

Sixteenth sitting

Monday, 18 June 2001, 3.15 p.m.

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

The PRESIDENT — Before we resume the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General. I would like to give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference for an announcement.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE INSTRUMENT FOR THE AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, 1997, AND RATIFICATION OF A CONVENTION BY JAPAN

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — This morning, 18 June 2001, Japan deposited the instrument of acceptance of the Amendment of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, 1997, thus becoming the fifth Member of chief industrial importance to accept this amendment after China, India, Italy and the United Kingdom. Consequently, this amendment may now come into force when it has been ratified by two-thirds of the member States. Present ratifications and acceptances stand at 65.

Furthermore, Japan also deposited the instrument of ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

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

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

Original Spanish: Mr. BARRENECHEA CALDERÓN (*Employers' delegate, Peru*) — My first wish is to offer to the delegates and participants in this 89th Session of the Conference, the first one of the third millennium, an institutional greeting from the National Confederation of Private Employers' Institutions (CONFIEP). We congratulate the President and Vice-Presidents on their well-deserved election.

On celebrating the 75th anniversary of the ILO, at a time which was said to be realistic, the subject for the 89th Session of the Conference was *Defending values, promoting change*. Even then the impact of rapid changes with a new consensus being built up around a set of shared values could be seen.

The Director-General's Report this year is closely linked to the 1999 Report, *Decent work*, which says that in order to maintain its relevance in the twenty-first century, the ILO requires a strategic vision of the world of labour so that it can plan and organize the

future. It goes on to say that business is the key to growth and that to improve productivity it is indispensable to have a flexible and dynamic labour framework in order to create jobs and raise the standard of living and to make a country competitive so that it becomes part of the world economy.

This year the Director-General is proposing a programme, a goal and some objectives for implementation which take into account the social aspects of a globalized economy with the question as to how we can reduce the decent work deficit.

For this delegation, the work deficit is a top priority and we agree with the Director-General that the employment gap is a failure of today's world because jobs are what people want more than anything else. Clearly, the first step away from poverty is a job because, as was said, workers' rights do not exist if there are no jobs. A productive job is a *sine qua non* for the achievement of a quality life.

The way of reducing the deficit is to raise national production, by means, largely, of private investment. This requires a stable, predictable and positive macroeconomic, political and legal environment and a competitive microeconomic environment which inevitably entails trained human resources, an appropriate physical, administrative and information infrastructure, decentralized investment, access to capital and of course good business plans.

Improving these conditions is not going to be easy, nor can it be the responsibility of a single agent. It is a long-term project and needs to be shared by the State, workers and employers. The results will not be immediate, they depend upon open dialogue, which alone can ensure consistency of policies.

With this in mind, CONFIEP has been developing a series of projects with the support of technical co-operation agencies and international bodies so as to:

- raise the competitiveness of the SMEs in Peru by providing training, business information and consultancy services;
- set up industrial clusters to consolidate relations between SMEs which supply the big firms without the big firms having to import goods and services which can be produced in the local market;
- gear our businesses to external markets, particularly towards countries which are members of the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

We continue to act as spokesperson with government bodies to put forward proposals to provide better conditions in which to create businesses which can provide sustained growth for the economy of Peru.

Finally, we would like to point out that constructive dialogue between the sectors of the economy is for us

of enormous institutional value which we try to maintain and strengthen, as seen by our participation in the National Labour and Social Promotion Council, a body which organizes, advises and promote social dialogue on a tripartite basis. This body was set up 20 years ago in Peru by Alfonso Grados Bertorini, then Minister of Labour and Social Development, and is being run with great enthusiasm, by the present Minister who is at this meeting.

These are some of the challenges and tests for our countries, governments, employers, workers and the Organization which is hosting us. Due to the rapid changes we need to find solutions quickly so that we can meet the increasing demands. As the poet Antonio Machado says, "you build a road as you go along. However, as we do so, let us walk with hope." I would like to quote a phrase by his Holiness, John Paul II, at the end of his Apostolic Letter, *At the dawn of a new Millennium*: "A new millennium is opening ... like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ."

Original Spanish: Mr. PRETI JORQUIN (*Employers' delegate, Guatemala*) — I would like to congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on having been elected to preside over the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, and also the Employer and Worker Vice-Presidents, on my own behalf and on behalf of my Federation, the CACIF, a Guatemalan employers' association.

On behalf of these employers of my country I would like to highlight the work done by the ILO under the stewardship of the Director-General, Ambassador Juan Somavia; for the paths he has chosen have proved conducive in strengthening tripartism and hence in promoting social dialogue.

The Report submitted this year to the Conference illustrates the fact that the Organization is adapting to the challenge of globalization and is laying new foundations on which to build a solid labour relations structure.

While it is true that there is a decent work deficit in the world, the fact remains that there are various factors at play here and I think perhaps the most important one is the lack of employment opportunities. This is the biggest challenge facing the management of this institution because both workers and employers, in conjunction with governments, have the overriding responsibility of boosting the available sources of work because its lack represents the poverty suffered by millions of human beings.

In its work the ILO should promote studies and short-term action to encourage investment, in particular in the poorer countries where the lack of opportunities is even greater, and here, we must ask ourselves "How can we encourage investors to invest in given regions and thus generate employment?" It is not only a matter of generating jobs but also of generating quality jobs. The ILO's experience in the world of work should be turned to account, to provide ideas to assist those countries which are desperately seeking to improve the living standards of all their inhabitants.

When it comes to addressing the complex issue of employment, we find ourselves faced with alarming population growth figures, especially in the more backward countries where the gross domestic product is not growing and in some instances is even falling. This leads to the building up of a deficit,

which increases year by year, leading in some countries to degrees of social unrest which might well destabilize their young democracies. In Guatemala, for instance, the unemployment rate is huge; only 31 per cent of the economically active population is in the formal sector, the remainder are either under-employed in the informal sector, or are working on the breadline, and yet for years labour legislation and tax policy would seem to have been bent on frightening off investors.

