

**Fifteenth sitting**

Monday, 18 June 2001, 10.15 a.m.

Presidents: Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, Mr. Donato

The PRESIDENT — Before we continue the discussion on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General, I wish to give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference to make an announcement.

**COMMUNICATION
FROM THE WORKERS' ELECTORAL COLLEGE**

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — I have received a communication from the Workers' Electoral College, dated 15 June 2001, which reads as follows:

The Workers' Electoral College met on Friday, 15 June at 9.30 a.m. on the occasion of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. In accordance with articles 50, 51 and 54 of the Standing Orders, Lord Brett was elected Chairperson of the Electoral College. Mr. M. Simón Velasco attended as representative of the President of the Conference.

In accordance with article 54, paragraph 5, the Electoral College confirmed the appointment made by the Workers' group of the Governing Body in January 2001 of Mr. A. Daer (Argentina) as deputy member to replace Ms. Rozas Velasquez (Chile). Ms. Rozas Velasquez moves to the substitute list.

The letter is signed by Lord Brett, Chairperson of the Workers' Electoral College and Mr. M. Simón Velasco, representative of the President of the Conference.

**REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE GOVERNING BODY
AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (*cont.*)**

The PRESIDENT — We shall now resume our discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Mr. BATBAYAR (*Minister for Social Welfare and Labour, Mongolia*) — Please allow me at the outset to convey my Government's support for the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General on the work over the past year and on the issue of the decent work deficit and forced labour as a global challenge, respectively.

The Government of Mongolia expresses its commitment, through the tripartite social consent structure, to respond to the call of the Governing Body to promote social dialogue, to improve statistical data and to work closely with the ILO in realizing the fundamental principles and rights at work, including raising awareness of the Declaration.

We express our appreciation to the ILO and to the supportive governments which have provided invaluable assistance in implementing projects to promote employment, social protection and social dialogue in Mongolia.

My Ministry, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour, is newly established as a result of the parliamentary elections of July 2000, and shows the Government's priority to address social issues. Its mission is to create an enabling environment for human development, to improve the living standards of people, to ensure universal access to basic social services and to reduce unemployment and poverty.

Over the past ten years, the population of Mongolia has increased by 1.4 to 2 per cent and the working age population has increased by 2.8 per cent. In other words, due to the "baby boom" of the 1960s and 1970s, the increase in the number of newcomers to the labour market is 1.5 times higher than the population growth. The comparatively young population of Mongolia sets the basis for a high growth in the labour force in the foreseeable future.

Based on the Government's appraisal of the critical situation with employment, an employment promotion law has been approved recently. This law will create an environment enabling effective employment promotion measures that are consistent with the needs of the market economy.

The economy of Mongolia is experiencing structural reforms, and the role of the private sector is increasing. In this regard, ILO technical support is playing a crucial role in identifying and addressing challenges in the field of employment and developing sound labour relations between workers and employers.

Mongolia has ratified 13 ILO standards, including the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

In October 2000, the Parliament of Mongolia ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). As a commitment of the Government, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the ILO. The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour is being successfully implemented in the country, with the aims to increase national capacity, to improve awareness, and to support a direct action to working children, particularly those involved in the worst forms of child labour.

The Government of Mongolia is striving to ratify, in the near future, the remaining important human

rights instruments, such as the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).

Special emphasis will be directed to the development of new occupational safety and health management. In this field, the Government needs technical assistance from the ILO to review the current situation.

The Global Report, *Stopping forced labour*, which has been developed in the framework of the ILO Declaration, was carefully studied by our delegation. It should be noted that the report has become very informative and provides a thorough assessment of the situation in the countries of the world. The report has deepened our understanding of forced labour and will be an important step in mobilizing efforts towards its eradication.

The prohibition of forced labour is provided for in the Mongolian national legislation.

The Government of Mongolia fully acknowledges the ILO's focus on the issue of social protection at this 89th Session of the Conference. This issue has caused heated discussion and debate over the past years in Mongolia, and in many other countries as well. Every social constituent looks at this issue from its own perspective. The opportunity of discussing it together and reaching a common understanding, that the Conference provides, is of paramount importance.

Although the globalization process has rendered socio-economic policy at the national level more complex than in the past, it is making it easier to exchange information and experience in the social sector between the countries. Finding an efficient and cost-effective solution to address the issues of social protection is a challenge.

My delegation commends the fact that this session is giving importance to the issue of cooperatives. We believe that cooperatives are an effective means to boost employment and to reduce unemployment.

The Government of Mongolia is committed to the development of cooperation with the ILO. It looks forward to its continuing assistance, in particular in the field of active employment policy.

We propose to review the framework of cooperation between Mongolia and the ILO in the light of the new ILO policies and strategies.

Original French: Mr. ABERKANE (*Employers' adviser, Algeria*) — In a world where globalization is constantly growing with each individual market becoming part of a single world market subject to drastic movements and unforeseeable latitude of extensive deregulation, it is useful to keep sight of some basic points of reference.

Do we have to accept the loss of jobs, income and demand as the inevitable result of the shortsightedness of a world market economy which sets profitability above all else?

Do we, in the name of the free movement of goods, services and capital, have to accept that businesses are obliged to close their doors and leave thousands of people out in the cold without any hope or job prospects?

How far should we go in accepting that the market destroys itself rather than developing it, on the grounds of efficiency and profit?

These questions need to be discussed fully in our assembly as they shed new light on the problem of

social security. What sort of social security can we devise, build and advocate in a world where the market dictates workers', employers' and businesses' every move?

The problems of national and international competitiveness, complicate the issue of social security even further.

Whereas, in industrialized countries, in particular, it is an ageing population and tough economic competition which jeopardize the continuation of social security systems and their funding, in developing countries it is the young and those who are not part of the active population who place too heavy a burden on the fragile and slow economic growth which only offers a few jobs in a market where the informal sector reinforces the black economy, without the input for the funding and extension of social security.

What sort of social protection system are we talking about in the long term in view of changing circumstances, the interconnection of markets, and globalization which, due to recession, puts all economic players on the same footing? The answer lies in the effects of a blinkered liberalism running counter to the healthy, dynamic nature of markets, being kept in check by all countries and States wishing to maintain a minimum level of social balance compatible with international competition.

The issue of cooperatives raises many questions in developing countries. Cooperatives have frequently been associated with agricultural and rural areas, where reforms have not always been successful. The many experiments show that it was the conditions for developing this type of organization which creates jobs and provides a synergy between those with a joint or collective project which were not right. The cooperative formula itself was sound.

The greatest handicap in Third World countries today is funding. Indeed, cooperatives do not have a suitable form of funding, which discourages them from taking the initiative and setting up a system. This form of organization, which is not costly and can do a great deal to fight against unemployment and exclusion is, however, still the poor relation compared with the incentives for business and activities, particularly amongst the young, women, the disadvantaged and the disabled.

The flexibility of cooperatives should be an asset in an increasingly open market which is still greatly undervalued.

The question of safety and health in agriculture deserves special attention because of what it represents for our people. Food problems and their implications for people's health should no longer be measured exclusively by the yardstick of profit and output. The destruction of our vegetable and animal kingdom, genetic modification and intensive farming which are injurious to people's health should, in future, be subject to very strict controls throughout the world so that there will not be two different areas of protection for people which is unfair and dangerous to the international community.

We have to ensure that there will not be two-speed health and safety in agriculture due to a lack of harmonization of legislation, checks and controls. This is one of the greatest challenges for all members of the international community because, should a food disaster arise, the risks are extremely serious for everyone without exception.

I would like to take this opportunity to launch three concrete appeals for solidarity for three basic issues in the world we live in.

The first concerns AIDS which needs to be addressed rationally and strictly by the international community to prevent this scourge during this twenty-first century from spreading on a large scale and endangering larger sections of the population. Indifference, or even blindness, to this disease will cost more in the long run than it will to take it on board long term by all the countries in the world.

The second concerns Africa, which contains some of the poorest people on earth who have to face conflict and war and have been torn apart by so-called development markets and policies which transfer more wealth and resources than they create for the people involved, the employers and the workers. Will Africa be condemned to be an area that supplies only raw materials and where the people are excluded from all the dynamics of the contemporary world? Development requires a view of progress which includes the welfare of humanity.

The last point concerns Palestine and the Palestinian people.

Finally, I should like to thank you for your attention and hope that this 89th Session of the Conference will be crowned with success. Let us hope that it will help fulfil the aspirations of those suffering at the beginning of the third millennium.

Mr. WILSON (Workers' delegate, New Zealand) — The Director-General has provided us with a Report which contains vision, inspiration, substantial pathways to a better future and a direct challenge to us all.

