, fit for its purpose, efficient, and conducive to enterprise growth. When it is all those things, workers' rights are most likely to be well protected.

Today, for enterprises to be truly sustainable, there is a need to abandon past attitudes (where these still persist) and look for ways in which employees and employers can cooperate to their mutual benefit.

Last year's 14th Asian Regional Meeting in Busan produced a list of 15 priority actions for realizing decent work and the reduction of poverty in that region. Among these, two in particular, if carefully implemented, will go a long way towards ensuring sustainable enterprises. They are: firstly, improve effective labour market governance by adopting, implementing and reviewing labour laws and social policies against the objectives of full and productive work sought by the Decent Work Agenda; and, secondly, develop effective labour management cooperation and bipartite partnership mechanisms and other appropriate institutions and regulations, including frameworks for social dialogue, as important elements for the effective and fair functioning of labour markets.

The ILO has a big role to play in these aims. It can start by doing more of what it is good at – building the capacity of governments and of employers' and workers' organizations so that they can together work out what is best for them in their own countries.

In doing this the ILO would be well advised to steer clear of the idea that its rules should always be interpreted in precisely its way.

Our Conference conversation on sustainable enterprise this year was a good start. Let us hope that we can build general acceptance here that successful enterprise is crucial. And that, as well as agreeing on all of the important protections and advances for workers that may be appropriate, that we can also agree that entrepreneurship is critically important, and that at least one role of all governments – assisted by the ILO – should be to build a truly enabling business environment.

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**Ms L. Harre, National Secretary,
National Distribution Union, New Zealand**

I will begin my contribution this morning with a short traditional Maori greeting that acknowledges the diversity and unity of those in this room.

E nga iwi

E nga reo

e nga karangatanga maha o nga hau e wha

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou tatou katoa

My job here is to respond on behalf of New Zealand workers to the Director-General's Report to the Conference. We appreciate the forthright way in which he has exposed shortcomings in progress towards social, environmental and economic sustainability. We agree that by handing much of its responsibility to the free market, the policy establishment has facilitated the transfer of wealth from workers to owners and greater income inequality within and between countries.

Constraining the exercise of property rights, including the rights of owners of capital, is a fundamental role of public policy and also a central purpose of this Organization. That is what labour standards do.

Last century's pact between business and labour enabled economic development in the Western industrialized countries through long-term private investment, public investment in social and physical infrastructure, and the welfare state. But agreements were only reached because workers were organized industrially and politically. Securing an environment for growth required employers to reach agreement with a confident and organized international workers' movement.

Thus, the values underpinning the foundation of the ILO, expressed in the cornerstones of social dialogue and collective bargaining, were necessary conditions for the Western development model last century. Yet, today's prevailing economic model generally treats those values as obstacles, rather than assets.

In his Report the Director-General makes a strong business case for international labour standards as a development imperative. However, a renewed commitment by ILO constituents, and in particular those who contravene its basic tenets, requires our intellectual belief in the importance of labour standards, social dialogue and collective bargaining to be demonstrated in practical terms. That, in turn, requires much more support for workers' collective organization.

We want an equal voice at the workplace, industry and national policy-making levels, as well as in this Organization. Labour market deregulation in New Zealand in the 1990s has had a sustained negative impact on workers' power at the workplace level. This problem remains despite industrial relations law reform based on the promotion of collective bargaining and improved workplace organizing rights.

Decent jobs in the manufacturing sector have increasingly been replaced with precarious, low-paid jobs in a growing domestic services sector – including in the areas previously dominated by the unpaid work of women, like caring for our elders. To restore and improve on the decent work won through industrial and political struggles last century, in New Zealand we will have to overcome three related obstacles.

First, the limitations of enterprise-based collective bargaining. With more workers employed by companies that compete viciously for market share in the domestic services sector, we need to extend collective bargaining to whole industries.

Second, and despite the organizing rights provided by law, the diminished capacity of unions to reach out to the vast majority of workers in the private sector who are neither union members nor covered by collective agreements.

And thirdly, the continuing hostility of employers to unionization and collective bargaining.

A genuine tripartite commitment to decent work, underpinned by social dialogue and collective bargaining, will assist us in overcoming these obstacles. Indeed, by virtue of our presence here each of the constituent groups in the ILO has taken on a duty to do just that:

- government, through its regulatory, public sector employment and service procurement roles;
- employers' organizations, by building support for worker participation and helping overcome resistance to collective bargaining among their members;
- unions, by reaching beyond the traditional industrial workforce and sharing our resources to organize the new workforce in today's industries and across the globe;

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- and the ILO, by promoting worker participation and helping to build the capacity of workers to engage in all relevant forums.

We particularly hope that governments will accept the challenge put down here in this Conference by the President of Chile to demonstrate commitment to the ILO principles by actively rebuilding union capacity and influence. The ILO commitment to social justice is timeless. However, history tells us that building the power of workers to organize is the best tool we have for achieving this ideal.

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Pakistan

Mr M.A.H. Khan, Secretary, Labour and Manpower Division, Pakistan

It is an honour for me to address the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference, the parliament of the world of work. The Conference provides an excellent opportunity to reflect upon the challenges raised by the Governments and the social partners in the tripartite setting of the ILO.

The Director-General, in his Report to the International Labour Conference, has outlined the challenges and the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and has presented some options for meeting these challenges and their impact on sustainable development. We find the Director-General's views of great interest and believe that they merit further discussion and careful reflection. I would like to share some general thoughts on the issue.

Promoting decent work requires, as a prerequisite, the existence of sustainable enterprises. For this, managing the effects of globalization, strengthening institutions and governments at all levels is essential. This is not an easy task, especially in the context of the rapid and profound changes being brought about by globalization. Decent work is best promoted through strong and efficient markets and strong effective institutions.

Social inequality within and among nations, aggravated by an uneven distribution of benefits and the cost of globalization, is a serious threat to sustainable development. We have to ensure that human financial and material resources are combined equitably and efficiently to achieve innovation and enhanced productivity. This calls for a new form of cooperation among governments, businesses and societies.

The ILO, with its unique tripartite structure, has a central role to play in all the areas that I have just mentioned. We would agree with the Director-General that in order for the ILO to play an effective role this Organization must constantly review and strengthen its capacity to assist its membership. However, we believe that in doing so we must especially strengthen the Organization's ability to undertake data gathering and analytical work, provide technical assistance in complex, interdisciplinary areas pertaining to employment generation and promote consensus on optimal approaches to achieve decent work in the specific socio-economic context of particular countries. At the same time, the tendency to overload review and reporting mechanisms should be avoided.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees freedom and non-discrimination in fundamental human rights. No citizen otherwise qualified for employment can be discriminated against on any grounds. Moreover, Pakistan is one of those countries that has ratified all eight core Conventions of the ILO.

In line with these objectives, the Government of Pakistan has made decent employment central to its economic development policies and has stressed the creation of conditions conducive to decent employment generation, poverty reduction and human resource development for sustainable economic and social development.

The initiatives in these areas include the poverty reduction support strategy, which aims to address people below the poverty line in providing employment opportunities, social security and education. This has brought 10 per cent of the people above the poverty line and reduced unemployment from 7.8 per cent to 6.4 per cent.