We should in the future act rather than just think. The truth is that economic growth must have a social dimension, but it is the economic growth that must be the priority. We cannot talk in terms of decent work if we cannot provide proper conditions for investment, and this is where the ILO could work at an action plan with a view to assisting countries which have the lowest levels of employment. It is unfortunately, in these countries where the level of child labour is increasing, and the ILO through its programmes has raised the alarm with some individuals and organizations which are involved in practices that qualify as the worst forms of child labour. This is why programmes such as IPEC should be geared to the needs of each recipient country, in consultation with the principal social partners, to try to mitigate this deplorable scourge.

As the Report says, it is the responsibility of the constituents to work together on diagnoses and solutions. The challenge of globalization requires tripartite participation to work out policies to ensure that this global trend is beneficial and does not imply a step backwards for those countries which are unable to take a pre-emptive stand in the face of this ocean of change that is engulfing us all.

Millions of young people in the world join the labour force each year, and in many countries their lack of proper training and education stops them finding work to meet their needs and to nourish their young families. This is another of the major challenges facing the ILO and its constituents: improving levels and standards of education as a prerequisite for adapting comfortably to a world where knowledge is the main added value in society.

In our capacity as Employers we agree with the Report, and as far as possible we will try to provide ideas and take action to reduce poverty in the world, always endeavouring to adhere to the guidelines so widely detailed in the Director-General's Report.

Original Polish: Mr. LEPIK (*Workers' delegate, Poland*) — On behalf of Polish workers, whom I have the honour to represent at this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, I would like to congratulate the President on her election to this position of honour and responsibility.

This session takes place against a backdrop of complex globalization and transformation in many countries, including Poland.

Like the documents prepared for the plenary sittings and the Committee discussions, the Report of the Director-General contains an analysis of the socio-political and economic situation in different regions of the world and current trends in the interaction of capital and labour. The ILO strategy, based on this analysis, is composed of four spheres of activity; standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; employment and support to technical cooperation programmes, social protection; and social dialogue.

During the previous session and at the Sixth European Regional Meeting of the ILO, our delegation mentioned that, in addition to the positive changes, certain alarming phenomena had been observed in our country in recent years. Allow me to raise these issues again at this session.

Last year was a period of increasing problems and privations for the workers of Poland. Unemployment in our country has reached the level of 3 million, of which 80 per cent do not receive benefits. According to official statistics, unemployment remains at 16 per cent. However, trade union data indicate that it is as high as 21 per cent if we take into account so-called hidden unemployment. The rightist government has allowed unemployment to increase from 10.3 per cent in 1997 to its present level and is incapable of stopping this trend. Therefore, we believe that a change in economic and fiscal policy is essential, for the present policy is causing systematic depression of economic development and national economic growth and, in effect, increases in unemployment and falls in real wage levels.

Over the past two years, the minimum wage has fallen to 36.1 per cent of the national average salary, while the cost of living has increased steadily. Over the last three years, the average pension has also fallen, to 53.9 per cent of the average salary. The phenomenon of hereditary poverty and unemployment is on the increase. There are serious fears for the future of pensions and invalidity benefits following social security reform.

The growing unemployment in Poland was the reason why the OPZZ drafted a project in April 2000 and presented a proposal on the conclusion of a pact for labour. So far, there has been no reaction from the Government to our initiative. However, the trade unions and employers' organizations are holding talks on the labour market and unemployment.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to the International Labour Office, which, under the Agreement on Technical Cooperation with Poland, signed last year, is preparing an analysis of the Polish labour market and will provide guidance on possible solutions.

We regret that, through the fault of the Government, the factors that led to the suspension by the OPZZ of its participation in the work of the Tripartite Commission on socio-economic issues have not ceased to exist. However, this does not mean that there is no social dialogue in Poland. It is conducted by the actors at enterprise, industry and even parliamentary level. Talks are proceeding among the trade unions, the Confederation of Polish Employers and the Polish Confederation of Private Employers, two representative employers' organizations.

Our parliamentary trade union representatives have submitted to the SEJM of the Republic of Poland a draft Act on the tripartite commission. We hope that through social dialogue the foundations will be prepared for a more effective solution of the existing problems encountered by working people in our country, in both urban and rural areas. These problems have snowballed because of the Government's hasty implementation of badly prepared reforms, in particular in the fields of health care, education and social security, which give rise to many social conflicts.

The process of Poland's integration into the European Union creates new opportunities for our society, but also difficult challenges.

ILO standards and European standards in different fields must be accompanied by decent work and decent pay. In this situation, we perceive the need for a radical change in socio-economic policy in Poland. Only then may we speak of sustained social peace.

The processes of privatization and restructuring in our country are accompanied by the dynamic development of multinational enterprises, including supermarkets. We have ascertained that, in many supermarkets, the labour law in force in Poland is violated and trade unions are prohibited. This has been confirmed by reports of the State Labour Inspection. There needs to be coordination, solidarity and cooperation between the Government and the trade unions in order to provide an effective opposition to these intolerable practices.

In conclusion, I would like to say on behalf of Polish employees and workers that the documents prepared for the session, the joint work on ILO Conventions and Recommendations and the exchange of information and opinions in the tripartite system give a new impulse to our activities.

I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the ILO management and the staff of individual ILO sections, as well as our Multidisciplinary Advisory Team for Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest, for actively supporting our efforts.

Original Spanish: Mr. QUIROZ HERNÁNDEZ (*Workers' delegate, Panama*) — I greet you on behalf of CONATO, the Panamanian Council of Organized workers, which asked us to ratify before you the international denunciation against the Panamanian Government, which we presented to the Director-General of the ILO in February, and which we have distributed to you.

In this we reiterate the violations 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), which were ratified by the Government of Panama and, since they are binding in law, must be applied. However, the Government and employers in Panama are violating them and this is escaping the notice of the Ministry of Labour, which is responsible for labour policy in the country.

Our country is suffering a serious economic crisis which is creating a growing sense of unease in society, and the legal insecurity we are suffering has further aggravated the position of our population, increasing poverty by over 50 per cent and unemployment by 16 per cent. This situation is unbelievable in a country like ours, where there are less than 3 million people, where the rich are becoming richer and the poor are growing poorer.