Decent work is an inspired concept and vision. Those who criticize its vagueness miss the point that it is a goal to which we should all aspire.

Founded on the Declaration of Philadelphia's vision of a "just share of the fruits of progress to all" and on the universal platform of rights in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, it enables every country to set its own targets to reduce the decent work deficit. But they do so in the context of an overall goal of ensuring that globalization delivers social justice for all, and not just rich pickings for a few.

Our Minister of Labour has already reported to you on the enactment in New Zealand of a new Employment Relations Act, based on the principles of the 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). This is a very welcome development for the workers of New Zealand and it is appropriate that I should acknowledge the influence of the ILO in returning our country to an employment law regime which guarantees freedom of association and the right to organize, and which encourages and promotes collective bargaining.

I also welcome other social justice initiatives by our Government, including the ratification this week of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

But I accept the reality that the new Employment Relations Act provides us with an opportunity, not a guarantee, of decent work for all New Zealand workers. Freedom of association and the right to organize are the means of delivering a social justice agenda at both the workplace and national

level, but we have to give substance to these rights to achieve it.

The Director-General observes that there will always be those who dismiss decent work objectives as "unrealistic", a "luxury", or worse, "high risk". I welcome his Report's rebuttal of these claims and his acceptance of an ILO role to respond to such arguments by marshalling the evidence to support those who are promoting decent work.

The Report provides further welcome evidence that job quality, worker participation and equal opportunity policies contribute positively to productivity.

But while the Government in New Zealand is restoring worker rights, we still face the challenge of relearning effective social dialogue. The Director-General has emphasized the ILO tripartite consistency required to achieve the aim of coherent policy packages. I agree, and note that strong tripartite partnerships are required within each nation as well.

The policies of the past decade in New Zealand have had a negative impact, and the Director-General's Report provides useful examples of how effective social dialogue can produce outcomes which are beneficial to all.

These include skill development policies which promote better labour market functioning and employment opportunities, and macroeconomic policies based on social partnership, which have produced a sound platform for economic growth.

Finally, and most importantly, the Director-General challenges us "to find a new way ahead for globalization" to a "rules-based international system that is fair to all".

There is an urgent need for governments and international institutions to demonstrate that there can be a new, fairer model of globalization. Frustration levels are rising all around the world.

The challenge to all participants in this Organization is to demonstrate that decent work is more than words; that it is urgent action coordinated globally which actually delivers for people.

To use the Director-General's analogy, social justice must be moved into the big league with trade and commerce.

This is the challenge which will be taken up at this week's meeting of the Governing Body Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization. It is a challenge for us all. We must not fail.

Original Russian: Ms. KOLOS (Government delegate, Belarus) — Since this is the first time I have spoken, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President on her election at this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference and wish her every success in her work. I would like to thank the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for his Report, which not only informs us about what has been achieved, but also stimulates us to fruitful discussion.

I would like to stress the particular importance of the reports of the Director-General in the past few years. The ILO's new approaches to the organization of its work have taken shape in the concept of decent work and continue to develop further. In this connection, the views of the tripartite constituents of the ILO are extremely important.

The Director-General's Report this year is the logical continuation of the 1999 Report, which defined

the priorities for the Organization's future work. Assessing what has been achieved over the last two years, we can say with some certainty that the Organization is moving progressively towards the achievement of the tasks it has set itself. It is true that, even at the beginning of the process for the attainment of decent work, the ILO has already taken a number of steps that make it clear that we are moving in the right direction. It is fortunate that the goal of decent work has found understanding not only within the ILO, but also outside it, and this in turn has a positive influence on the ILO's authority.

At the same time, it is clear from the Director-General's Report that there is much yet to be done if the concept of decent work is to take firm root in the minds of those who have a decisive influence on development.

The Director-General's Report is an in-depth study of those tasks that have to be resolved by the tripartite constituents of the ILO in the next few years and sets out a well-developed programme of action for achieving the aims of decent work.

The priorities in the implementation of the decent work programme will, to a significant extent, depend on the internal situation of the particular country. At the same time, one can speak of priorities that are common to groups of countries. Thus, for low income countries, a particular area of concern is poverty, employment and social security.

For many States, including those with average and sometimes even high levels of development, there are still problems with job creation and economic growth and also with the universal observance of workers' rights as enshrined in law, especially in the informal sector of the economy.

Safety at work, gender equality and the improvement of social dialogue among the participants concern all countries however developed they are.

In spite of particular national conditions, and therefore differing national priorities, the main aims involved in achieving decent work are the same for all of us. These are reflected in the four strategic aims of the ILO — fundamental rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue. Only an integrated approach, aimed at attaining all four strategic tasks of the ILO, can truly bring us nearer to the goal of decent work.

We would like to express our solidarity with the Director-General's conclusion that "it is easier to advance on each of the different dimensions of decent work if progress is made on several together". This integrated approach is consonant with the social and economic policy of the Republic of Belarus. Of course, we cannot say that we have achieved equal success on all fronts, for the magnitude of the problems yet to be solved and the starting positions in various areas differ from one other.

We must also bear in mind the fact, that social and economic processes in the Republic of Belarus are complicated by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Fifteen years after that accident, Belarus, which was a victim of a technological accident, not of its own making, is still forced to spend enormous financial and material resources, over 20 per cent of the state budget, on dealing with its consequences. All this inevitably has a direct and indirect influence on our capacity for creating better conditions at work and better remuneration for the workers of my country indeed, it affects all aspects of the life of the people of Belarus.

Here we would like to acknowledge the help that has been given us by the International Labour Organization in developing new approaches to re-solving a problem that for many countries is complex and urgent, namely reform of the pension system. We are pleased with the results of our two-year cooperation and are quite sure that the theme of decent work will become a central focus of the new joint Programme of Cooperation between the ILO and the Republic of Belarus.

In conclusion, I would like to stress our determination to do everything in our power in order universally to improve working conditions in my country and help the ILO to give practical application to the idea of decent work throughout the world.

Original Arabic: Mr. EL AZALI (Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Egypt) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! On behalf of the millions of workers affiliated to the Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions, I am delighted to participate in this international Conference because of the importance of the International Labour Organization to all of the world's workers, especially in the developing countries. The ILO is regarded in our country as the defender of a noble cause and it represents a trustworthy reference point because of the mandate with which it has been entrusted in connection with social protection, social dialogue and labour rights. We have every hope that the ILO will be able to play its due role at the international level in order to make work more accessible and more humane in the context of the current international situation of globalization and the revolution in technology. We are pleased to see that decent work is once again at the centre of the Director-General's Report.

This demonstrates the extent to which the Organization is aware of the problems confronting many developing countries, including my own, because of restructuring programmes and economic reform policies to which the new economic circumstances are forcing us to resort. It also demonstrates that the Organization is seeking to make a positive and effective contribution to reducing the problems that particularly affect the developing countries, reducing incomes and standards of living and causing increases in unemployment and poverty. These adverse effects are no longer confined to the most vulnerable sectors — women, the elderly, children, young people and people working in the informal sector; they are now spreading to other categories of workers who are losing their jobs as a consequence of the overall decline in the economic situation of our country and the slowdown in development provoked by recession. At the same time, investment is falling and the debt burden continues to grow. It is thus clear that competition in international trade and economics is not fair if we compare the situation of the developing and the developed countries.

The campaigns against exports from developing countries and the devaluation of those exports under the pretext that they do not comply with international labour standards have forced consumers to boycott such products. This is not the way to encourage observance and application of international labour standards in our countries. On the contrary, it will harm the balanced economic and social development that we seek and may backfire sooner or later on the perpetrators, for we all depend on

one another in this world. We are all aware that workers in the developed countries are being overtaken by fear of globalization just like their counterparts in the developing countries, but, while the causes of those fears are sometimes shared, at other times they run counter to the hopes and aspirations of others. Thus we must rally all our forces around our points of agreement in order to serve the interests of all and realize all our aspirations on the path of economic and social progress.

I cannot fail to mention our profound belief in the important role of international labour standards, particularly those relating to fundamental rights in the implementation of sustainable development. The ILO, through its mechanisms and procedures, has certainly succeeded in promoting and guiding legislation. Through the reports under the follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work last year, on freedom of association, and this year, on forced labour, we see that the discussions have borne fruit and that we can hope to see progress in the ratification and implementation of these standards. We hope that this Organization will remain a forum for dialogue and not confrontation, a platform for innovative cooperation, in order that all may share the benefits of globalization in a spirit of justice, equity and solidarity.