Specially targeted programmes have been undertaken for women's empowerment to provide equal opportunities for decent employment. Recently, the Government has reserved 10 per cent of posts in all public sector organizations for women.

Similarly, the Ministry of Labour has undertaken labour inspection and the social protection policies, skills development and a labour market management system to increase employment and decent work.

Pakistan is one of the eight countries in which a "One UN" pilot project was initiated in March this year. We in Pakistan are working closely with the ILO and the social partners, as well as with other United Nations organizations to implement the Decent Work Country Programme. We place on record our appreciation of the support and assistance provided by the ILO and its area office in Islamabad. We are convinced that we will succeed in implementing our Decent Work Agenda, despite the challenges of an ever more globalizing world.

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**Mr A.W. Tabani, President,
Employers' Federation of Pakistan, Pakistan**

Let me begin by extending the greetings of the employers of Pakistan to the President and the delegates attending this 96th Session. We wish at the outset to compliment the Director-General on his Report to the Conference this year. It conveys to the tripartite constituents the advice to develop policy tools for a "green jobs initiative" aimed at achieving an environmentally sustainable process of development. This is in addition to his discussion on the wide range of issues on decent work deficits, moving forward on the Decent Work Agenda, the key issues for action as decent work has now become part of economic, social and environmental policies. He has highlighted the need to develop better methodologies to capture the reality of unemployment in developing countries and has emphasized the need for better data as being vital to ILO policy initiatives as well as measuring progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015.

This year I have had the honour of being the spokesperson for the Employers' group in the general discussion on strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members. It is from that experience and perspective that I would consider the Director-General's Report to this Conference. From our debate there was real convergence among participants for the ILO to focus on a core mandate in the world of work. It is only then that the ILO can ensure effectiveness to its constituents, but also to others within the context of globalization as well as United Nations reform. As a pilot country in the United Nations reform process, we are convinced that we need a strong, focused ILO, one that can clearly articulate what it can do to strengthen tripartism, give recognition to the role of key national actors and contribute at country level. Until we have that focus restored, and until the ILO's capacity is rebuilt with regard to its knowledge, skills base and analytical

capacity, as has been mentioned by the Director-General himself, I would caution against looking to shift its work into other areas, important though those areas may be. That is not to say that the ILO should not move forward. It certainly should, as the dynamics of globalization mean that change should be accepted as a constant factor.

An example of how the ILO can be effective comes from my own country. Recently we experienced an important buyer withdrawal from the Sialkot region of Pakistan, an area where sports goods, especially hand-sewn footballs, are produced and where large numbers of small manufacturers depend on export markets for their well-being. Through ILO engagement with us, our worker colleagues and others have been able to respond effectively to the concerns behind buyer withdrawal and they have recently agreed to reengage and buy from Sialkot. ILO assistance was instrumental in achieving that result, and I would like to express my thanks to Mr Kari Tapiola and his team as well as the ILO Islamabad Office for their practical help in realizing this most positive outcome.

The ILO, through consultations with the tripartite partners, has finalized a plan of action to train employers and workers in the Sialkot region in the application and observance of relevant national labour laws in order to satisfy their buyers. I wish to express our satisfaction with the continued cooperation of the ILO Islamabad Office with the Employers' Federation of Pakistan in the realization of our Decent Work Country Programmes. I wish to thank the ILO Director for his support.

We have noted with satisfaction that the Report recognizes the role of business, albeit cautiously. What is now needed is for the Governing Body to ensure that this realization is reflected in programmes and resources within the employment sector. The ILO is focusing more and more on the experiences and roles of multinational enterprises, thus ignoring the overwhelming majority of small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources and which face continued challenges as to their sustainability. This is a group that needs the help and assistance of the ILO. It is at this level of economic activity where job creation and entrepreneurship need to be facilitated by an appropriate regulatory environment supportive of business.

The Director-General has also discussed the widening gaps in the distribution of income and wealth in many countries and the fact that labour income in 16 developing countries fell on average from 68 per cent to 62 per cent as a share of national wealth. These are alarming figures. In this context, the report *World Trade 2006, Prospects for 2007*, released by the WTO in April of this year, warns us of the risks that lie ahead in 2007 following the strong trade figures of 2006. It is expected that global merchandise trade could slow down to 6 per cent compared to 8 per cent in 2006. That is a very sharp reduction of 2 per cent, and all should not go well for 2007.

While I can understand the rich contents of the Director-General's Report, it would be my strong recommendation that the Governing Body consider its elements. It can then decide strategically whether the ILO should involve itself and, if so, how, remembering always that the ILO is there first and foremost to respond to the needs of its constituents, to help them to be as effective as possible at the national level and to respond to their needs for technical cooperation that actually helps people. That it what should guide the ILO now and in the future.

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Philippines

Mr A. Brion, Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippines

Last year in Busan, we have already reported what the Philippines has done and what it then intended to do. We have incorporated the Decent Work Agenda in our Philippine Medium-Term Development Plan and we intend to further enhance our policies on circular migration as one of the tools of addressing poverty, the main target of the Decent Work Agenda in a country like the Philippines.

This year, we wish to report that we have made some headway, particularly in the areas the present Report mentioned, and let me relate some of them. In the area of tripartism, we have gone beyond the usual concept by adopting our “3+ programme” which we are already implementing at the regional level and at least in our National Human Resource Conference on productivity and competitiveness. “3+” means going beyond the government, employer, worker model to actively include other stakeholders, particularly local government units, academia, and NGOs. This is the model now that we are building upon in our labour relations and job facilitation approaches.

We have laid down the information groundwork through the development of a Philippine Labor Index, the first of its kind, that we shall use as a summary measure of the progress and gaps in decent work in the Philippines. We are also working towards a skills registry of both our local and overseas workers as a first step towards our job facilitation activities, particularly for the new local and overseas markets. We are calling 2007 our “supply-side year”, as we look not only at the available manpower, but at their intrinsic quality and that of the services they deliver.

We started in the field of household service workers, where the Philippines has a significant share overseas, by requiring assessment and training of our people before they are deployed overseas. In the process, we have set a minimum salary for their services as a marker for the economic value of their services.

We have likewise launched what the International Organization for Migration (IOM) called the first of its kind, our National Reintegration Center, that addresses the transition of our overseas Filipino workers as they return into mainstream Philippine life. We aim to do this while they are still working overseas by linking them up already with their home communities and by addressing their active economic concerns such as remittances and its costs, savings and investments, and the avoidance of the rags-to-riches-to-rags syndrome. We hope to roll out the Center’s full range of activities by the end of this year.

Our developing economy, which started to take off last year, is now gathering strength, favourably affecting the value of the peso, increasing our overall growth rate and allowing us to create 1.528 million new jobs last year. The sad note is that this achievement hardly made a dent in our unemployment figures, which only went down from 8.1 per cent to 7.8 per cent, because the size of our incoming labour entrants merely offset the job creations.

Another area where we appear to be failing is in the report card of the Committee on Freedom of Association which has asked us to explain our various deficiencies under the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

I am aware that this is not the time and place for discussion of this concern. But we do have systemic concerns that we share with the other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, led by Cuba, particularly in looking at the structures and operations of the Committee and its overall effectiveness. The Philippines can only hope that the Committee will be very discerning in giving due course to complaints and in appreciating explanations given. I refer particularly to premature referrals by complainants who have not exhausted their remedies in the local forum and who are simply engaged in forum shopping and other sinister designs. I refer, too, to those who complain to the ILO but at the same time refuse to cooperate in addressing the subject matter of the complaint in the local forum, giving rise to the suspicion that they simply want to use the Committee as a press forum and are not after actual remedies.