The employers, making use of the economic crisis, are closing down firms and dismissing hundreds of workers and, in most cases, they do not even pay their debts to the workers. Moreover, since the Government took power in September 1999, it has dismissed over 19,000 public sector workers, an undesirable policy which is still continuing today. It should be stressed that this practice of government dismissals has affected associations of public employees and people such as our colleague Xiomara Ambulo, who worked in the Ministry of Labour itself and is a member of CONATO, the largest workers' organization in Panama. The Government and the Employers have the blessing of the Supreme Court of Panama, and we

have had to denounce it to the Legislative Assembly for abusing its powers since it is modifying labour law so that it can condone violations by employers and the Government itself. The Higher Labour Tribunal has revoked 70 per cent of rulings in favour of workers made by the arbitration boards, thus undermining the spirit of this tripartite organization which is supposed to administer justice rapidly and impartially, by contrast with the slow procedures of other labour dispute bodies.

The privatization process in Panama has caused increasing unemployment and rising costs. The impunity of some employers is disadvantageous to workers. One example of this is the case of the President of the newspaper *La Estrella de Panamá*, Augusto (Onasis) García, who does not comply with labour legislation, or accept resolutions or sentences imposed upon him. He is waging a campaign against the general secretary of the printing and graphic arts union, Pedro Hurtado, denying him work and not paying his wages. He does not respect the collective bargaining agreement, he humiliates and pressurizes workers at the newspaper, and there is nothing which can make him submit to our labour legislation. So how can we talk about dialogue and peace at work if unilateral actions are taken, no solutions are found as nobody listens and hunger and unemployment abound. Peace guarantees dignity, it creates physical and spiritual harmony, it means health, it means friendship with God and mankind, and enables us to build a new humanity.

Further to all this, there is a tendency in the Government and among employers to create alternative trade union organizations to undermine existing ones and cover up their failure to respect labour law and agreements. This in no way improves the situation, and it will give rise to more divisions and confrontations.

The extreme hardship faced by public officials because of job insecurity needs to be resolved. The law governing public service was suspended by cabinet resolution No. 122, of 27 October 1999 and in spite of workers' demands the Supreme Court just ignores this matter.

The workers of Panama denounce this anomaly and we call upon the ILO to urge our Government and employers to respect our rights, international standards, and the independence of the judiciary. Only in this way can a climate of peace and harmony be guaranteed.

Original Vietnamese: Mr. NGUYEN DINH (*Vice-Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam*) — First of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, I would like to convey our greetings to everyone present and to congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on her election as President of the Conference. I trust that under her guidance, this session of the Conference will be a great success.

The delegation of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam would like to join the voices of many other delegations speaking over the past few days in support of the efforts of the Director-General in promoting decent work for all people worldwide. The task is a long-term process, requiring joint tripartite efforts in each country. Since the 88th Session of the Conference, we have done many things to fulfil the commitments in the Declaration on the Funda-

mental Principles and Rights at Work that we adopted three years ago. However, as indicated in the Report of the Director-General, there is still much to be done in order to narrow and eliminate the gaps in employment, workers' rights, social protection and social dialogue. The task of our Organization is to maintain the efforts to obtain decent work in the context of globalization. We must work to make globalization a positive factor for employment and prosperity for all citizens of the world and to oppose policies that would widen these gaps.

In support of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Government of Viet Nam has continued to improve labour standards and working conditions in Viet Nam.

In November 2000, the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, at the unanimous request of the ILO constituents and other organizations concerned, ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). We have also reached consensus in principle on ratifying the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), which we believe will be ratified soon. Viet Nam welcomes the cooperation from IPEC and is ready to sign the *Memorandum of Understanding* on the implementation of a plan of action on preventing and eliminating child labour in Viet Nam. The Government's view is that in order to prevent and eliminate child labour, we have to continue our efforts to eliminate the root of child labour — that is poverty and illiteracy. At the same time, we must raise the awareness of families, children and society as a whole on this issue.

With regard to labour relations, Viet Nam has a plan to spread good practices among enterprises and to incorporate them into models of sound relations in the workplace in conformity with the international labour standards, laws and culture of Viet Nam. We do so with the aim to create a sound, stable and peaceful work environment.

There is no forced labour in Viet Nam. Vietnamese law prohibits all types of forced labour. In this connection, I would like to offer some comments with regard to the Global Report on *Stopping forced labour*. Paragraph 52 of the report refers to the Public Work Ordinance of Viet Nam. I would stress that public work labour, according to this Ordinance, is based on the voluntary principle and the moral obligation which depends on different types of working requirements and the contributory ability of each individual. The Vietnamese people have spared no efforts to do their share of public work for the common good of all communities.

With regard to implementation of the Ordinance, upon the invitation of the Government of Viet Nam, the ILO dispatched experts to Viet Nam to consult with the Government on how to implement the Ordinance in a way that meets the national needs and complies with ILO Conventions.

Paragraph 239, page 76, of the report refers to the situation of women in several developing countries, where women have a burden of debt due to illiteracy, and especially the lack of land for cultivation, which is the most important resource for farm production. The Government shares this concern with the ILO and calls for consideration of the countries involved to develop policies on education and land in order to create more opportunities for women. In Viet Nam, we have a land policy, according to which farmers have been provided with land equally and with no discrimina-

tion. This is one of the important government programmes on hunger eradication. It is helping people to participate in democracy and not to fall into poverty. This policy also contributes to national food security and is one of the vital parts of the social protection system.

My Government's delegation would also like to welcome the development of social cooperation and insurance discussed during this Conference.

At present, Viet Nam has nearly 19,000 cooperatives, approximately 160,000 co-working groups and occupational associations of cooperatives. These models have brought in 7.5 million workers in many trades and made an active contribution to the growth of the country. As part of the strategy of socio-economic development in coming decades, the Government will continue to issue and perfect policies to support the development of cooperatives in order to make this a key sector.

The Government is drafting a Social Insurance Act that will be submitted to the National Assembly for approval. It aims to increase the number of beneficiaries of insurance, keep the equality and make a contribution to the national social protection system. The Vietnamese Government welcomes the technical assistance of the ILO in this field.