On behalf of the workers of Egypt, I cannot conclude without paying tribute to the work of the Director-General of this Organization, and, especially, without drawing attention to the sufferings of the workers in the occupied Arab territories in Palestine and Lebanon that result from the continued colonialist occupation by Israel and its barbaric actions. As long as the occupation continues, international protection must be provided to the workers and peoples of the region. I should also refer to the sufferings of the peoples and workers of Iraq, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Sudan, who are subjected to unjust embargoes that have lasted too long and should be lifted forthwith in the name of the justice and dignity to which we all aspire.

Original French: Mr. DIOP (representative, Organization of African Trade Union Unity) — First of all, allow me on behalf of the African workers within the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and also on my own behalf to congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on her election as President of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference and I would wish her and the Vice-Presidents every success in their noble task. I have no doubt whatsoever that the discussions which will take place during this session will be constructive and will contribute to the success of this Conference.

In the OATUU we are of the opinion that the ILO's duty as a social institution is to strengthen the balance between the worlds of labour and profit. It is obvious that, as a trade union organization, my organization supports any ILO initiative designed to promote the fundamental rights of workers throughout the world and to improve the fate of working populations without any distinction.

I am happy to emphasize firmly that my organization is firmly committed to combating child labour in Africa on the one hand, and on the other hand is striving to ensure that the African countries ratify all seven core Conventions as well as the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Our organization the OATUU, would like the ILO to be more active in guaranteeing the recognition of the rights and freedoms of African migrant workers in host countries, particularly in Europe. It is inconceivable that millions of migrant workers, who have always carried out the most difficult and most dangerous tasks in the developed countries, should today be the victims of injustice.

The OATUU highly appreciates the efforts made by the ILO through its different multidisciplinary teams in Africa. It recognizes the fact that, despite their budgetary constraints and the ever-growing requirements of technical and advisory services, the latter provide the framework for a large number of projects relating to promotion of the spirit of enterprise, employment, vocational training and aid to the informal sector, which is constantly growing in Africa.

I should like to emphasize the important role which the ILO should play in the field of technical cooperation and with respect to the efforts to be able to develop programmes and activities in this field.

It should be recognized that the economic and social conditions of the African countries involve growing demands which it is difficult for them to meet with their own resources. This should prompt the ILO to double its efforts in order to promote technical cooperation in Africa and extend its framework and content whilst seeking appropriate financial resources.

Furthermore, I should like to speak about gender equality and relations between men and women. It is crucial that all the ILO member States should draw up a system of standards guaranteeing the fundamental rights of women, with recognition, and also equality of men and women in all spheres of life, particularly those of education, employment and labour.

My organization is of the opinion that labour standards promulgated in the different countries should make greater provision for special protection for women during pregnancy and maternity. They should also further protect women working at night or in difficult conditions. In other words, we advocate non-discrimination in employment and salaries for women.

I cannot finish without expressing the gratitude of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity to Mr. Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, for the particular devotion with which he has untiringly carried out his term of office since he has been at the head of the ILO.

I should also like to congratulate him for the quality of his Report, which highlights beyond any doubt the fundamental values to which African workers and their national trade union organizations are deeply attached.

Mr. ABDELLA (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ethiopia) — I would like to congratulate the President and the Vice-Presidents upon their election to preside over the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would also like to commend the Director-General and his competent staff for the well-researched and comprehensive Report submitted to the Conference, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. The Report contains a detailed account of the ILO's work in reducing the decent work deficit and the proposals containing new and innovative approaches in meeting this global challenge.

In his Report, the Director-General explained the decent work deficit as an absence of sufficient employment opportunities, inadequate social protection, the denial of rights at work and shortcomings in social dialogue. He also noted that we need to confront these challenges in order to create conditions that might permit working people to realize their aspirations for a better life.

In this regard, we fully agree with the Director-General when he stated that the global challenge of reducing the decent work deficit should not be dictated by policy intervention from the ILO, or from any other external source. As such, every country, irrespective of the level of development, should set its own goals to reduce the decent work deficit with due regard to its specific circumstances, conditions and possibilities. The international community should also support this effort.

Moreover, for national efforts to produce tangible results in reducing the decent work deficit, it is imperative that ILO's endeavours in constituting the universal framework by formulating the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as a basic instrument, should be promoted and realized by member States.

The ILO should also intensify its various technical cooperation activities, with a view to assisting member States in implementing the underlying principles and rights embodied in the core ILO Conventions.

However, the daunting task remains of creating the necessary environment in order to achieve decent work in practice at the national level within a global economy where there is a large majority of unemployed and underemployed workers, coupled with poor wages, low productivity and inadequate social protection, especially in the informal sector.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate for me to touch briefly on the African reality in relation to the challenge of reducing the decent work deficit. The interwoven problems of the continent, such as unemployment, poverty, gender inequality and the conflict situation, are further aggravated by the negative effects of marginalization from the world economy. These adverse situations have further hampered the socio-economic development of the continent. Moreover the participation of the informal sector in employment accounts for the majority of the workforce. One of the drawbacks of this informal sector is that a large proportion of the labour force is not organized in industrial associations or other regular conditions of employment.

The lack of these formal structures is hampering the implementation of ILO standards. Therefore, rights at work and social protection are not effectively ensured. In these situations, the principle of full, productive and freely chosen employment cannot be fulfilled.

Furthermore, our countries are facing problems of widespread unemployment in urban areas, and vast underemployment in rural areas. High annual population growth, low productivity and a limited share of large and small-scale industries curtails the generation of employment and healthy economic growth. In the face of these unfavourable conditions, international organizations such as the ILO are expected to formulate and promptly implement new initiatives aimed at tackling the challenges of the informal economy.

Turning to the remaining agenda items, my delegation is appreciative of the reports submitted for our

consideration. The issues of safety and health in agriculture, promotion of cooperatives and social security are all timely and pertinent issues to the work of our Organization. In particular, the subject related to social security issues, challenges and prospects is of a particular interest, for it would address deep-seated problems and help us to develop our social protection system with a view to ensuring sustainable social security schemes.

Finally, I wish the ILO and the Director-General and staff thereof, every success in their efforts to see this Organization assume its new role with renewed commitment and dedication. We look forward to a better future, with more innovative and effective approaches in addressing the pressing issues of our time.

(*Mr. Donato takes the Chair.*)

Mr. MOMOEDONU (Minister for Labour and Industrial Relations, Fiji) — Please allow me at the outset to join others in congratulating the President on her election to preside over the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. On behalf of the Government and the delegation of the Republic of Fiji, we offer the President and her colleagues our most sincere congratulations. They have our support and blessings to effectively carry out the tasks of this august body. The appointment of Ms. A. Sto. Tomas will refocus the direction of the traditional activities of the ILO towards the smaller nations of the Asia Pacific region, and in particular the island States of Oceania. These small nations are blessed with many God-given resources, but they tend to be left out or left behind in the process of globalization.

As the President eloquently outlined in her maiden address on Tuesday, 5 June, "Globalization is the mantra of the new millennium. All it means is that we have to produce more, serve better and do both at the lowest possible cost. The theory is that, if competition were unhampered by tariff and non-tariff barriers, it would be a better world." The inevitable question is, can the small island countries, like Fiji, compete with the economic giants of the North?

The answer is definitely no, as we are handicapped by our geographical isolation and lack of technological resources. In this connection, we support the President's call that "Globalization, like golf, requires a handicapping system that allows the new players to catch up".

My country is currently going through a political crisis, and with the assistance and understanding of the international community, our interim caretaker Government is committed to guide the country back to parliamentary democracy and out of this political quagmire by having general elections in August this year. In spite of Fiji's political turmoil, my Government has not abandoned the ILO ideals of tripartism, especially the cooperation of the social partners, for the pursuit of social justice and the attainment of a better quality of life for the people of Fiji. As a member State of the ILO, our participation at last year's session of the Conference was not possible because of the political situation that we are still going through at home. We are attending this year to show the ILO that workers' rights are secure and protected under Fiji's legislative framework, contrary to the libellous propaganda promoted by some elements, which will only bring hardship both economically and socially to

my country. These elements are both inside and outside the country.

The Government of Fiji has made a commitment to ratify all the fundamental human rights or core Conventions, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The ratification of these Conventions will be effected with the full participation of the social partners as the Government of Fiji firmly believes that is the cornerstone of all ILO activities.

On the domestic scene, my Ministry has finalized a paper on the labour reform policy framework which is targeted at developing our law and practice to tie in with the various ILO instruments as a means of aligning our policies with the various requirements of the globalization process.