We hope, finally, that perceived problems and deficiencies shall be evaluated in the context of a country's unique circumstances, degree of development, history and track record, for each country is different in these respects. As a rule, we posit that faithful Members of the ILO need assistance and encouragement, not condemnation, if indeed there are deficiencies.

Having said all this, let me conclude with the commitment that the Philippines shall continue its vigorous push for decent work and in pursuing the ideals of the ILO, because these are irreplaceable keys to our development as well as effective means to serve the greater interests of humanity.

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**Mr M. Varela, Chairman, Employers' Confederation
of the Philippines, Philippines**

Mr President I would like to extend to you on behalf of developing Employers our heartfelt congratulations on your well-deserved election as the President of the 96th Session of the ILO Conference.

On behalf of the Philippine employers, I should like to commend the Director-General not only for his incisive Report on decent work for sustainable development, but also for his firm advocacy and perseverance in spreading the ideal of the Decent Work Agenda for sustainable development.

Indeed, the vision of decent work for all is an ideal whose time has come. It has an unmistakable nobility of purpose, since it is premised on a higher moral order. It is a shared vision of international community. Translating it into reality through country-specific action programmes is a daunting task. However, it is not an impossible dream. Every single step towards its realization is worth taking.

There is an underlying moral principle behind the Decent Work Agenda. It underscores the dignity of the worker, which must not be sacrificed in the pursuit of globalization and macroeconomic gains.

Even as we affirm our commitment to help create the conditions conducive to the mission of providing decent work for all, we realize that no single sector production can perform the task alone. This lofty vision has better chances of becoming real only in the context and within the dynamics of international tripartism and social dialogue.

Any strategic aspiration, however far-reaching and global in its ramifications, is only a compass. It indicates particular locations in relation to the destination. To be able to reach the common goal, a more detailed road map is needed that gives an indication of the terrain and its contours together with suggested pathways and obstacles to avoid.

Hence, the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference is a most timely occasion for checking our bearings. How far have we gone in our collective journey towards decent work for all? How can we accelerate our pace? What adjustments in direction must we take? To what extent is the Decent Work Agenda affected by the speed and extent of globalization and by the mounting pressure to shift to a low carbon economy.

Decent work for all is the seed of a great idea that needs good soil in which to grow. We believe that only within the framework of a holistic development strategy that is balanced and sustainable can the idea mature to produce the desired results.

It is in keeping with the spirit of the Decent Work Agenda that the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) has factored into its range of institutional activities the philosophy and practice of corporate social responsibility. The profit motive is not the only driving force for business expansion. There is a growing concern to give an organized and constructive response to the legitimate needs of stakeholders. The challenge lies in achieving a proper balance so that no single sector profits to the exclusion of others.

The Employers' Confederation of the Philippines is a strong advocate of respect for human rights both within and beyond the place of work, gender equality at work, providing a window of opportunity for the handicapped, protection of the environment and sustained generation of income-yielding opportunities through the setting up of small enterprises and corporate involvement in community development activities.

We have set up our own corporate responsibility department to give greater focus to our outreach programme, which seeks to help create a more just, caring and equitable society.

Also, a substantive feature of our advocacy is the reform of inflexible labour market policies that hinder the promotion and growth of sustainable enterprises.

The challenge confronting us in labour market reform is that, while enterprises in the formal sector, 91 per cent of which are micro enterprises employing less than ten workers, absorb only 18 per cent of the total employed labour, their number and total employment continue to shrink, while the informal sector has expanded to over 73 per cent of total employment. What is worrisome is that most of the losses more often involved micro and small establishments which employ the majority of wage and salary workers in the formal sector.

This adverse pattern of a shrinking formal sector and an expanding informal sector is confirmed by various independent studies of the UNDP, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. The findings indicate, among other things, that quite a number of local businesses that are unlicensed are increasing as many traders avoid the high cost of regulations, which include onerous populist labour enactments that will play a role in constraining job growth in the formal sector.

We should therefore step on the brakes so that the business will flourish and more jobs will be created. This is also consistent with the broad objective of ECOP's advocacy of the introduction of reforms to increase economic freedom, particularly business freedom, both at the macro and micro levels to the extent that our nationalistic and populist Constitution will allow. In the area of labour market reform, ECOP's advocacy is two-pronged: to promote reforms in labour market policies conducive to the promotion and

growth of sustainable enterprises and to promote and maintain industrial peace and stable labour–management relations through enlightened and responsible tripartism.

As we learn more from the experiences of employers’ sectors in other countries in implementing the Decent Work Agenda, we develop additional insights into how to accomplish more. We have much to learn from the practices of others whose vision we also share.

In conclusion, I believe that only with the solidarity of all the Members of the International Labour Organization can the Decent Work Agenda develop roots and branches for the benefit of all.

Thank you.

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**Mr D. Mendoza, President, Trade Union
Congress of the Philippines, Philippines**

On behalf of the Filipino workers, allow me to congratulate the Director-General and the staff of the ILO for the splendid work that has gone into the Report.

The agenda of the 96th Session of the ILO Conference speaks volumes about the work that the tripartite partners need to sustain in order to promote decent work.

At the outset let me emphasize the commitment of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) to the adoption of the Recommendation and Convention concerning work in the fishing sector. For a country, the economic activity of which depends a great deal on the fishing sector, and a nation known for its great seafaring tradition, we believe that the adoption of the Convention and its accompanying Recommendation is not only timely but necessary.

We fully support that this Conference should use the Report of the Committee on the Fishing Sector of the 93rd Session as a basis for discussion.

Regarding the promotion of sustainable enterprises, while there is a growing recognition of the role of the private sector in the promotion of employment creation, little has been said about the role of the workers’ organizations.

There are countries that share a great deal of experience in workers’ enterprises in the Philippines. The TUCP initiative for creating a cargo-handling enterprise in the port of Cebu, wholly owned and operated by workers, has produced decent jobs for over 1,000 port workers. The TUCP has also been involved in a venture to provide skills training for call agents which has trained over 1,000 young people who have found work in the business process industry. The latter programme started only in October last year.

Trade unions have evolved their traditional responsibility of representation. Such initiatives should be supported at the international and local levels. We also call on the multilateral recognition and support of these programmes.

This year, the Director-General has spoken to the Conference about the need for more coherent policies on trade, financing, investment and employment.

Globalization and trade liberalization, while creating a super highway for the movement of capital and unlimited returns for multinational enterprises, has created problems for job security and distribution of wealth at the national level. Economic development must translate to investment in social services.

In the Philippines, while there have been marked improvements in the economy, these must translate into improvements in social security allocation, unemployment insurance, skill training and other social services.

Let me also take this opportunity to call on the ILO to make proposals, in conjunction with the Bretton Woods institutions, on programmes for debt reduction or debt-swap arrangements. This will enable Third World countries to reinvest debt-servicing budgets to programmes on skills development, social protection, and environmental protection, including programmes that shall assist the social partners in pursuing the creation of green jobs.