Mr. NEAGOE (*Workers' delegate, Romania*) — In my capacity as representative of the Romanian trade union movement at this Conference, I would like to join the previous speakers and congratulate the President on her election to the presidency of the 89th Session and commend her for the excellent capacities she has shown during the works of our Conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations on behalf of the Romanian trade unions to the Director-General of the ILO for the excellent Report which was put forward to the delegates. The central theme of this Report, focused on the translation of decent work into our national realities in the framework of a globalized economy, is very generous. For us, the trade unions, the Decent Work Agenda launched by the ILO two years ago is not only an integrated agenda but also an ambitious action programme which, we firmly believe, will create stronger bridges between the social dimension and economics. For the trade unions it is vital to make decent work happen in the interest of all the workers that we represent. Thus, we should also keep in mind that the practical application of the Decent Work Agenda depends on the efforts and priorities that we assume at the national level and that its ambitious goals require a high degree of consensus in our countries. For Romania, which after 12 years has not overcome the transition period, employment and social security for our workers are top priorities. We must ensure them on the basis of a genuine social dialogue, which should lead to a sound economic development.

We support the statement made in the Director-General's Report which underlines that decent work offers a way of combining employment rights, social protection and social dialogue in development strategies. In this regard, trade unions in Romania have increasingly given importance to the social dialogue, as we are sure that it is only in the framework of a broad social dialogue that the trade unions and the social partners in general can play their role as guarantors and promoters of democratic solutions aimed at ensuring economic development and social rehabilitation.

We are also interested in seeing how discrimination against women and children — which is a major pre-occupation — can be alleviated or abolished. We are, therefore, satisfied that Romania is among the countries that ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in the year 2000. It is still regrettable that Romania has ratified fewer Conventions than the average number ratified by other Central and Eastern European countries.

From the trade union point of view, we would have liked to see more references made in the Report to trade union rights and freedoms, as well as to the role of trade unions in making this agenda applicable in our countries.

About the situation in Romania, we would like to inform you that parliamentary and presidential elections were held in November 2000. On that occasion a radical change occurred in citizens' political opinions, and the former coalition Government was replaced by a new social democratic one. The new Government proposed to the social partners the conclusion of a Social Agreement for the year 2001. This Agreement has been signed by the five major trade union confederations of Romania, along with employers' associations which are representative at national level. The general objective of this agreement has been to relaunch economic growth in the context of the development of a stable legal framework, harmonized with the legislation of the European Union.

One of the fundamental principles of the Social Agreement makes reference to cooperation among the parties that have signed this document, on the basis of partnership concepts, mutual respect and good faith. This should take place in the framework of a harmonization of their specific interests and in accordance with multilateral provisions, including international Conventions and agreements ratified by Romania, as well as those that refer to the social dimension of European integration.

The Social Agreement means that responsibility for the social dialogue should be assumed by all social partners, but first of all by the Government, which must prove that it complies with all the responsibilities assumed by its representatives. In this context, the priorities for the year 2001 have been jointly decided. They focus on the legal framework, the wage policy, employment policy and social insurance policy.

Within the tripartite monitoring committees, trade unions have in several cases raised issues relating to non-observance by the Government of its commitments, notably due to the lack of a functional social dialogue.

One positive aspect of the development of tripartite structures in Romania is the reinforced role to be given to the social and economic committee. The new Government has promised to strengthen that role, but it has not yet done so.

I would like to end my intervention by thanking the ILO for the excellent preparation of this Conference, and Mr. Somavia for his extensive activity as Director-General. I would like to express the support of the Romanian trade union movement for the application of the Decent Work Agenda in our country, in full solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Original Spanish: Mr. ALVIS FERNÁNDEZ (*Workers' delegate, Colombia*) — The ILO, pursuant to the Declaration of Philadelphia and to the Declar-

ation on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998, bases its mandate on the defence of freedom of association, on equitable societies, and the promotion of human rights.

In this context, the Director-General presented his Report on *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge* to the Conference. The programme requires effective national policies involving governments and employers for the generation of stable remunerative work, with social security, without gender discrimination, and with full freedom of association and collective bargaining, the basis upon which one can construct a real culture of social dialogue.

We workers are fighting for decent work, in the conviction that what is required is a change in the economic model, with its neo-liberal facets, and the practices of world trade, which prevent the poorer countries from participating in the international market and which limit their social and economic development.

In Colombia, the escalation of violence and armed conflict affects the whole of society, particularly the rural population, which has been subjected to cruel massacres and forced population displacement, increasing poverty and public harassment, with all the inevitable consequences for society.

We regret to have to say once again to this assembly how dangerous it is to participate in union activities in Colombia. It is almost suicidal in the climate of intolerance, threats, forced population displacement and murder of union members. In the first five months of the current year, there have been 46 murders of union members — an open demonstration that this is a direct attack upon the national union movement.

Military and police personnel have been involved in these criminal acts against the unions and defenders of human rights. For example, Wilson Borja, President of FENALTRASE (the trade union for government employees in Colombia) is a member of the delegation to this session of the Conference. On 15 December last year he was the victim of an attack in the city of Bogotá, and he still suffers from the aftermath of the wounds resulting from that attack, an attack which involved ranking military and police personnel who were subsequently put on trial and whose participation compromises the very existence of the Colombian State.

We repeat, on behalf of the workers of Colombia, a request to the Governing Body that they appoint a commission of inquiry for Colombia to see for themselves the realities of the labour market, the acts of insecurity and violence which union members and their organizations are exposed to, and the degree of political will of the Government to adopt effective measures to guarantee the lives of the people and the respective human and labour rights in our country.

These are the reasons why we are insisting on a commission of inquiry. We declare emphatically that we have no other purpose in doing so; there is no question of the application of trade sanctions on the country or of slowing the peace process to which we are all committed.

We trust that, with the authority of the ILO and the presence in Colombia of a commission of inquiry, timely and effective measures against the violations I have denounced and the impunity of those who perpetrate such actions will be taken.

The mandate of the Special Representative of the Director-General for cooperation with Colombia,

appointed by the Governing Body in June last year, did not, in fact, lead to the results we expected.