We are looking at achieving this objective in the next three years, and with the fine-tuning of the Industrial Relations Bill and the draft Workmen's Compensation Scheme we hope to provide for and protect the workers of Fiji from the effects of the globalization process. We cannot achieve this without the support of the workers of Fiji. It seems ironical as they will be the beneficiaries, but the most representative workers' organization in the country, the Fiji Trades Union Congress, has blatantly refused to have anything to do with the interim caretaker Government although the international community has supported the Government's plans to restore parliamentary democracy in Fiji within the given time frame of 25 August 2001.

It shall be our main task when we return home to pursue the restoration of meaningful dialogue with the workers to enable us to promote national economic recovery and growth, fulfil our reporting obligations and the address ratification of the fundamental human rights Conventions. That constitutes an essential element in addressing the Director-General's global challenge to reduce the decent work deficit. We agree that decent work is a development goal and that it expresses the people's right to development and a country's right to a fair share of the benefits of globalization.

Fundamental principles and rights at work are the essential foundation of decent work and people must have work if these rights are to be realized, so employment must be part of the process.

Like other Third World countries, we in Fiji do not profess to satisfy the equation. Fundamental rights at work are protected by our Constitution but the provision of employment is still the priority goal to achieve. That will not deter us; when political stability is restored in Fiji, we shall vigorously pursue the global challenge.

The concept of decent work is an integrated approach and we look forward to the ILO continuing with the integrated human resources development programme currently under way in my country in partnership with the Government. The programme aims to identify and promote the needs of the labour market and it is hoped that it will lead to the absorption of the majority of school leavers annually in meaningful employment.

The Government of Fiji looks forward to the adoption of an instrument on the question of safety and health in agriculture. My country's economy is mainly based on agriculture and the anticipated standard will extend our existing occupational health and safety legislation to the rural people who are mainly engaged in the agricultural sector.

Similarly, the agenda item on social security is timely as it will generate discussions on its financing and coverage. The delegation of Fiji welcomes the conclusions adopted by the Conference and urges the Governing Body of the ILO to give serious consideration to the conclusions when planning its future actions on the subject. We in Fiji are currently working on reforming our social security programme and look forward to working in partnership with the ILO and other countries in this area.

We also welcome the first discussion of the item on the promotion of cooperatives during this session of the International Labour Conference. Cooperatives are perceived as a means for their members to achieve common economic and social goals in all countries, yet the ILO does not appear to have any comprehensive international labour standards in this area.

In Fiji, rural dwellers and those who live in villages expect the local cooperative store to supply them with their basic needs. In many cases such stores are a confirmed source of credit during emergencies. They are an established part of life in the rural areas and villages of my country and we welcome the action taken by the ILO.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania on its action in relation to the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The condolences of the Government of Fiji are conveyed to the Royal Family of the Kingdom of Nepal on their recent loss, and also to the victims of the flooding in El Salvador.

Ms. BANNERMAN (Minister of Manpower Development and Employment, Ghana) — On behalf of the Ghana delegation, I formally congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas and my colleagues the Vice-Presidents on their election to the presidency and vice-presidency of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. It is the conviction of the Ghana delegation that the session will be completed with distinction.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank all the delegations, especially the African group, for giving me the honour to serve this Conference as one of the Vice-Presidents.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the Report of the Director-General, which is intended to focus global attention on the decent work deficit. The decent work deficit is enormous, especially in developing countries such as Ghana. It is thus most reassuring that the Director-General and the ILO have decided to give this global challenge the attention it deserves.

In a fast-changing global economy, propelled mainly by science and technology, which is acutely lacking in many parts of the developing world and especially in Africa, the fundamental problem is how to make decent work available to all communities so that the dividends of globalization will be seen to be enjoyed by all. Decent work is indeed a means of creating access to adequate health care, quality education and decent standards of living. The absence of decent work breeds poverty and misery, and the scourge of child labour and slavery in its various guises.

Thus, the urgent need for the formulation of policies and the establishment of appropriate institutions that will promote the achievement of decent work

cannot be over-emphasized. It goes beyond Conventions and legislation. It demands total commitment, cooperation, support and active participation of all the tripartite constituents and other stakeholders at the national and international levels to reduce the decent work deficit.

Fortunately, actions that need to be taken to reduce the deficit fall within the four strategic objectives of the ILO, namely, employment, the fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection and social dialogue. We commend the ILO for the various programmes which have been creatively fashioned to facilitate the realization of these strategic objectives. We are indeed proud to reiterate the fact that Ghana has ratified all the core labour standards, and we are making every effort to meet the requirements set by the Conventions.

Notwithstanding her current financial constraints and limited access to technology, Ghana is committed to the realization of decent work and will strive to achieve this goal nationwide.

Indeed, the new Government of Ghana has formulated policies and initiated plans aimed at sustained economic growth through prudent macroeconomic measures that would, among other things, control inflation and reduce budget deficits. The Government has made job creation and employment a key factor in this economic and social policy, with human resource development as a strong component.

Improving the conditions of service of workers is another area of concern to the Government. It has openly expressed dissatisfaction with the situation of low wages and low productivity currently prevailing in the country, and has called for a national discourse involving the social partners and all other stakeholders to find a solution to the problem. Concerning the other dimensions of decent work, namely social protection and social dialogue, the Government is taking a serious look at our social security systems with a view to increasing coverage and enhancing their effectiveness. Ghana believes in social dialogue and will continue to give it prominence in all aspects of its economic and social policy planning and implementation.

In all these efforts, the Government of Ghana considers the ILO as its strong ally and will continue to count on its support and partnership to achieve the goal of decent work.

Original French: Mr. CHAMI (*Employers' delegate, Morocco*) — First of all, it is my pleasure to address my heartiest congratulations to the President on her well-deserved election and also for the way in which she has led our work, thanks to her well-known experience and competence. My congratulations are also extended to all the Officers who, together with the President, have made the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference such a success.

As usual, we took great interest in reading and studying the Director-General's Report, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. In the face of a globalizing economy, new rules are becoming established which entail serious consequences at the social level because of the way in which the operation of the market is determined essentially by economic objectives. These changes are fast becoming part of a global area, whereas the rate of development is ever more unequal, disparities in the field of labour and security are, if anything, getting bigger, and the gaps between

countries are growing larger. There can be no single remedy provided by a single institution or authority for these injustices, which threaten the legitimacy of globalization. On the contrary, we need to involve all those with a role to play, however big or small. Summits and international conferences have called on all those concerned to make efforts to raise awareness of the most critical situations and to unite their attempts to find a fair balance. It is within this framework that our Organization has approved the agenda put forward by the Director-General, designed to focus the ILO's efforts on decent work as one of the major global objectives of our times. In order to do this, we need a strong consensus of the three categories of constituents with a view to collective action. The shortcomings which sometimes limit the effectiveness and cohesiveness of our activities are a reflection of weaknesses in the Organization's institutions and, as Mr. Somavia says, in attitudes. We are aware of the size of the task, and that efforts must be deployed unstintingly and untiringly. In other words, we give our full support to the Director-General in the campaign he is waging so passionately in order to spread awareness of the objectives and to obtain the support of the various actors involved.

I would like to refer to another lofty initiative. In 1999, the Secretary-General of the United Nations first put forward the concept of Global Compact. He called on businesses to be more active with respect to the distorting effects of globalization and to this end to adopt a series of fundamental values, mainly based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, particularly with regard to human rights, labour conditions and the environment.

I am happy to state that not only have we fully endorsed this concept, which mainly concerns businesses, but we have even forged ahead in certain respects. The General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises, which I have the honour to represent here, has adopted the concepts of citizenship enterprises and sustainable development, and stressed dialogue between the social partners. CGEM also endorses the principles of the Global Compact, by opening up and forging new alliances with new partners in order to improve and develop the supply of services to enterprises. Emphasis has been laid on promoting decent work, and on strengthening initiatives for the development and migration of the informal sector. In 1997, our Confederation set up an ethics committee with follow-up mechanisms in order to promote a culture of ethics and to raise awareness among all the members of the economic world. This committee has drawn up an Ethics Charter for Businesses which has been widely disseminated among our members. The CGEM has carried out a sustained campaign against all forms of abuse of power and unfair competition. At the social level, CGEM has undertaken to modernize labour relations on the basis of dialogue, advocating balanced social policies which take into account the interests of the main partners involved in production. It is permanently committed to tripartite discussions with trade unions and the Government. Furthermore, we should emphasize participation of our Confederation in combating corruption and in the plan of action for an ethical public life. Practical activities have begun to be carried out, such as prohibiting child labour, compulsory health insurance and punishment for discrimination in labour.

As you know, the CGEM is an association which is fully aware of its role and we are ready to assume that role to ensure that the positive effects of globalization are not buried entirely under the avalanche of its more perverse effects.

