

CLOSING SESSION

CHAIR: A M ZAKARIA; FACILITATOR: LINDA WIRTH

1. GUY THIJS

Dear constituents, resource persons, facilitators, observers and ILO colleagues. We are coming to the end of a three day consultation. Mrs Yamamoto has asked me to apologise on her behalf for not being able to address the closing ceremony because of other commitments in the sub-region.

By all accounts the consultations provided for very rich discussions covering key issues and challenges that will determine whether progress can be made in the Pacific on the Decent Work agenda.

We have discussed challenges from prospects and conditions for growth and employment creation to social inclusion and capacity issues and the required regional cooperation to make decent work a reality in the Pacific region.

Decent work is not, and should not be a hollow term but stands for real things - tangible outcomes that affect the lives of the beneficiaries that we want to reach.

I will not go into the substance of the discussions and conclusions reached as Linda Wirth obviously already did this. I would rather focus my closing remarks on follow-up steps we can take in terms of the process. How do we take these discussions further to ensure it is not yet another meeting where we agree on certain things and continue as usual?

I would like to echo Ms Yamamoto's remarks at the opening ceremony when she said that the ILO is keen to step up our support to the sub-region - within our means. As has been alluded to in the discussions we would really hope that upon your return you organise tripartite consultations at country level with other relevant partners to discuss what you have reviewed here in Nadi and to outline your specific priorities and concrete country outcomes as well as strategies required to ensure implementation. The ILO, through its office in Suva, its sub-regional office in Manila and the regional office in Bangkok stands ready to provide inputs into such a process as required. Once those priorities and outcomes have been identified more concrete DWCP programmes/frameworks can be developed.

Other options for follow-up that have been raised may include a higher level political meeting to ensure political commitment and buy-in. We might also consider in conjunction with such a meeting to organise a donor conference to mobilise the necessary resources.

Finally, to ensure we have a forum for a continued dialogue we have created a webpage on which all related documents will be posted. This webpage will also feature an e-mail address to which you can address further comments and suggestions in relation to the report of the meeting and other follow-up steps related to the Strategic Programme Framework.

This leaves me to say a few words of thanks - particular thanks are due to our constituents for their valuable contributions and guidance, resource persons and observers for sharing their specialist knowledge on certain topics, and ILO colleagues for their preparatory work - particularly those over here in the local secretariat for a great job in ensuring the logistics.

I would like to express sincere thanks to Mr Zakaria for his dedicated years of service to the ILO as Ms Yamamoto already mentioned at the opening. I would like to give him the floor to say a few words - followed by his successor, Mr Werner Blenk who will take over the reins of the office as of 1 December - and on that note thank you very much!