There is still intolerance, there is still impunity and the Government is implementing measures imposed by the IMF in critical and sensitive social sectors such as education and public health. There have been massive lay-offs of state employers, which in turn has led to an increase in the already high number of unemployed in Colombia.

Mr. TUGUSHI (*Workers' delegate, Georgia*) — I have the honour to emphasize the substantial work carried out by the leadership of the ILO for promoting all over the world the ideals of social justice and humanism. This was clearly reflected in the comprehensive Report of Mr. Juan Somavia, which was particularly relevant for countries like Georgia, which are in the process of establishing democratic societies.

However, the transition from totalitarian governance to free market relations, and the introduction of democratic values, are accompanied by a large number of complications.

Let me remind you that Georgia has acceded to almost all of the fundamental Conventions of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Currently, bureaucratic procedures for the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), are under way.

Despite the economic reforms being undertaken in the country, we are still witnessing a crisis, and the improvement of workers' social conditions has not yet been achieved.

The situation is ever more complicated owing to the presence of numerous internally displaced persons from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region, as well as refugees from the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation.

It is a pity to note that not all transnational companies favour the trade unions of their industrial entities. Trade unions have to overcome serious difficulties in concluding collective agreements.

The present level of gross domestic product (GDP) of the country does not meet the minimal requirements necessary for the social protection of the population.

Average salaries, and especially pensions, are very much below minimal needs. This problem is ever more complicated because of delays with salaries and pensions.

It is common knowledge that globalization should serve social purposes, and the elimination of poverty must be among primary political objectives. But, reality is another matter. For example, the issue of employment is one of the serious problems in Georgia. Presently, more than 57 per cent of the active population is employed in the informal sector, where, as a rule, elemental labour conditions are violated; people work up to 12-14 hours per day, without a day off; and women frequently work at night, and are not granted annual leave or medical allowances.

It is becoming common practice at transnational enterprises and other entities to introduce fixed-term labour contracts, which ignore elemental social guarantees. Trade unions have to fight seriously against this problem.

As regards the fundamental mechanisms for regulating social and labour relations, we regret to note that a general agreement at national level has not yet been concluded. Indeed, this is a violation of the law

of Georgia and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

I would also like to emphasize serious violations of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), which has been ratified by Georgia.

During the Congress of the Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation Council on 24 November 2000, in the presence of foreign guests, representatives of Parliament, some of its members and heads of local government exerted all efforts to support their candidature.

Some local authorities held trade union meetings and stirred up interest among its members for their participation in the alternative structure, which is inspired and supported by them and by some groups.

Recently, on the eve of the regular session of the Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation Council, one of the regional judges of Georgia unilaterally adopted an unprecedented decision restricting the Council to discuss two issues included in the agenda.

It gives us reason to wonder who has the right to prohibit trade unions from discussing issues which they deem necessary to discuss?

I hope that we are not alone in our struggle.

Everyone must be aware that trade unions are independent and willing to maintain constructive cooperation with everyone. We do hope that the support and solidarity of our fellow trade unions, the ICFTU leadership and also Mr. Juan Somavia, will be timely and efficient.

Ms. NGHIDINWA (*Deputy Minister of Labour, Namibia*) — On behalf of the Namibian delegation it is my honour and privilege to join other delegates in congratulating the President on her election to chair the 89th Session of the Conference. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Juan Somavia, for his excellent Report *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*.

Having emerged from the decades of colonization and the bloody wars of liberation, Namibia applauds all measures that promote socio-economic development, peace and stability for all.

I have studied the Director-General's Report, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, and found it an admirable document, that not only stimulated our thoughts but also correctly pointed out the often downplayed deficits in the world of work.

We in the developing world are struggling in the fights against poverty, persisting high unemployment, gender disparities, weak implementation of workers' rights and poor social protection.

When we inspect and evaluate the achievements of the ILO, I am confident that we are moving along the right track. The "Getting going" list in the Report is, indeed, impressive and we have to commend the Director-General and the Office for initiating and moving on these critical issues.

Namibia wishes to particularly mention the development of the strategic programme and budgeting process which gives effect to the strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda. This is the most effective way to react to a rapidly changing world of work, and it contains the required flexibility to remain relevant during different stages of development.

We regard the discussion about the social dimension in a globalizing world as crucial. We believe that the efforts by the Director-General to further an inte-

grated approach in order to add meaning to the debate is commendable and deserves support.

An isolated ILO in a globalized world would, in our opinion, be a less effective institution.

Central to our thinking should be people. We have to be outcome-orientated at the grass-roots level. We, through the ILO, have to influence the global agenda and focus it on people-centred issues. Currently the global agenda is dominated by economic and financial topics, and we have not been very successful in giving the globalizing world a human face.

As I mentioned earlier, for the developing world the fight against poverty and unemployment remains the most important challenge. The hurdles in our path towards prosperity are many, and I do not intend to list all of them now. What is important, however, is to realize that the playing field is not level at all. The developing world still has to play uphill and against the wind. If we want to address poverty, why are some of us reluctant to remove barriers that perpetuate poverty? If we want to ensure equality, why are some of us continuously emphasizing differences?

In Namibia, Vision 2030 aims to bring the country to a level of development equivalent to that of the developed world. For our labour and employment sectors this vision could be seen as a Namibianized version of the Decent Work Agenda, since it, too, focuses on the uplift of the living standards of all our people.

Our national development plan, a plan that covers medium-term development objectives, also includes objectives aimed at promoting labour and employment practices that would fulfil the goals of the Decent Work Agenda. Other important issues covered in the national development plan relate to improved and sustained quality education and health care for all Namibians. The abovementioned programmes will be implemented through decentralized structures and would therefore directly benefit people at the grass-roots level.

The need to address the threat of HIV/AIDS has prompted the Government to establish a national coordinating committee. It is our sincere hope that with the required commitment the threat posed by this pandemic will be combated effectively.

It is our opinion that the development and revision of labour standards and related instruments for the world of work remains one of the important functions of the ILO. We believe, however, that the implementation of such instruments is equally important. The ILO plays a role in the implementation process mainly through its regional structures, and it is there that we have observed some weakness. Often the field structures are under-resourced, ill-equipped and therefore unable to facilitate the implementation of ILO policies.