Original Spanish: Mr. MARTINEZ MOLINA (*Workers' delegate, Chile*) — On behalf of the working women and men of Chile, I greet the President of this 89th Session of the Conference of the International Labour Organization, our colleague and compatriot, the Director-General of the ILO, and all distinguished delegations here this year.

By proposing decent work as a policy and programme axis, the ILO is restoring our confidence in fundamental human values. This Conference is a window of hope in a cold and impersonal world, increasingly subject to market laws. The hope of finding work is the aspiration of many men and women in the Americas and throughout the world. Decent work, as conceived by the ILO, is our ideal. Decent work refers to fair wages, proper labour conditions, the right to health, education and social protection.

Chile is a country with 15 million inhabitants and a labour force of 6 million, of whom 2 million are self-employed.

Over the past 30 years Chile has liberalized its economy, has integrated into international markets, and is doing its best to establish trade relations with the burgeoning global economic groupings.

However, in the field of labour relations we maintain a great number of rigid laws and regulations that have an adverse effect on workers, have made employment precarious, and have generated a high level of labour instability.

My country has joined the club of those that, in order to create a good international image, ratify Conventions and then forget to enforce them.

In February 1999, Chile ratified the 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), and parliamentary approval formally enacted them as a law of the Republic. However, the enforcement of these Conventions is non-existent.

Furthermore, labour reform is being encouraged, but the content of this reform is alarmingly removed from the Conventions I have just referred to.

The country upholds a flawed and unjust labour legislation that allows the systematic violation of the most elementary labour and trade union rights.

Unemployment is reaching alarming rates, and men and women at work are working over 12 hours per day. We actually have a record of 2,496 hours worked each year by every worker.

Twenty years ago the current pension system was imposed on the Chilean people. This is no more and no less than enforced savings for old age, but bereft of all the basic principles of a social security system. This is a totting-up of individual payments, but quite individually separated, and this means that the benefits received by those who have contributed, basically depend on their individual ability to save. As a consequence, the lower income workers are those most adversely affected when the time comes to claim a benefit.

One of the chief defects of Chile's social security system is related to coverage. There are ever fewer contributors, because of the high percentage of infor-

mal employment, and the non-existent benefits that low income workers receive from the system.

Of the 6 million workers that once existed in the system, only 2.5 million now regularly contribute.

Another of the defects is based on the high cost of administration of pension funds, which fluctuates between 5 and 10 per cent of the input of the contributors. This, in addition to the low profits shown by workers' savings, is reducing the possibility of access to a decent pension dramatically.

The system of contribution funding by individuals does not guarantee any pensions for the medium- and low-income workers, who actually constitute 66 per cent of our country's manpower. These people can contribute the whole of their working life and still not accumulate sufficient funds for a decent pension, and then the State of Chile has to provide a minimum pension for them while the profits are made by private funds.

One further aspect that I should highlight is the extreme concentration that has reached the state of a monopoly of the Chilean pension system.

In 1990 there were 22 pension fund administrators, and today there are only eight. Of those eight, three cover 70.8 per cent of Chile's pension market.

Over the past ten years, due to the continuing practise by employers of declaring the pension input by their employees, but without handing these to the administrators, a vast accumulated debt is now owed by the employers to the Chilean workers. This fraudulent appropriation now amounts to \$650 million which, if it is not repaid, will harm the workers' pensions even more.

The Single Central Organization of Chilean workers considers that social security is an issue both for today and for tomorrow. It requires a debate if we are to produce any reforms based on the four fundamental pillars, the pension system, the health-care system, occupational accident and diseases insurance, and unemployment insurance and a job generation policy.

I very much hope that the debates of this 89th Session of the Conference will lead to agreements that will improve the circumstances, in terms of social security of our people and, in particular, of our working men and women.

Mr. MALLIA MILANES (*Employers' delegate, Malta*) — My delegation would like to join those who have expressed their congratulations to the Director-General for his Report, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*. It is a well crafted, well argued Report and, above all, it is designed to appeal to a broad constituency exceeding what we have become used to with regard to the Director-General's Report.

Once again, however, the Maltese delegation is obliged to record its unhappiness at the delay in publishing this Report.

It is clear that the thrust of the Report is to put employers in the spotlight; if they criticize too much they will be seen as negative and blocking consensus, while on the other hand, if we do not react to specific policy suggestions, we shall inevitably be seen and quoted in years to come as having accepted the entire vision set out in this Report.

Taking care to acknowledge the support of its constituents, the Report attempts to define what decent work really is. Perhaps it is easier to define what decent work is not, rather than what it is. In defining

decent work, we should, perhaps, start with the statement that it is about securing human dignity.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the less-than-adequate employment opportunities afflicting both rich and poor countries. Available statistics only serve to reveal the enormity of the challenge posed by the employment gap. Indeed, this year's *World Employment Report* calculates that 500 million new jobs will be needed over the next ten years merely to absorb new entrants to the labour market.

Other gaps have been identified, including a rights gap, a social protection gap and a social dialogue gap. In addressing the deficits represented by these gaps, care must be taken to ensure that the pendulum is not allowed to swing too much to the other side, thus creating fresh gaps and imbalances.

In any case, the majority viewpoint appears to be that the minimum for decent work comprises the principles embedded in the ILO Declaration. It is, and will remain, a subjective concept. We will settle for that, as well as for the statement that it is for each nation and region to define it in the light of its own particular circumstances, including history, geography, culture, and economic and social development. It goes without saying that, once people have attained the minimum, they are bound to ask for more. That is human nature, and we accept it. We find no difficulty in associating ourselves with such statements as "there is obviously no suggestion that all countries can realistically" and at the same time "aim for the same absolute conditions". We can only applaud such restraint. Speaking for myself, I refuse to believe that a sensible solution cannot be crafted without resorting to the one-size-fits-all policy.

On the other hand, I have some difficulty with the concept of the decent work deficit, tied, as it is, to an ever-shifting minimum goal post.

We, as employers, must confess to some misgivings concerning the absence of more persuasive statements under the heading of "universality". We would also have liked to learn how, for instance, the ILO intends to promote the actual creative jobs. Certainly, more emphasis could have been placed on this vital issue. The ILO should have a stronger focus on examining the conditions needed to create sustainable employment and the barriers preventing enterprises from being able to provide decent work. The ILO's help and advice is needed, mostly for encouraging a continuous improvement in small and medium-sized firms. Most jobs are actually created in these types of firms.

In conclusion, the employers welcome the focus on consensus in the Report. However, whilst the Director-General declares he is searching to promote consensus on standards to be universally applied, their form and content must be absolutely correct from the start. When consensus is found, the ILO emerges all the stronger. But, there must not be an illusion; there must not be any false consensus.

Original Spanish: Mr. INSUA CHANG (*Minister for Labour and Human Resources, Ecuador*) — I should like to start by saying that a document has no value unless its message, arguments and propositions actually apply in practice. Not only is political will required, but also needed are effective, timely, reliable and agreed upon follow-up mechanisms, to make the document viable.

Ecuador has ratified all the core Conventions of the ILO, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour

Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and we are prepared to make all the necessary efforts to implement them. For this, it is obvious that in addition to the efforts the Government can make we will have to rely on appropriate international cooperation, and specifically that of the ILO.

For none of us present here is it new to say that forced labour is a perverse reality that violates the basic and universal rights of the workers of the world, that makes work precarious and creates far-reaching inequalities. Its final eradication is thus the ultimate aim that should be pursued by any state that places the common good at the heart of its policy. This issue has been dealt with over many decades, in the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and also in its follow-up machinery where, without total success, efforts have been made to achieve its elimination. On this occasion, aware of the scope of this phenomenon and the dire social consequences that it produces, we have met again with more urgency to deal with this global scourge. It is obvious that it is imperative to strengthen our efforts to achieve such an important and just goal.

What is the reason for the existence of forced labour in the world? What are the causes underpinning even encouraging it? In general terms, it is a lack of human solidarity, selfishness and individualism, almost always with a lack of social sensitivity on the part of some people in power who use forced labour for individual or collective gain, thus maintaining their privileges. There will never be social justice while privileges exist and are protected. The constitutions of almost all the nations of the world proclaim equality of rights, but not all nations put it into practice. I can even state that governments themselves allow forced labour or even encourage it, forgetting a basic principle of common sense: when anyone or any group is in a bad state and is left without protection and with their most basic needs unsatisfied, society as a whole will inevitably be affected. Unfortunately, this inherent truth applies as well at the international level. While we must accept our own responsibilities, we must recognize too that many first world countries are also responsible directly or indirectly for poverty and inequality. What are we asking for? We are asking to be allowed to sell our products without restrictions, because only in this way will it be possible to achieve reasonable levels of remuneration and social justice.