However, we must do more to translate policies into action at the earliest opportunity. This is imperative if social unrest is to be prevented. This should be a priority for everyone.

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Republic of Korea

Mr S.S. Lee, Minister of Labour, Republic of Korea

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, and his staff for the work they have put into preparing this Conference.

In its report released in 2004, the ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization stated that "now is the time for leadership to move from sterile debate to positive action". Since then, the ILO has made a lot of effort in close cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as with the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, to ensure that globalization creates equal opportunities for all. However, for all its efforts, many socio-economic problems, which may undermine sustainable development, still persist in today's world.

The Director-General's Report this time adequately pointed out the problems caused by globalization and properly illustrated the tasks that we have to undertake to tackle those problems.

I found his Report very similar to the broad-based growth strategy the Korean Government is currently pursuing. The strategy is to expand growth potential and strengthen social integration so as to be able to promote employment and growth simultaneously and to strike a balance between growth and distribution.

The Korean Government has pursued "flexicurity" in order to resolve labour market polarization, with a special focus on improving employment security for vulnerable groups of workers. A bill on non-regular workers was passed by the National Assembly last November, with the aim of eliminating abuse and discrimination against non-regular workers. The Korean Government is also striving to expand social service jobs in areas such as health care, welfare and education, which are directly related to people's daily lives.

Since last year, the Government has made it a national strategic task to build an advanced employment security network, and has intensively invested in it. The Government is also pushing ahead with policies aimed at promoting the welfare of the aged and low-income earners and expanding the coverage of social insurance to non-regular workers and self-employed people.

As the Director-General pointed out, close consultation between tripartite parties is very important in realizing decent work for sustainable development. In this respect, it seems appropriate to discuss this matter at the ILO.

Personally, I am of the belief that open-minded dialogue is the most powerful tool for solving difficult problems. When I took office as Minister of Labour in February 2006, the legislative process concerning the roadmap for industrial relations reform was bogged down in a stalemate in Korea, but we were able to get out of it through tripartite dialogue.

The legislative bills on the roadmap were prepared on the basis of tripartite agreement and passed through the National Assembly at the end of last year. Although there is still room for improvement, the passage of the bills served as an important opportunity for Korea to bring its labour laws into line with international standards.

Never complacent about what it has achieved so far, the Korean Government will continue to try to improve industrial relations systems and change thoughts and practices to establish cooperative industrial relations.

The Director-General's Report properly pointed out major issues of concern, but the ideas proposed in the Report have yet to be developed into concrete action plans. More effort should be made to develop policies and conduct theoretical studies on these issues.

As I mentioned earlier, the ILO has the great advantage of operating on the basis of tripartism. The ILO should find specific measures to solve various current issues by making maximum use of that advantage. By doing so, it could ensure that the benefits of globalization can be evenly distributed within, as well as between, advanced and developing countries.

Keeping in mind the criticism that tripartism could not respond rapidly enough to keep up with the fast pace of change, I would like to propose that innovation should be brought to the way the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body are operating.

I hope that this session of the Conference will become meaningful by enabling us to seek and find concrete solutions to important issues proposed by the Director-General.

The Korean Government would like to reiterate its commitment to support and cooperate as much as possible in achieving the ILO's goal of decent work.

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**Mr Y.v. Kim, Vice-Chairman and CEO, Korea
Employers' Federation, Republic of Korea**

This year's Director-General's Report, *Decent work for sustainable development*, certainly presents daunting challenges and enormous opportunities for us all.

Sustainability is a gripping issue. From the developing to the developed world, every society is questioning how to cope with environmental and demographic problems such as global warming and fast ageing societies, as well as problems of poverty, HIV/AIDS and youth unemployment. In this context, the balanced approach to sustainable development suggested in the Director-General's Report is most appropriate. Indeed, market-driven economies alone will not contribute to prosperous societies, unless they are accompanied by effective public policies and sound social partnerships. However, we must remember that a balanced approach to any matter can be taken only when it is based upon correct information, just as a good prescription can follow an accurate diagnosis. Pros and cons should be taken into account, especially on controversial issues. Relevant arguments should be collected and used as references to identify correctly the characteristics of problems, analyse causes and generate findings. Then comes strategy. For correct diagnoses, the ILO needs to secure a broad knowledge base through its strong grounding in the tripartite approach. In this regard, the research capabilities of the ILO need to be strengthened and its cooperation with other international agencies should be focused on improving such capabilities.

Growing inequalities at the national and international levels are certainly an obstacle to both decent work and sustainable development. The problem often manifests itself in various forms at different levels, so how to address it can differ according to the circumstances. For instance, income inequality must be differentiated from income bipolarization, which is affecting many countries including Korea, especially with the experience of the financial crisis and conditionality imposed by the international financial agencies. Income bipolarization is characterized by the decrease in middle income families and in the move by top and bottom income groups, respectively, to the two extreme ends of the income distribution scale. We believe that the policy focus to tackle this phenomenon should be on restoring the middle-income group through economic growth, rather than politically-driven income legislation.

For the middle-income group to grow, the most vital task is to expand domestic demand to restore the growth potential. Strategic industries must be promoted to create more and better jobs. A social environment must be formed that is conducive to investment and business creation, to provide jobs. Coherence among institutions must be pursued. In many countries, reform of labour laws often takes place without consideration of the complementary nature of the financial system and other systems related to doing business.

Korea has witnessed lowered efficiency in its economic system during the rapid reform process since the financial crisis. The reform, started in a rush and modelled on the so-called advanced system, disregarded the healthy development of conglomerates, entrepreneurship and risk-taking ability, which were the driving forces of the Korean economy.

The Director-General's Report also points out the need for the ILO standards to be more adaptable to changes. This is an appropriate and commendable move, but one that should be taken with caution. Rules and regulations are not a panacea to all problems. They can be a guiding light only if they are reasonable, based on common sense and acceptable to constituents.

I now conclude by expressing the hope that the founding mission of the ILO that labour peace is essential to prosperity, as clearly indicated on the ILO web site, will prevail in all the work and activities of the ILO.

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**Mr H.k. Baek, General Secretary, Federation
of Korean Trade Unions, Republic of Korea**

It is a great privilege to deliver my speech in this important Conference on behalf of 15 million workers in the Republic of Korea.

I am deeply impressed with the Report of the Director-General, *Decent work for sustainable development*, amid the ever-increasing challenges of neo-liberal globalization that have been facing us.

In particular, I extend my full support to the conclusion that there is an urgent need to strengthen social dialogue based on tripartism in order to guarantee decent work for all, given the consistent deterioration in the employment conditions of working people.

At the same time, my special thanks go to those in the ILO who have worked so hard on this year's Global Report, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*.

The Report coherently provides us with future action priorities by emphasizing that further efforts should be made to eliminate discrimination based on gender, race, religion, age, HIV/AIDS status and disability, despite the considerable progress that has been made so far in achieving equality at work.

In this regard, I would like to stress the issue of discrimination against non-regular workers. Non-regular workers, whose numbers have been rapidly increasing owing to the growing flexibility of the labour market, are suffering from extreme job insecurity and poor working conditions. Therefore, concerted efforts to resolve the non-regular worker issue should be made by governments, management and labour, in order to achieve decent work for all.

The Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) is keenly aware of the importance of social dialogue, which is the core principle of the ILO. It was in this belief that we succeeded finally, on 11 September last year, in reaching a social agreement on labour laws and systems, which has been a thorny issue for a long time, within the tripartite high-level panel. This tripartite agreement brought about some significant achievements, such as the abolition of compulsory arbitration and the third-party notification requirement, as well as the introduction of written labour contracts and dismissal notices.

Of course, there still remains a lot to be done to further improve Korean industrial relations. Nonetheless, we strongly believe that meaningful progress has been made by the agreement, to the effect that extreme confrontation and conflicts between labour and management could be avoided and that reasonable settlement of industrial disputes should be sought through social dialogue.

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce the FKTU's new strategy for the trade union movement.

We recently committed ourselves to a social reformist trade union movement under the banner of "Trade union movement in alliance with grass-roots workers and the general public" in order to tackle the challenges posed by neo-liberal globalization.

It is our firm belief that the trade union movement should serve not only a few organized workers, but all vulnerable members of society. All the parties concerned, including trade unions, businesses and governments, should play responsible roles. It was in this context that the FKTU joined the UN Global Compact in March this year with the aim of promoting corporate social responsibility.

We also took a leading role in setting up the Korea Labour Foundation in April this year, in the belief that a new paradigm of industrial relations could be created by direct dialogue between labour and management.

Last but not least, I have to express my deepest regret over the fact that the Japanese case of “comfort women” (concerning Japan) and a case on the right to freedom of association (concerning Colombia) were excluded from the list of individual cases to be examined by the Committee on the Application of Standards. In particular, it is intolerable that these cases were vetoed by the Employers’ group even before the Committee started consultations on the selection of cases.

We are convinced that such a veto against the “comfort women” case by the Employers’ group is closely related to the unjustifiable attitudes of the Japanese Government, which has kept denying that it coerced women into prostitution during the Second World War. This issue is no longer only a matter of the victims or countries concerned, as we recently saw strong movements to adopt resolutions on the issue in the national legislatures of the United States, Canada and Australia. Accordingly, a worldwide consensus has been built that this is a universal issue to be urgently resolved.

We strongly urge the Government of Japan to provide the victims with official apologies and due compensation, as recommended on several occasions by the Committee on the Application of Standards and to do so as soon as possible. I would like to point out that the supervisory mechanism of the ILO could be seriously jeopardized if this case were again excluded from consideration by the Committee.

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Singapore

Mr C.P. Ng, Divisional Director, Workplace Policy and Strategy Division, Ministry of Manpower, Singapore

The Singaporean economy continued to grow, at a healthy pace, expanding by 7.9 per cent in 2006 and 6.1 per cent for the first quarter of this year. Buoyed by strong economic growth, Singapore experienced record employment levels – 76 per cent of working-age Singaporeans at the end of last year, which is one of the highest in the world. The unemployment rate also dropped to a low of 2.6 per cent in 2006. Our efforts to restructure our economy, upgrade the skills of our workforce and maintain a flexible labour market have provided more jobs for our people. Nevertheless, globalization has also led to widening income gaps. Low-wage workers, with lower education and fewer skills, are vulnerable to structural unemployment. The ILO’s efforts in helping member States promote decent work is therefore a timely one.

In Singapore, helping vulnerable workers is one of our national priorities. Recently, new initiatives were implemented to help vulnerable workers through concerted efforts of the tripartite partners, namely the Government, the Singapore National Employers’ Federation (SNEF) and the Singapore National Trades Union Congress. Two years ago, we implemented a holistic package of policies and measures to help low-wage workers and their families based on the approach of “workfare” rather than welfare. Underpinning this philosophy of workfare was that all workers including low-wage workers, sought to be self-reliant for themselves and their families through meaningful jobs that earned adequate wages. They should be able to own their homes, educate their children and put aside enough for their medical and retirement needs. Recommendations to assist low-wage workers achieve these goals were clustered around six broad initiatives: rewarding work;

social support to enable work; higher skills for better work; expand job opportunities; creating hope for the future; and sharing in the nation's progress. Specifically, to reward work, the Government has decided to supplement the take-home pay and retirement savings of low-wage workers provided they work regularly. This is a national wage supplementation scheme for all low-wage workers, for all older low-wage workers, and it has been institutionalized in our social security system under the Workfare Income Supplement Scheme. For example, all older workers above a certain age who earn 1,000 dollars a month will get 100 dollars of workfare income supplement, representing a 10 per cent increase in their income.

The other tripartite partners also play a vital role to help low-wage workers. Employers are given financial incentives by the Government to redesign lower value added jobs into higher value and help upgrade the skills of workers to do these jobs. Workers' organizations and unions have on their own set up employability institutes to encourage low-wage workers to upgrade themselves and stay employable.

Another important agenda item at this session of the ILC is the Director-General's Report, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*. We recognize, as do other countries, that providing equal opportunity for employment requires a multifaceted approach. We agree that legislation alone cannot eliminate discrimination. We therefore formed in Singapore a Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) in May of last year to help tackle discrimination at the workplace. TAFEP has made good early progress in raising awareness of fair employment practices at workplaces in Singapore. The Alliance spearheads promotional programmes to shape the perceptions and mindsets of employers, employees and the public against any discriminatory workplace practice. Notably, it has recently introduced a set of tripartite guidelines which shape corporate norms on employment practices, such as the conduct of job interviews and the design of job application forms. The guidelines have been well received by both employers and workers. To date, more than 500 employers, including various chambers of commerce and other employment federations, as well as the civil service, which is the largest employer in Singapore, have signed a pledge to abide by fair employment practices. TAFEP will also set up a one-stop centre where workers and employers can provide feedback on unfair employment practices and seek advisory services. Employers can also tap into the centre's assistance to build up capability such as human resource processes to implement fair employment practices.

In closing, the Singaporean delegation looks forward to a fruitful discussion on the various issues on the agenda. I am confident that under the President's able leadership, this session of the ILC will be a successful one.

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**Mr J. de Payva, President, Singapore National
Trades Union Congress, Singapore**

Mr President, the Singapore National Trades Union Congress delegation joins other delegates to congratulate you on being elected to preside over the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

In Singapore, we recognized that discrimination is very difficult to prove, and therefore it is difficult to enforce the law. We have therefore decided to make continuous efforts to educate the employers and the public on the issue. Early in 1999, the tripartite partners, that is, the Singapore National Employers' Federation, the Ministry of Manpower and the Singapore National Trades Union Congress, issued the "Tripartite guidelines on

non-discriminatory job advertisements” to promote the use of objective criteria in the recruitment of job candidates.

In 2001, at the National Manpower Summit, the tripartite partners endorsed a statement to the effect that in line with the principle of meritocracy, employers will select candidates for jobs based on merit, experience, capability and other relevant job requirements. In 2002, the tripartite partners jointly issued a code of responsible employment practices, based on the principle that staff should be treated fairly and employers should continue to recruit on the basis of skills, merit, experience, capability and relevance of job.