We are therefore of the opinion that the strengthening of the field structures and programmes for gender equality should be a matter of priority.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity again to thank the Director-General and the ILO as a whole for the efforts to make this world more liveable for the poor people of this globe. To achieve a decent living standard for all our people is a very noble goal, and you have our support in that endeavour.

Original French: Mr. DIOP (Workers' delegate, Senegal) — It is with great pleasure that I am taking the floor at this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference and I would like to take this

opportunity on behalf of the delegation of Senegalese workers to warmly congratulate the President on her election. I would also to congratulate all the Officers of the Conference on their election.

This 89th Session of the International Labour Conference is taking place at the beginning of a new millennium, which demands of our Organization, in spite of its 80 years of experience, that it should adopt a new vision and face new challenges related to globalization.

I think it is very appropriate that in his Report the Director-General analyses some of the major issues which face this institution and which are very topical indeed. I am most gratified by this state of affairs and I would like to lend my support to the solutions and the general orientations proposed for the ILO's agenda for years to come. By emphasizing the importance of achieving decent work, the Report has really touched upon a very key issue, which is to resolve the problem of poverty. In a world with more than 160 million unemployed persons and almost 1 billion underemployed persons, it is clear that without decent work with sufficient and stable remuneration, poverty can never be eradicated.

Poverty is no longer confined to the developing countries. It also affects the developed countries.

In my country, Senegal, statistics show that more than half the population is living below the poverty level. This state of affairs is due to the fact that the economic programmes adopted by our governments and the reforms they have started in order to attract investment do not yield satisfactory results. Quite the contrary, these initiatives have resulted in more precarious employment in the formal sector and have led to a tremendous expansion of the informal sector, where workers are left to their own devices and are vulnerable to exploitation.

The advocates of globalization keep urging us to increase productivity. While we do not wish to sell short the opportunities which globalization can bring to our countries, we still feel that increasing productivity must go hand-in-hand with decent work which commands stable and adequate remuneration and which can provide greater security and dignity to workers.

It is in this spirit that we ask governments to combat poverty and do away with inequalities by investing more, and more effectively, in the public sector. For our part, our trade union organizations have already taken initiatives, setting up structures such as workers' production cooperatives which are capable of creating or preserving employment.

We would like the Government of our country, as well as the employers and the International Labour Office, to lend their support to our efforts so that we will be able to achieve our objectives in this field.

I would also like to mention the importance of social dialogue. In the past four years, social dialogue has been in the limelight. In addition to activities carried out in this framework by the Office as part of the PRODIAP (Programme to advance the social dialogue in the French-speaking African countries) project, several regional and subregional meetings have been held in Africa to discuss the importance of setting up mechanisms for an open and constructive social dialogue among the social partners. Unfortunately, there have been more words than deeds.

In Senegal, however, a tripartite forum on social dialogue was recently convened. One of its conclu-

sions was to adopt a social charter for the social partners. While this matter is still being discussed by the parties concerned, for us as workers no social charter can be successful unless it is inspired by and complies with the fundamental principles of the ILO including freedom of association, the right to pursue claims, the right to strike and the right to bargain collectively.

This session has also been asked to consider a key issue — social security. For several years now, there has been a deep crisis in this sector, which has only been worsened by the globalization of our economies and the failure of structural adjustment programmes.

The solution offered by international financial institutions is to shift from a pay-as-you-go scheme based on collective solidarity towards a funded, privatized and individual system.

Many countries are in favour of this sort of approach, but it will only further deepen inequalities and exclude even more people from social security coverage. In the developing countries, only 10-15 per cent of the population has coverage.

Senegal has considerable experience in the field of social security. Our first systems go back to the colonial era. However, our social security system has also undergone a crisis which nearly left it unable to make payments. It is thanks to the commitment and perseverance of the workers, supported by our employers, that we were able to negotiate and ultimately achieve independent management of our social security institutions.

This new approach made it possible in a few years to put the system back on a sound financial basis, and we have even been able to build up considerable reserves. While we have made progress in this field, we still need to extend our system to include all branches of social security. We have to improve medical coverage, for example. We are very worried by the new threats which weigh heavily on the future of social security, and by attempts made by certain quarters to gain control over our social security system, to the detriment of those who worked so hard to consolidate it.

We have come a long way. We have overcome a number of obstacles and we have managed to make our social security system the system that it is today. We will not accept any attempts to have it destroyed for purely political reasons by having it adopt programmes without any future.

This is why we have asked the various partners in this system to close ranks to defend our achievements in the social security system which so many generations have contributed to build.

This session has also addressed night work for women. Prohibiting night work for women has always been a major workers' claim in my country because of the social and cultural burdens assumed by women. Today, in our countries, working conditions are even harder for women. Insecurity and harassment of all kinds have worsened. We therefore still maintain that women should be spared the problem of having to work at night.

We also support the idea that both at work and in society in general terms, women should be entitled to a greater measure of security and more protection.

I would not wish to close this statement without reiterating my support for the aims and programmes promoted by this institution in the new millennium.

The challenges before us are many and varied, both in developed and developing countries. But if we pool

our efforts and if we draw inspiration from the principles and values which have been underpinning the ILO since 1919, I am quite certain that we will be able to win this battle for peace, freedom and social justice. We will thus have accomplished the historic task entrusted to us by the founding fathers of this Organization.

Original Spanish: Mr. ARCINIEGA AGUIRRE (*Workers' delegate, Ecuador*) — On behalf of the workers of Ecuador, I congratulate the President on her appointment and hope that this 89th Session of the Conference will enjoy massive participation from all sectors and make it possible to improve the standard of living of our peoples.

We should acknowledge the work done by the Director-General of the ILO, particularly the campaign against discrimination, the campaigns to eradicate the worst forms of child labour and in favour of decent work, and the constant support for social dialogue. Under the tripartite structure, it allows us to reach consensus on the objectives of eradicating poverty and unemployment and finding solutions to increase the well-being of the family.

We very much regret that we were not able to be present at the last session of the Conference when, unfortunately, a governmental decision did not permit the Ecuadorian delegation to attend. We apologize for this.