We cannot continue with this situation, where obstacles and restrictions of all types are placed in the way of trade, and at the same time subsidies are granted in the developed countries for certain production sectors, especially agriculture, to the detriment of those nations which cannot afford to make such subsidies. This reality will become still more obvious with the process of globalization. This is something all the States of the world will have to face; we have no way to avoid it. For this, it is necessary for the developing countries to understand that in order for globalization to be positive, it must find its place in society.

In the last two years, out of a population of 12 million people, more than half a million have emigrated from Ecuador, which is nearly 5 per cent. It is not a source of pleasure for Ecuador or for the Government to witness this tragic situation which affects the unity of the family and obliges many Ecuadorians to

leave the country to earn a decent living, very often suffering marginalization and racism.

That notwithstanding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the host countries, and especially the United States, Spain and Italy, for welcoming our compatriots and giving them an opportunity to work.

Ecuador draws the attention of the International Labour Organization and its Members to a new process of forced and precarious labour, which is developing thanks to outsourcing. If it were well designed, outsourcing would be extremely positive for the development of various productive activities. When misused, it only serves to allow employers to avoid and shirk their responsibilities. *Bona fide* outsourcing provides a healthy, flexible and needed supply of labour on the labour market in Ecuador. However, as I have said, the fact that there are no guidelines from international bodies on this subject, weakens national provisions and creates a situation where there are no standards, and where employers avoid their responsibilities. This subsequently limits or creates obstacles to freedom of association, makes work precarious because of the avoidance of responsibilities by both of the enterprises involved and reduces or eliminates the workers' ability to share in the benefits and profits of the enterprises.

The ILO and its Members must urgently address this mechanism which undermines working conditions in the world, in the light of the very serious need to forestall the emergence of a new type of forced labour.

We firmly believe that the only coherent and rational way of coexisting is in a society based on the rule of law. This is why it is necessary to create the required standard-setting bodies. We must bear in mind the following principle: my own rights end where other people's begin.

Original Chinese: Ms. YAN (*Employers' delegate, China*) — First of all, please allow me to extend our warm congratulations to the President on her election to preside over this session of the International Labour Conference. My congratulations also go to the two Vice-Presidents. I am convinced that under their guidance this session of the Conference will surely achieve complete success.

We are now entering the twenty-first century. Economic globalization has become an irreversible historic trend. The reorganization of capital, technology and knowledge around the globe has promoted the economic development of various countries while posing new challenges to countries and regions the world over. In particular, enterprises are faced with the grave test of how to enhance their competitiveness, which will decide their survival and development.

We are happy to note that in his overall policy framework for achieving decent work and promoting the development of enterprises, the Director-General has comprehensively expounded on the relationship between the realization of decent work and the promotion of enterprise development and enhancement of their competitiveness. We had the honour of discussing this issue with the Director-General during his recent visit to China and he emphasized repeatedly that enterprises can play an important role in achieving decent work. He also pointed out that without enterprises there would be no employment, without employment there would be no rights, and there

would be no chances for more jobs. Therefore, it is our hope that discussions and exchanges among the delegates at this session of the Conference will help us to gain consensus on this issue so as to promote a sustained development of enterprises and upgrade the competitiveness of enterprises, to increase employment in a bid to achieve decent work for everyone.

China is a country with a large population. After over 20 years of reform and opening up, we are now moving towards the market economy. In the face of the great pressures of employment and economic globalization, the Chinese Government has regarded the encouragement and promotion of development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as a basic policy for boosting the national economy, shaping the major players in the market economic structure and stabilizing society. The Government has adopted clear-cut objectives and measures to promote the structural readjustment of SMEs, encourage technological renovation, give policy support in taxes and revenues, expand the financial channels, establish a credit guarantee system and create an environment for fair competition. The China Confederation of Employers (CCE) will do its utmost to carry out and implement relevant policies, laws, and rules and regulations in this regard, so as to create better conditions for the enterprise development.

To achieve sustainable development of Chinese enterprises and for their rapid integration into the world economy, we have for the past 20 years sponsored the China Business Summit every year in China in co-operation with the World Economic Forum. This makes a direct and positive contribution as it can help enterprises in foreign countries to come to know China by visiting the country. It also helps Chinese enterprises to get to know the world.

We have also been engaged in mutually beneficial cooperation with the ILO and the other agencies of the United Nations, employers' organizations in other countries and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, in the field of labour relations, enterprise behaviour, environmental protection and overall social development. These have positively helped to bring about the all-round integration of Chinese enterprises into the international market.

We will, as always, continue to strengthen our co-operation with the ILO and employers' organizations in foreign countries so as to work jointly for the achievement of the strategic objectives of the ILO.

Original Arabic: Mr. GHOSN (*Workers' delegate, Lebanon*) — Allow me to convey my very warm congratulations to the President on her election to preside over this very important session of the International Labour Conference. Allow me to pay a tribute also to the Director-General for his extremely exhaustive report, which has addressed all the main issues regarding the Organization and its member States.

We are currently experiencing very rapid change due to globalization, and globalization carries within it the seeds of some very adverse effects for Third World countries. In spite of those who claim that globalization has only positive effects, we believe that the agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, the economic arm of globalization, holds warning signs of true disaster for the medium and long term.

The countries of the Third World do not have industries that are competitive enough to face technological

change and the quality and volume of the goods produced by the industrialized countries. Multinationals and their capital will undoubtedly be dictating the social policies of these countries and those of the countries of the South, and this will seriously affect the notion of independence in the future.

Amongst some of the most serious aspects of this very rapid change, we can mention the worsening of unemployment. Globalization introduced by the agreement establishing the World Trade Organization will lead to unjust amendments in national legislation which will only be regulated specifically by commercial standards, at the expense of social values, and the notion of a welfare state that we founded last century.

We are also convinced that freedom of association will not be spared by these serious changes because the conditions of international agreements and international financial institutions will inevitably contradict trade union rights and freedom of association as well as everything that has been achieved by workers during a struggle which has lasted several decades.

We strongly support the direction in which the International Labour Organization is moving with regard to the protection of the right to work and freedom of association, and participation in developing legislation.

Nevertheless, it is more important that the International Labour Organization plays a more dynamic role with a view to supporting the peoples of the Third World and protecting the rights and *acquis* of the workers. We reiterate how important it is for the Organization to have a more effective role in the Arab region and in the support given to the Lebanese trade union movement, so that it will be better organized to face up to the problems that are building up.

I would like to take the opportunity to ensure you that we are committed to making this year one when we take effective measures to implement the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and also the year when we establish a more organized trade union structure, thus enabling our trade union movement and general confederation to play a very active role within our society.

We fully appreciate the Director-General's Report, particularly Report VI — Social Security: Issues, challenges and prospects. Indeed, this is one of the priorities of the General Confederation of Workers. We are proud of one of our greatest achievements, the establishment of a national social security fund which, for the trade union movement in our country is the provident fund for social and welfare health. We know that the health of the workers is their only capital. We also consider that it serves as a shield, protecting workers from the challenges of globalization and its adverse effects in developing societies.

While in Lebanon we have managed to guarantee political rights in our democratic system, we attach particular importance to social rights. Therefore, the Act concerning the health of the elderly was adopted, pending the adoption of a draft law on retirement and social protection. The three social partners are taking part in drawing up of this legislation.

We in the trade union movement are convinced of the importance of striking a balance between economics and the social dimension. We must fight against the triple horror of poverty, ignorance and disease. This can only be done through social solidarity, which leads to social stability and security through a social

welfare and retirement system capable of ensuring a decent life for all workers and a decent retirement for pensioners. We also need to provide better health protection for all workers. The establishment of an unemployment fund will assuredly protect workers from the adverse effects of free trade and the risks inherent to globalization and its repercussions on the labour market.

Finally, on behalf of the workers of Lebanon and the Lebanese people, we appeal from this podium to the international community and to all friends of Lebanon and of the Lebanese people, which has liberated a part of its territory from Israeli occupation, to support us in liberating our territory which is still occupied, in releasing our prisoners who are languishing in Israeli prisons and in rebuilding our country, which was destroyed by the Israeli occupation.

From this free podium, we wish to reiterate our support for the intifada of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation. This people should have an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. The international community should bring pressure to bear on Israel to make it implement international resolutions and withdraw from all occupied Arab territories in the Syrian Golan, in Palestine and in Lebanon. I wish you every success, for the good and prosperity of the workers of the world.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-KUHLANI (*Workers' delegate, Yemen*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! We commend the efforts made by the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, and we appreciate his relentless efforts to improve the performance of the Organization and translate its objectives and principles into reality.