Last year, the Singapore’s Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP), which was co-chaired by SNTUC, was set up on the recommendation of the Tripartite Committee on Employability of Older Workers, to shift mindsets among employers, employees and the general public towards fair and responsible employment practices for all workers. Last month, the TAFEP launched a new set of guidelines to fight discrimination at the workplace. Following the new guidelines, job application forms asking for a person’s age, gender, race or even photograph are soon going to become a thing of the past in Singapore.

As Singapore is a small country with very limited human resources, every citizen is important to us. We can ill afford to allow discrimination to strip us of much needed human resources and break up our social fabric. The SNTUC will continue to fight discrimination till the end together with our social partners.

As we become more and more globalized, the gap between the rich and poor, the skilled and unskilled, permanent and contract workers is increasing. Singapore is no exception. Hence, I am pleased to inform you that, since last year, the SNTUC has come up with a five-year plan to bridge the gaps and strive for an all-inclusive labour movement that reaches out to all income groups, especially lower incomes, as well as all workers, all nationalities and all ages. We plan to achieve this through job redesign, creation of skills, skills upgrading, development of membership benefits and the strengthening of our social partnership with the Government and with the employers.

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Sri Lanka

Mr A. Seneviratne, Minister of Labour Relations and Manpower, Sri Lanka

On behalf of the Government and the delegation of Sri Lanka let me extend our sincere congratulations to the President and the Vice-President on their election to preside over the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference. We also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO and Chairman of the Governing Body, for the Reports they have submitted to the Conference for discussion.

This year the Report of the Director-General focuses on some key issues in promoting *Decent work for sustainable development*. Sri Lanka fully endorses the need to encourage economic initiatives compatible with sustainable development by promoting more sustainable conception and production patterns. Use of resources productively and economically is an important aspect of sustainable development. Given the role of work and production, no one is better placed than the tripartite constituents to promote

sustainable production and consumption. Indeed, sustainable development is based on three equally critical pillars: economic, social and environmental. It is of utmost importance to link economic production and social protection with environmental management. Reconciling those concerns is essential, especially in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and access to basic human rights such as access to health, education, water, sanitation and energy.

To solve this equation is the only way to ensure long-term development, integration of an equitable industrial developmental and management of common public goods. The complex agenda of sustainable development requires establishing long-term effective strategies for sustainable development along with strong national commitment and leadership and improved coherence of existing processes, frameworks and strategies. It implies an interaction process of planning, setting priorities, implementing choices relevant to a country's sustainable development needs and learning from experience to continually improve people's lives.

Sri Lanka has formulated a national decent work policy and an action plan with the participation of the tripartite constituents to address existing decent work deficits. Allocation of funds from the national budget for 2007 is a clear reflection of the recognition and the commitment of the Government to address these issues in order to achieve the goal of decent work. Embodying most of the activities in the plan of action for decent work in the ten-year policy development programme, 2006–16 or the ten-year vision of the Government is a further reflection of the Government's commitment to having to address the decent work issues.

With a view to creating more and better jobs, we are in the process of implementing the initiatives of the national employment policy and our national productivity policy. Now we have taken the employment, sourcing, career guidance and productivity promotion to grass-roots level by establishing mechanisms at the divisional administration level. We are committed to minimizing the social cost of economic and legal reforms by promoting appropriate and gender sensitive social production programmes and improving the management of occupational safety and health.

A new law on occupational safety and health is being enacted and an institute of occupational safety and health has been set up with a view to promoting education, enforcement, research and documentation in the area of occupational safety and health. For sustainable development and employment promotion, we recognize the significance of educating the tripartite constituents and strengthening tripartism. In order to build the capacities of tripartite constituents and promote social dialogue, we have set up an institute of labour studies. Let me take this opportunity to thank the ILO for extending assistance in all these activities. Sri Lanka welcomes the initiative taken by the ILO to mainstream decent work throughout the United Nations system. Sri Lanka also welcomes the ongoing reforms in the United Nations system and hopes, as the Director-General states in his Report, that these reforms would contribute to “improve its responsiveness and delivery, provide better service to constituents, enhance agency cooperation and policy coherence and make better use of its knowledge and assets” in the system. The Decent Work Country Programme for Sri Lanka developed with the participation of the tripartite constituents for the period of 2007–09 is a clear reflection of the role of the ILO.

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**Mr D.W. Subasinghe, General Secretary, Ceylon
Federation of Trade Unions, Sri Lanka**

I wish to convey our deep appreciation to the Director-General and the Governing Body for their persistent follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and in promoting the Decent Work Agenda, which is further evident from Report V, “Strengthening the ILO’s capacity to assist its Members’ efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization” introduced to this session.

As pointed out by the Director-General, it is the logical follow-up after what was revealed by report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

Introducing this Report the Director-General has underlined the need for stronger national and international collaboration, and the need to boost the collective influence of the ILO and its tripartite membership to achieve better national and global governance, in pursuing the four strategic objectives of decent work: promotion of rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue.

Last year, Sri Lanka was able to formulate a Decent Work Country Programme followed by a decent work action plan, along with relevant identifying criteria, a project which was actively promoted by the Ministry of Labour with the assistance of the ILO Office in Colombo and in collaboration with tripartite constituents. So far, however, the Decent Work Country Programme has not gone very far beyond the precincts of the Ministry of Labour, and remains in our view, a statement of directive principles without an active operational, national framework. We believe that it is necessary to set up a national tripartite mechanism to oversee and monitor its implementation.

The Decent Work Country Programme should to be linked with the development objectives and plans of the Government. Regrettably, in our case, this is still a grey area and is confined to a large document entitled “The Ten-Year Horizon Development Framework” announced with last year’s government budget. It is more an expression of vision than an economic plan. Any further progress in this regard is hampered by the acute financial and political destabilization brought about by an escalating war with the insurrectionist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are fighting for a separate state in the north and east of the country. This armed conflict has been going on for over 20 years, claiming to date over 65,000 lives on both sides.

In 2006 Government’s military expenditure was over 15 per cent of its revenue, and what was left for public investment was less than the wage bill for public servants. After the LTTE air raids about a month ago with low flying aircraft near the capital and the international airport, the tourist industry has almost ground to a halt.

The international rating for Sri Lanka as a zone for investment has plunged to a new low. In such circumstances there is little hope for the Decent Work Country Programme to take off in a coherent manner, even if it were to receive the due official recognition that we are asking for.

The economic impact of the above mentioned factors have seriously worsened the living conditions of the working class. The annual inflation rate is running at 16 per cent even according to official figures. The prices of consumer goods has skyrocketed. Although the Central Bank of Sri Lanka claims that the GDP growth rate last year was 7 per cent no such growth appears to have taken place according to many observers. The same Central Bank sources admit that the real wages of private sector employees continued to decline. Today the average monthly wage of a private sector employee is around US\$55 while the minimum wage stands at less than US\$50.

The country's priority today is a negotiated political solution to end the ongoing war. Although no one disputes this, peace is getting ever more distant in our opinion. Ten major trade unions recently wrote jointly to the Government regarding its urgency, however there is no appreciable response so far. The status of the conflict, which is continuing, is one where fighting terrorism has assumed the foreground while the ethnic dimension which gave rise to it, has receded to the background. We expect to discuss this matter with employer organizations, to explore the possibility of a joint course of action. The subject of a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict has always been controversial, encompassing a wide variety of views. Now a new dimension has arisen. The atmosphere is highly charged in the context of intensified military conflict. In the tripartite meetings at which the Decent Work Country Programmes was discussed, the subject of war and peace was left out.