Regarding work in Ecuador, we see that the promotion of flexible labour to attract national and international investment was a farce. If nothing else, this failure illustrates the terrific increase in unemployment and underemployment in the last decade and has further widened the gap between rich and poor.

Instability caused by part-time work and outsourcing of services has made the life of workers precarious. In Ecuador, less than 1 per cent of agricultural workers are union members and they have no right to collective bargaining. There is greater exploitation of women and even minimum conditions of hygiene and safety are not observed.

The use of chemicals without proper control is causing serious illnesses and deformation of newborns. Hence, some irresponsible employers demand that workers in the agricultural industries must be young (between 18 and 26 years of age) and that women should not be pregnant and should be unmarried.

This is only a part of the real picture, which, unfortunately, shows a deterioration in the application of laws and international standards, together with a lack of credibility, negligence, intolerance, corruption to the point of unconstitutionality and obstacles to the registration and operation of various organizations in sectors such as health and private security. Different authorities are competing to pass conflicting resolutions, which wreak havoc with workers' rights. We have reported these findings to the Committee on Labour Freedom for analysis and comment.

Labour reforms are being imposed, including the Public Finances (Reorganization) Act and the Investment and Citizen Participation (Promotion) Act, which have fine-sounding names to make them more palatable but favour certain minority pressure groups which, as in the latter case, make use of conflicts in Parliament to push legislation through. Later, following complaints, they are declared unconstitutional. In the case in point, over 80 per cent of the content was

found to be unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Ecuador. The "law" in question contravened the rights to freedom of association and collective negotiation and the right to strike, etc.

At present we are fighting to control the abuse of contractors rather than in-house workers because there is a huge number of unemployed in Ecuador. We are asking the ILO to intervene in this area and, as far as we know, the issue is under examination.

The financial crisis of 1999, which originated in the private banking sector, caused a fall in production and gave rise to unpopular measures which, as usual, burdened the poorest classes. A lack of security and confidence caused a drop in internal savings, aggravated the banking crisis further and led to the freezing of deposits as ordered by the Government. Small and medium savers were affected, while major investors were provided with information which enabled them to protect their capital.

The adoption of the dollar as the currency in Ecuador, contrary to the Constitution, caused a loss in purchasing power in combination with the growing inflation, which was 91 per cent in 2000; this impoverished families and caused the closure of over 3,500 small and medium-sized enterprises, with the loss of some 350,000 jobs.

Estimates show that some 160,000 Ecuadorians enter the labour market each year without finding a job. The worse affected are young men and women up to 18 years of age. School drop-out rates reached 20 per cent in 2000. Spending on health care fell by 60 per cent and expenditure on food was reduced by 70 per cent.

Eight out of ten Ecuadorians are now living at poverty levels and 4 million out of our population of 12.5 million are destitute. The Government, for reasons best known to itself, has reduced the size of the family unit from five to four members in order to reduce the cost of the family shopping basket, which still costs US\$270 per month, whereas income is \$117 for those who are lucky enough to have a job. One might wonder what happens to the remaining 20 per cent of the population which is unemployed and the 57 per cent which is underemployed.

It is important to note that, while the ILO sets its sights on applying trade union freedom, collective bargaining, the right to strike, social security and social dialogue with strong partners in order to achieve a strong, equitable agreement guaranteeing decent work in Ecuador, the Government has, in order to consolidate the process of dollarization, deregulated labour, making work precarious and worsening the situation of the union movement.

On behalf of the workers of Ecuador, I would ask the ILO to recommend to our Government that it give up these practices that are contrary to decent work, which, for us, is an essential part of the universal right to live in dignity. Employment is a right of the people and it is the duty of governments to promote it in the best possible conditions.

Original German: Ms. DEMBSHER (*Government delegate, Austria*) — In his Report the Director-General has succeeded admirably to group together all the initiatives which are aimed at ensuring a social balance in the globalized economy. This is precisely what we need: not new initiatives all the time but rather a bundling together of all existing proposals and measures, together with cooperation by all parties

involved and the ILO, acting as a coordinating hub — so that we can achieve decent work for all.

Growing pressure by civil society keeps reminding us that there is a lack of decent work and that the international community must devise common strategies to tackle this deficit.

Austria welcomes the fact that the ILO is cooperating with the Global Compact strategy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, which emphatically urges multinational companies to shoulder their social responsibility on a voluntary basis. In this context, multinational corporations should be made aware of the fact that in the social field the Global Compact corresponds exactly to the four fundamental principles and rights at work set out in the ILO Declaration. Also, that there is the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as well as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

Governments should also provide incentives at national level to encourage enterprises to go beyond their statutory obligations and shoulder greater social responsibility on a voluntary basis. The Austrian Ministry for Economy and Labour, for example, is planning to present an award to companies which have taken exemplary measures in the field of occupational health and safety.

The key statement of the Director-General, that it is not enough simply to secure compliance of core labour standards, but that we need a more comprehensive approach to promote decent work in a globalized economy, has our full agreement as a long-term objective.

To counter-balance the flexibility required for the operation of a globalized economy, people must be entitled to some measure of job security. It is not enough to offer them just any job, what they need is secure jobs, with working conditions that are guaranteed by law, social security and a decent living wage. This is also the concern of the European Union, which promotes the concept of quality of work.

Social dialogue is of crucial importance here. It is particularly important when businesses and companies restructure and merge, that workers' representatives should be involved in discussions at all levels, to ensure that measures taken are more balanced and are more easily accepted.

As far as social progress in a globalized economy is concerned, Austria feels that it is essential that there be regular dialogue involving all the relevant international organizations. It welcomes the fact that the Governing Body Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization, is going to spend some time next week considering the structures that it will need to be able to act as a platform for precisely this kind of dialogue. Austria feels that it would be desirable to find a solution which would allow all ILO member States, including those which are not members of the Governing Body, to play an active role in contributing ideas to this dialogue.

It gives me particular pleasure to be able to announce that in September 2000 Austria ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and that at the beginning of May 2001 — about one month ago — the Austrian Government decided to forward to Parliament the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), for ratification. This means that Austria will soon have ratified all eight core Conventions.