His Report this year asked how decent work could become a national reality in the context of a globalizing economy. This has been very successful, in that the topic has attracted the interest of workers and trade unions all over the world, and will influence the living standards of workers everywhere, particularly in developing countries, where people have suffered most from the negative impact of globalization, which includes the lack of social and cultural restraint and the absence of social justice.

I agree with the Director-General's Report when he speaks of freedom of speech and organization and that they are the basic conditions for progress.

I must mention the progress made in Yemen in the field of human rights, democracy and respect for fundamental freedoms. I must point out that democracy in Yemen is still in its infancy. Yemeni society is still unfamiliar with the rules and mechanisms of the democratic process, especially because of a high illiteracy rate, among women in particular.

In consolidating the democratic process, we have held free and direct, general elections on the basis of secret ballot. The expression of the free will of the people in electing representatives is guaranteed by the Constitution, and Yemen is committed to respecting international treaties concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Yemen has also signed the eight core Conventions of the ILO concerning human rights. Nevertheless, the Workers' Confederation is still faced with sizeable obstacles linked to the economic and democratic changes that are taking place under globalization. Therefore, I call on the ILO to increase its support and technical cooperation so that we can enhance our

capabilities, develop our methods of action and achieve our goals, including equal opportunities in the labour market and a better life for everyone.

The principles that were included in the Report of the Director-General are core principles that apply to all societies that are fighting for a free, stable and secure life.

We want to see a world that strives for decent work, justice and equality, and we support all efforts to stop Israel's activities in the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shaba farms. We call on the international community to provide the kind of assistance to the children of Palestine and Iraq described in the Report. We support the establishment of a Palestinian State on occupied Palestinian land, with Jerusalem as its capital, and we call on the United Nations and the Security Council to carry out their legal and moral responsibilities, in this regard.

Original Spanish: Mr. GALUMCH (Workers' adviser and substitute delegate, Venezuela) — This Conference is an event that symbolizes the new reality of today's world, a world which is increasingly globalized and in a constant state of flux as we enter the twenty-first century.

I should like to express the gratitude of the workers of Venezuela for the Report given us by the Director-General. He is awakening awareness of the possibility of reducing the decent work deficit. More than a global challenge, it represents the major challenge of the century, to attain decent work for men and women. We recall that the fight has begun towards improving the qualitative aspects of labour, but we must not lose sight of the many nations which have not even reached the level of sustainable work.

Neo-liberalism, more flexible working arrangements and globalization have claimed to open fundamental labour rights and yet a relentless war is being waged throughout the world against them. They are seeking to establish lower labour costs in order to be in a better position to compete at the expense of the workers, at the expense of the life of the workers.

They want human resources to pay the price of their competition, so we feel obliged to oppose this state of affairs which seeks to whittle away the rights of the workers. We are taking up the defence of the right to organize, the right of freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the right to decent work and the right to stand united to defend what has already been won for the working class.

The trade union movement is called a movement because it moves: it is not just one more term with which to identify. It was by moving that spaces were opened up in which workers were able to speak out, to express their political views and to win victories. The Director-General has stressed the fact that the programme for decent work could constitute a fundamental agent of change to benefit all. The workers of Venezuela have pushed for a change in the direction of the trade union movement which, in recent decades, has shown itself to be running counter to the interests of the workers which it claims to represent. The rules of the unions focused on negotiating rights, but in their own interests, and they sought to justify more flexible arrangements for labour to the detriment of the right to collective bargaining, stability of labour, deregulation of salaries, doing away with the social benefit systems in 1997. These factors, inter-

alia, are the causes that have led to apathy and scorn for everything related to trade unions and trade union leaders.

We, the workers, are supporting the process of a unified movement of workers through free, direct, universal and secret ballots in which all political and trade union trends are equally represented, and can exercise the rights to which they are entitled under article 95 of the Bolivar Constitution on freedom of association.

We want a society in which workers can express their creative abilities, trade unions which are at the service of the majority, fighting so that workers will have equal opportunities, so that society can offer to workers and their children the chance to build a noble country which our liberator, Simon Bolivar, wanted.

To attain this society, we are starting to build a new form of trade unionism in which the self- and the co-managed union is strengthened with links to the essential elements that this historic era holds for Venezuela. In other words, a trade union organization representing the best traditions and universal principles of the working class: solidarity, independence, autonomy and true democracy.

We welcome the fact that on this agenda we have an issue which is so fundamental to us — social security. This is why we, the working men and women of Venezuela, have chosen to adopt a programme of action that provides for active participation in the form of drawing up laws and having a say in the direction of our country's economy. We want to establish an effective social security system which guarantees everyone access to decent housing, full medical care, leisure time and a dignified retirement.

We, the trade union leaders, have to assume the new responsibilities involved. The promotion of co-operatives will make it possible to design strategies to transform wage earners into owners, to build up a workforce embracing all sectors of the country, to enable more and more workers to be owners of their workplace, through different forms of co-management, shareholding, cooperatives and workers' associations.

We must be imaginative, capable of generating new sources of labour, increasing GDP, productivity and benefits for workers, their families and for the community.

In conclusion, I should like to make it clear that we in Venezuela have been able to fly the flag for social justice, decent work and integration in Latin America, and we now take on the commitment to fight to guarantee progress for mankind.

May I say, on behalf of the men and women who are working in Venezuela, that all of us may feel fear, but only the bold can ignore it as they constantly move forward, even until death, but always thinking of victory.

Mr. HARRIS (representative, Education International) — It is rare in the international system to find a report that addresses profound issues in a clear and readable fashion and the Director-General's Report does that. He expresses the reality lived every day by people around the world, and he articulates what the ILO can do. He conveys both a vision of the ILO's role and a set of down-to-earth strategies for pursuing that vision.

We know that the education sector has an enormous role to play in the global challenge of reducing

the decent work deficit, because the knowledge gap is closely connected with the other gaps identified in the Report. Those who miss out on education are also the unemployed and the working poor, the ones without protection, the ones excluded from social dialogue. For them, poverty and disadvantage will be perpetuated from generation to generation.

Through the ILO, the international community has outlawed the worst forms of child labour that deny them their right to go to school. As we reach the half way point in ratifications of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), many governments still have to put into place concrete programmes for the elimination of child labour. Education International is working with the ILO, with IPEC and ACTRAV, to have the Convention ratified and implemented in every country.

The campaign against child labour goes hand-in-hand with the Global Campaign for Education for All, the world-wide campaign mounted by Education International with civil society organizations such as Oxfam International and Action-Aid. Yet even as governments and agencies, such as the World Bank, rally to support this campaign, we are confronted with a major obstacle.

Many of the workers in the education sector, teachers and other employees, are themselves among the working poor. The majority of our members in developing and transition economies actually earn wages below the poverty line in those countries. What does that mean in practice? It means that they seek other jobs to survive, often in the informal sector, tourism, driving taxis, subsistence farming or piece-work. They are in schools only part of the time. It also means that many countries are recruiting people with no qualifications to teach. So let us not kid ourselves. Part-time schooling and the engagement of totally unqualified personnel will not close the knowledge gap, and will therefore not reduce the decent work deficit. Decent work in the education sector is a prerequisite for reducing the decent work deficit in the community at large.

This Conference has received the latest report of the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. The report highlights an alarming and counterproductive lack of social dialogue in the education sector. The report provides clear evidence of a continuing decline in the employment conditions of teachers worldwide, and that decline is at odds with the consensus on the need for lifelong education and training, or human resource development, in the twenty-first century.

This has already led to a worldwide shortage of teachers, particularly in the developing countries and the disadvantaged areas of industrialized countries. The decline in quality schooling in the inner cities and the banlieues, contributes to the loss of hope and the alienation of young people, especially those from immigrant families and minorities. These young people need good teachers. The links, as the Director-General says, are there between unemployment and family tensions, violence, crime and drugs and we also have a growing brain drain from developing countries as industrialized countries recruit their scarce qualified teachers.

The market will never redress these ills. Our societies require the political will to do two things. One is to invest in quality public education for all, and the

other is to respect the rights and dignity of citizens, which are outlined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We agree that the Declaration will only be implemented if the constituents of the ILO throw their weight behind it and that is why we are working so much with the ILO. But governments and our political institutions must play their part. Too often, ILO decisions and findings are ignored. Take, for instance, the freedom of association findings on rights of workers in the public sector, which are too often ignored by governments, including those that claim to be the greatest advocates for international law.

It is also part of the global challenge to achieve greater coherence in the setting of international norms and rules through the agencies of the UN system, including the WTO.

Education International is a global union. We represent employees in a sector that is numerically great, 50-60 million, and growing. We reflect the reality of each society and each community and, together with the global unions in other sectors, we are determined to work for a global economy based on fairness and respect for human dignity, derived from the principles which underpin the ILO and its mission.