I take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation of the services of the ILO Office in Colombo, and the ILO Area Office in New Delhi, who have always been helpful in the endeavours to strengthen tripartite dialogue and for their all-round efforts to advance the goals of decent work in Sri Lanka, while assisting our trade unions in the development of their capacities.

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Thailand

Mr C. Indrasukhsri, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Thailand

It is a particular pleasure for me to speak here in this year, 2007, which marks for us the auspicious occasion of the 80th birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The Director-General's Report, *Decent work for sustainable development*, confronts the major challenge in advancing the Decent Work Agenda effectively, and indeed puts forward the core employment values that should be continually considered and provoke our reflections.

As the ILO reported recently, more than 13 million ASEAN workers are migrant workers, and more than 5 million of those are working in other ASEAN countries. The Thai Government has consistently sought to make progress with respect to our commitments regarding labour and to improve employment conditions in our country. I would like to draw your attention to the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, adopted in January 2007. It commits all of our governments to promoting decent, humane, productive, dignified and remunerative employment for migrant workers.

We are also committed to promoting human resource development programmes for our workers and to helping them to reintegrate into society when they return from working overseas, and also to upholding the rights of migrant workers.

I would next like to touch upon the issue of work in the fishing sector. This subject is a very important one and we welcome the attention paid to it at this year's Conference. We are determined to ensure that decent conditions exist for people working in the industry.

We believe that, to protect fishers, the adoption of a new Convention concerning the fishing sector will be beneficial. At the moment it would be a challenge to adjust working conditions on board to the requirements agreed. We believe that we are not alone in facing

this challenge, but that it would be possible to try to regulate working conditions according to these standards in the near future. Of course we very much welcome the sentiments offered, and hope that fishers, not only in Thailand but worldwide, will one day grasp and use to the full the opportunities provided by the Convention.

The ILO's desire to improve its capacity to assist Members' efforts to reach their objectives in the context of globalization reflects its strong responsibilities. We fully support this approach, and congratulate the ILO on continuing to seek to improve its effectiveness, which will help to ensure that women and men living in poverty have opportunities for more productive employment. We will of course do whatever we can to assist this process.

Regarding the topic on the promotion of sustainable enterprises, the Tenth National Economic and Social Plan of Thailand emphasizes the need for peaceful development in society by strengthening family and community bonds to create a green and happy society.

At all levels, Thai people are being encouraged and helped to consider how they are living their lives and how this can be brought into line with the self-sufficiency principle. Ensuring that our economic activities do not damage the environment, or bring our descendants into unsustainable debt, is an important strand in the overall strategy.

Finally, the Ministry of Labour has made more progress in enhancing social protection for the disabled in collaboration with the Council of Disabled People of Thailand, employers and government agencies. At the moment, we are on the way to submitting our findings on the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) to the Cabinet, which will be the next stage in ensuring ratification. It is expected that more favourable measures will be expanded in future.

I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Thailand, to express our heartfelt appreciation to the ILO for its commitment and continued support. Thank you.

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**Mr T. Koonopakarn, President, Employers'
Confederation of Thai Trade and Industry, Thailand**

There have been significant improvements in Thailand's economic, social and environmental situation during the past and current years. All efforts have been geared toward achieving better lives for all.

Due to a limited time, I will go straight to what I want to say without any fringes. The progress in Thailand toward decent work may be summed up as follows.

First, more focus has been placed on personnel resources development and management, emphasizing fairer and more humane consideration of workers.

Secondly, the application of competency-based compensation has been promoted as a means of giving opportunities to all workers for a comparable income, based on individual competency.

Thirdly, efforts have been stepped up for skills development aimed at developing and upgrading the skills of workers, as well as those of the general public, so that they may engage themselves in trade that would bring them better income or be promoted to better jobs with better pay.

Fourthly, efforts have been stepped up for better occupational safety, health and environment at work for all levels and in all sectors, especially small and medium enterprises.

Fifthly, labour protection and social security coverage have been expanded to include small and medium enterprises, home workers and unorganized workers in general.

Sixthly, education for young people is free up to 12th grade. In addition, there are Government loans for university education, in addition to scholarships from educational institutions.

Seventhly, there are increased benefits from the social security system for all workers. The Government is also considering extending social security coverage to unorganized labour in the informal sector.

Eighthly, as far as health is concerned, people not covered by social security will get free medical treatment if they are registered with the competent authorities.

As a predominantly agricultural nation, there are numerous measures to help farmers elevate their living standards. Protection and improvement of water resources have been a national agenda. Agricultural technology, improvement of crop yields, protection against crop diseases, etc., have been widely promoted.

A Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives has been set up by the Government to provide credit especially to farmers. There have also been Government-sponsored export promotion programmes for agricultural products. All these have been our national priorities.

All the efforts and measures mentioned above have contributed substantially to the betterment of life of the Thai people. Regrettably, there has been an unfortunate interruption in the political process in the country, which has delayed many economic and social development programmes that would otherwise contribute more to the improvement of life for the Thai people.

I hope that these unfortunate circumstances will soon come to an end and may be pushed forward by the social and economic development programme that will be beneficial to all.

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**Mr P. Thailuan, President, National Congress
of Thai Labour, Thailand**

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to have the opportunity to convey my message on behalf of workers in Thailand.

In the past ten years, reporting on the trade union situation in Thailand, I used to tell this Conference that there were two serious problems in my country. The first problem was on subcontracted workers, and the second, the intervention of the tripartite mechanism.

May I inform you that these two problems have not been solved yet and the situation seems to be even more serious.

The type of employment that I called the double-standard employment still exists. Subcontracted workers, who are employed at the same time as permanent workers, receive a lower salary, without any fringe benefits. At present, this type of employment is spreading throughout the country. Moreover, most foreign investors have changed their way of recruitment in favour of subcontracted workers. There are two million subcontracted workers now in Thailand, and their numbers seem to increase more and more.

As to tripartite system, for more than 30 years the Government has controlled all tripartite committees by claiming authority to appoint their members, including the Labour Relations Committee, the Labour Welfare Committee, the Social Security Committee and the Workmen's Compensation Committee. Only the Labour Advisory Committee and Associate Judge in the Labour Court are elected by trade unions.

Over the past ten years, workers and trade unions in Thailand have tried to change the tripartite system by giving workers a better chance to elect their own representative in all tripartite committees, but their efforts have never succeeded.

There was a good opportunity for Thai workers to solve the problem when there was a change in politics on 19 September last year, when the military dissolved the Constitution and appointed a Constitution Drafting Committee. I, in cooperation with trade unions and workers in Thailand, have submitted a proposal to the Drafting Committee to insert a clause in the Constitution to prevent the abuse of subcontract work and to empower trade unions and workers to elect their own representatives in all tripartite bodies. I am pleased to inform you that our proposals have been accepted by the Constitution Drafting Committee.

Article 83, paragraph 8, of the new draft Constitution states that the Government's economic policy must be to promote employment opportunities for the working-age population, to protect child workers and women workers, and to organize the labour relations and tripartite system so that workers can elect their own representatives, to provide a social security system and to promote decent work for all, with fair remuneration, and equal treatment in welfare and fringe benefits and without any discrimination.