Original French: Mr. ADIKO (*Workers' delegate, Côte d'Ivoire*) — It is a privilege and a great honour to be able to address this august gathering, particularly at the beginning of the third millennium and at a time when, in my capacity as head of the General Union of Workers of the Côte d'Ivoire, I am taking the floor on the items on the agenda of this session. I cannot fail to take this opportunity also to address to Ms. A. Sto. Tomas my sincere congratulations on her brilliant election and on the skill and dexterity with which she is guiding the discussions of this session of the International Labour Conference.

The examination of the activities of the past year demonstrates the efforts that have been made and the ground that has been covered. The subjects selected for the agenda encourage us to consider the complexity and diversity of the situations facing the general population, and workers in particular, in our country. This year it is the promotion of cooperatives, true economic structures which provide jobs in the informal sector and which are an alternative in the struggle against unemployment and poverty.

As regards safety and health in agriculture, this is a sector that we are particularly attached to, because of the essentially agricultural nature of our country, where more than 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas.

Social security is extremely lacking in our country and far from meets the expectations of the workers and the population. Therefore, effective and lasting solutions have to be sought concerning its organization, its operation and its financing.

Regarding Conventions and Recommendations, we note a considerable gap between ratification and implementation rates, particularly concerning basic rights and principles at work. It happens that the countries that have ratified the largest number of Conventions are not necessarily those that make the most efforts to implement them. This is the paradox. Furthermore, it is not unusual to notice here and there a real discrepancy between the terms of certain Conventions and the progress that has been made in the field. Indeed, sometimes the ratification of a Con-

vention, far from being a real social contract, is simply a formality or a matter of conscience.

At any rate it is clear to see that still today there is a considerable amount of inertia as far as the implementation of Conventions ratified by certain governments is concerned. We also feel that the weight of international solidarity should be used more to encourage governments to address these situations for the benefit of the more disadvantaged populations.

In respect of the particular circumstances of Côte d'Ivoire, if the items on the agenda meet with a positive response because of a certain framework of reference, considerable efforts nevertheless remain necessary in order to take into account the true concerns of our workers and our people. The organization of women, young people, jobseekers and others into cooperatives is a reality in Côte d'Ivoire. The National Welfare Fund has been recently restructured and has gone from an administrative structure to a true company that is managed jointly by workers and employers. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that considerable efforts still need to be made in terms of organizing our services in order to deal with claims more speedily and to make things more functional in order to meet people's expectations.

As far as public officials are concerned, they benefit on the one hand from the General Civil Service Pension Fund, as far as old-age pensions are concerned, and on the other from the Mutual Benefit Society for Public Officials and Agents for pharmaceutical costs and medical care. While these two bodies have been restructured slightly, they are not yet, however, in a position to fully meet the expectations of their many users.

On the subject of Conventions, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire should do everything in order to ratify the core Conventions, and to ensure their implementation, as well as respect for the fundamental principles.

In this connection, the General Union of Workers of Côte d'Ivoire keeps trying to bring to the Government's attention the use of certain hazardous and noxious substances in agriculture, in the construction industry and in industry in general.

Lastly, I would like to mention the eternal question of the debt that is crushing the poor countries. This debt today constitutes the principle cause of poverty and acts as a brake on the development of our countries. It is a source of conflict and political instability. Indeed, unemployment, poverty, hunger and destitution do not coexist well with the notions of peace and pluralistic democracy. The wise man was not wrong when he said that a hungry man is not a free man. Overwhelmed by material concerns, he cannot rise above his immediate needs and conduct himself as a thinking being. This is at the source of various political upheavals that in turn have dramatic economic and social consequences. For this reason we feel that the Conference could plead in favour of cancelling the debt of Third World countries in general, and of African countries in particular.

Original Spanish: Mr. REINA VALLECILLO (*Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security, Honduras*) — The Government of the Republic of Honduras has come to this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference at the head of the Government, Employers' and Workers' tripartite delegation. As a Government representative, as the

Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Labour and Social Security, heading the delegation of Honduras, I have come to this great Conference to meet an international commitment, and with the conviction of doing so fully aware of all the responsibilities entailed by the membership to this prestigious world organization.

Today, labour and social problems are limited to a global economic context which renders labour relations more acute and difficult. Therefore, dealing with these problems requires a greater effort to achieve understanding and cooperation, with a view to involving the sectors composing tripartism in an alliance which enables us to move ahead for the good of all.

At this crucial time, when the world of labour is struggling in a web of contradictions and conflicts, the role which our Organization must play is tremendous. In this context of despair and distress for the most disadvantaged peoples, resulting from the liberalization of markets and protective legal frameworks, the policies and strategies formulated by the ILO are acquiring promising dimensions.

The agenda of this 89th Session of the Conference refers to various issues which, in my country in particular, have been very topical in recent times. Without overlooking the importance of other items on the agenda, we would like to refer specifically to "safety and health in agriculture", "social security: issues, challenges and prospects" and also "promotion of cooperatives".

The first of these issues pertains in our country to the serious effects produced in the banana agro-industry and the mining industry sectors, as a result of the uncontrolled use of chemical products, such as pesticides and fungicides.

For its part, the problems addressed in the sixth item of the agenda is a recurrent one in the tripartite labour relations of our country. At this precise time, a serious situation has occurred wherein the social actors, despite months of intense social dialogue, have not succeeded in reaching an understanding.

We are pleased, because it is appropriate and important, with the beginning of the first discussion on the fifth item of the agenda "promotion of cooperatives" as a way of improving living and working conditions and promoting access to and integration in various support services for traditionally marginalized sectors.

In our country, although much remains to be done in this field, I think we can say that there is a great tradition of cooperatives which is closely linked to the development of the Honduran trade union movement.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of my country, I would like to reiterate and endorse its full support of and follow-up to the four strategic objectives set forth in the framework of policies determined by the Director-General for the period 2002-05, in compliance with the goals of decent work.

Original Spanish: Mr. MANGUE OBAMA NFUM (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Equatorial Guinea*) — First of all I bring warm greetings from the people and Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to the peoples of all the world represented here, and especially the Swiss people who have welcomed us with such friendliness.

It is an honour for me to take the floor in this magnificent forum to associate myself with those who have spoken before me and to congratulate the President on her unanimous election to preside over this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I also congratulate the Director-General and his staff on the excellent quality of the Report he has presented and the meticulous report submitted to this plenary under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Equatorial Guinea aims to be an internationally integrated State that promotes and contributes to international peace and security, whatever the nature of the conflicts or their focus. It is from this viewpoint that the Government of my country has set itself the primary objective of promoting peace, peace based on social justice. And for this peace to be lasting and passed on from generation to generation, we have opted for the fair redistribution of wealth among the forces of production and the regulation of the labour market through the following. Wages will no longer be subsistence wages, but wages for decent existence. Working hours and working schedules have been regulated, as has the length of the working day, and there are now to be paid holidays. Safety and health at work will be provided through conditions that every enterprise has to respect; and stability of employment through legal restrictions or economic conditions on the dismissal of workers by the employer. Social security will cover free health care for the worker and his family, and benefits for illness or accident. Retirement pensions will guarantee a minimum income when people retire due to age or some kind of incapacity.

On this basis, and so as to make decent work a reality in Equatorial Guinea, the aim is to prevent discrimination in employment, promote social dialogue for the greater participation of social partners and protect children. For this reason, the Government ratified on 26 December 2000, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Conven-

tion, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Therefore, my Government has undertaken intense legislative activity to bring into line its legislation and labour practice with the guiding principles of these Conventions which, under our Constitution, are part of our legislation and occupy a top rank in the legislative hierarchy. With these measures my country has started the process towards the goal of decent work.

Contrary to our noble ideas and efforts we see, with growing concern, that certain milieu that are hostile to the Government of Equatorial Guinea continue to carry out a campaign to discredit our country. A prime example of this is the report of the Special Representative of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Dr. Gustavo Gallon when he says, gratuitously, that "In 2000, the Government of Equatorial New Guinea did not ratify any of the labour Conventions adopted by the ILO".

We hope that all, without exception and without any hidden agenda, will be able to use for the good of people and the international community, the triangular relationship of sovereignty, national policy and world connections.

In my country, we understand that the political economics of globalization, which have as an objective common ground and distribution of wealth in an equitable way among countries and within each country, can help achieve decent work and guarantee peace and social justice.

I conclude my modest statement by expressing my wish for the success of this Conference, and that globalization, which we hear so much about, should not be the source of new injustice, but should contribute to the greater well-being of all mankind.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.45 p.m.)