I hope that, if this draft Constitution comes into force, the Government will follow this policy and that the problem of subcontracted workers and the tripartite mechanism in Thailand will be solved.

I will be here again next year to report on progress in this matter.

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Viet Nam

Mr B.H. Le, Vice-Minister for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam

First of all, I would like to agree with the Director-General's main findings in the Global Report on *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*. We appreciate all of the achievements recorded by the ILO in the fight against all forms of discrimination at work.

We are aware that these achievements are always accompanied by challenges, on both global and national scales. For Viet Nam's part, equality at work is always secured in our policy-making process. This position is clearly demonstrated in our Labour Code and our Law on Gender Equality of 2006. Vietnam has also ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). So, all forms of discrimination, whether based on gender, race or social origin are prohibited by law in Viet Nam. We welcome the inclusion on this Conference's agenda of the issue of sustainable enterprise development and the role of the private sector in job creation. With our Law on Enterprises and Law on Investment, we in Viet Nam have created a favourable, equal and non-discriminatory investment climate which has enabled domestic investment to take place and has attracted an influx of foreign direct investment, thereby bolstering private sector development. Under this favourable regulatory framework, some 40,000 private businesses have been established every year, churning out hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The Government of Viet Nam considers the determination of the Director-General and the ILO to review the draft convention on work in the fishing sector as being appropriate action to improve working conditions within the labour force in this sector. At present, there are about 4 millions persons in Viet Nam involved in aquatic fishing and aquatic farming. This sector is characterized by small-sized production with basic and poor working conditions which need improving.

Regarding ILO's budget for 2008–2009 and the discussions of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity, the Government of Viet Nam would like to express concern that the ILO needs to enhance its operational capacity in order to deserve contributions from member States.

It is my pleasure to inform you that, as of 2007, Viet Nam has become a full member of WTO. This marks a new stage in Viet Nam's integration into the world economy. WTO accession will expose Viet Nam to both new opportunities and new challenges. To meet developmental requirements in this new context, Viet Nam has been proactive in developing a system of labour legislation. In this connection, the National Assembly of Viet Nam has adopted four laws in relation to labour and employment, namely the Law on Social Insurance; the Law on Vocational Training; a law on sending Viet Namese workers overseas on short-term contracts; and amendments to the Labour Code relating to settling labour disputes. Furthermore, the Government of Viet Nam established a national committee on labour relations in May 2007, in order to promote the roles of the social partners in constructing a sound and harmonious labour relations environment.

In July 2006, the Government and social partners in Viet Nam signed a national cooperation framework on promoting decent work with the ILO for the period 2006–10 focusing on four pillars: labour market development; employment creation and poverty alleviation; extending social security and occupational safety and health; and supportive policies for the most vulnerable workers. Some of these activities with the participation of donors have been operational as a result, thereby contributing to successfully realizing the objectives and goals stated in Viet Nam's 2006–10 Socio-economic Development Plan by 2010.

We would also like to inform you that the Government of Viet Nam has ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). This happened in March 2007. Currently, with the technical assistance of the ILO, feasibility studies are being conducted on ratifying the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and Viet Nam is seeking ILO technical assistance for the ratification of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). The Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) are also being reviewed.

Viet Nam is one of eight pilot countries of the “One UN” initiative. At present, the task force comprising representatives of the Government of Viet Nam, donors and UN organizations, including the ILO, are actively formulating the “One Plan”.

In the future, assessment of social impacts stemming from WTO accession, particularly on labour market and employment, as well as enhancing labour relations and social dialogue, will be very important, as will reforming wage policies, implementing voluntary insurance schemes for farmers and workers in the informal sector, and promoting occupational safety and health. These are priorities on our agenda.

Before ending my speech, I would like to thank you for the valuable technical assistance and support which has been and which will continue to be extended by the ILO and donors to Viet Nam.

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**Mr N.T. Dang, President, Vietnam General
Confederation of Labour, Viet Nam**

On behalf of the Vietnamese Workers and trade unions, I would like to convey to you, Mr President, our warmest congratulations on your election to the post of President of the Conference. I also wish the Conference every success.

The workers and trade unions of Viet Nam highly appreciate the Reports of the Chairman of the Governing Body and the Director-General of the ILO. We all recall that the Director-General of the ILO delivered the first Global Report on discrimination entitled *Time for Equality at Work* at the 91st International Labour Conference in 2003. Four years later these messages remain valid, but the need to combat discrimination in work is even more urgent in the face of a world that appears increasingly unequal, insecure and unsafe.

The second Global Report on *Equality at Work: Tackling the challenges*, presented by the Director-General at this Conference, provided us with a global picture of the fight against discrimination. The Report examines emerging issues and patterns of workplace discrimination and inequalities and outlines the ILO’s experiences and achievements to date and the challenges that the ILO and its member States face. Apart from this, the improvement of working conditions in the fishing sector, and promotion of sustainable enterprises in ILO capacity building, which are incorporated in the working agenda of the Conference, are of concern to all ILO member States, including Viet Nam.

Elimination of discrimination in the workplace has become universal and requires political commitment. The workers and trade unions of Viet Nam consider the Decent Work Country Programme to be a key instrument to tackle workplace discrimination at country level.

Viet Nam was one of the first countries in the East Asia and Pacific to adopt the ILO’s national framework of cooperation for the period 2006–10 on promotion of decent work in Viet Nam in 2006 with a view to guaranteeing sustainable economic development. Vietnamese trade unions share and support the ILO’s approach to promoting sustainable enterprise and insist that economic growth should go hand in hand with social justice.

We support the adoption of the ILO Convention on the fishing sector and consider it to be an instrument with which to improve working conditions and decent work in the fishing sector.

We also support the ILO's reform and will make every effort to further this process in order to enable the ILO to implement its mandate and programmes to assist its member States more effectively in the context of a globalized world.

Viet Nam became a full member of the World Trade Organization in November 2006. In the process of integration into the international economy Viet Nam is completing its legislation. Viet Nam has ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). It has just ratified the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

In March 2007, the National Assembly of Viet Nam approved a series of key laws and legislation, such as the law on gender equality, the law, revision and amendment of the Labour Code, the law on social security and the law on vocational training and the law on sending Vietnamese workers abroad with fixed-term contracts.

The trade unions of Viet Nam are, on one hand, actively involved in formulation of legislation and policies and improving the representation and development of trade union organizations at the enterprise level, mainly in the foreign investment and private sectors.

We consider negotiation and conclusion of collective labour agreements the most important tool to defend the rights and interests of workers and trade union members and to combat discrimination in the workplace.

In the last four years, the programme of recruiting a million new members has been conducted successfully and increased the total membership of the trade unions in Viet Nam to approximately 5.7 million.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the ILO for its effective technical assistance on various issues, namely capacity building for trade union activists in respect of collective bargaining at the workplace, improvement of gender issues, combating child labour, HIV/AIDS and promotion of sound industrial relations.

We also thank brother trade union organizations the world over for their support and assistance to Vietnamese trade unions. We hope to continue receiving technical assistance from the ILO and support from friendly trade union organizations throughout the world in order to better safeguard the rights and interests of the workers and trade union members in Viet Nam.

Thank you very much for your attention.