Mr. MARICA (*Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, Suriname*) — May I congratulate the President on her election to this 89th Session of the Conference.

In March 1999 the decision was taken by the Governing Body to start a tripartite discussion at the 89th Session of the Conference on the promotion of cooperatives. It has been a wise decision because economic development in many countries has necessitated such a discussion.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the social partners reach consensus on this matter so that a new Convention can be adopted at the 89th Session of the Conference. For developing countries like Suriname, this will mean a greater legal reinforcement in the struggle against poverty.

I would like to compliment the Director-General and his Office for the excellent Report written for the 89th Session of the Conference, and I can assure him that my Government will support all ILO's realizable programmes and activities concerning decent work.

It is in fact the duty of all governments to develop programmes and initiate activities within their own countries with the aim of creating decent work for all their workers.

With this in mind, my Government has reinstalled the tripartite Labour Advisory Board, which was inactive for quite some time. This tripartite body just recently finalized the tripartite consultations on ILO standards, with the advice to the Government to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). In this context, we must announce that we are in the process of ratifying the two core Conventions, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the above cited Convention (No. 182).

In his Report, the Director-General identified four important areas of consensus which emerged over the past decade relating to the debate on trade and labour standards. It is my opinion, however, that arguments put forward against the linkage of core labour standards and trade must not be marginalized, as we live in a world where good intentions and initiatives are often abused.

As Minister of Labour, I have stated on various occasions that labour should, or must, be regarded as the most important productive factor, and in Chapter 2 of his Report the Director-General reiterates this statement by saying that probably the clearest link between social efficiency and productivity is found at the firm level. We clearly agree, therefore, that, to gain productivity, we must provide our workers with a decent working environment.

In Suriname, all tripartite actors and NGOs have expressed their desire for social dialogue. To this end, and given the socio-economic and macroeconomic situation in my country, my Government has set up a preparatory tripartite committee to establish structural and sustainable social dialogue. Within this same framework, my Government has also set up a preparatory committee on establishing a socio economic council, as a follow-up to the structural and social dialogue.

We expect this to result in a better understanding as to how to achieve welfare and well-being for the entire Surinamese community.

In conclusion, I would like to state that this excellent Report by the Director-General gives us a basis on which to pursue and achieve the goals set out by the ILO. I do hope, or rather I know, that in the end

all efforts to reduce the decent work deficit will be worthwhile.

Original German: Mr. HEINZEMANN (*Employers' delegate, Germany*) — I would like to begin by congratulating the President on her election.

Many speakers have already praised the Report of the Director-General, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, and that includes speakers from all groups. In the Report, this topic is discussed in a very broad context, and I think that that is most appropriate and very constructive. But it is this very comprehensive approach which also makes the Report somewhat problematic. Its aim, promoting economic development, employment for all, equitable remuneration, social security and freedom of association for workers and employers, is one to which we all subscribe. From a German point of view, this is a challenge which is not new. To a large extent this is what Ludwig Erhart, the first Minister for Economic Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War described and formulated as a “social market economy”. It is a combination of social and economic policy objectives.

Obviously, we must not overlook the fact that the political, economic and social context has changed tremendously since that time, especially in the wake of globalization. There is a new dimension to the challenge and such a comprehensive issue really calls for in-depth analysis and discussion — five-minute statements are quite inadequate and cannot possibly do justice to this task. Therefore, I think we need a very thorough and well-prepared discussion of this Report. As I see it that can only take place within the framework of an ongoing discussion which will provide opportunity for careful consideration of the arguments for and against the different positions and of where they fit in the general context. The full significance of the Director-General's Report cannot be revealed in one quick reading; on the contrary, it calls for very careful reflection.

This is precisely why I, along with many others, regretted the fact that we received the Report so late; the German language version was made available even later. May I suggest that the discussion of this Report be continued in the Governing Body.

While many suggestions and ideas in the Report are appropriate and correct, it is very difficult to imagine just how they can be put into practice and exactly what sort of impact they would have on the broader aims of providing decent work.

Let me perhaps just mention two potential conflicts of aims arising from the Report. It is absolutely correct that our objective must be to promote decent work, but surely we have an even greater problem in that according to the Report of the Director-General there are 160 million unemployed in the world, and if you add the underemployed, the figure rises to 1 billion. Will it really be possible to implement all the aims with an equal measure of priority or will there have to be a certain order of priorities among the various objectives pursued? This is something the Director-General does not explain with sufficient clarity in his Report. He rightly points to the different levels of development in the various member States and consequently to the limits of the financial resources available to achieve the aim of promoting decent work. But I think we need a very serious and detailed discussion of all this. Perhaps the best way of going about it

would be by a step-by-step approach. Ultimately our objective must be to promote decent work for all.

I would ask you not to interpret this as an argument in favour of playing off unemployed workers against each other or of defending non-decent work — certainly not.

There is another problem I would like to mention, if I may. I am not so sure how relevant, at least in my country, the representational gap is, which the Director-General refers to in Chapter 1.2 of his Report, where he explains the decent work deficit, because this representational gap exists as a result of the fact that often workers are not organized, and the Director-General sees this as a problem, particularly for agricultural workers, domestic workers and workers involved in small and micro-enterprises.

With regard to social dialogue, I would have thought that relations between employer and worker tend to be much closer in small enterprises because the boss is not a distant figure somewhere far away, he is also a colleague who works alongside his workers and is more familiar with their problems than anybody else. We should perhaps also consider whether workers in small enterprises are not perhaps better able to defend their own interests than are intermediaries. This, of course, will also depend on basic attitudes towards responsibility and the role of workers. I think we should see the worker as someone who is capable of dealing with his own problems. I would venture to say that in my country the German employers have already come some way towards implementing the programme in favour of decent work as part of the social market economy, which I mentioned at the beginning of my statement. This does not mean, of course, that we cannot always improve, and we will certainly make our contribution to ensure that other countries too can make progress in this direction.

I look forward to continuing this discussion and I firmly believe that the ILO can provide its member States with valuable assistance in achieving this objective.

Mr. HERBERT (*Minister of Labour, Liberia*) — Please permit me first of all on behalf of my delegation, the Government of Liberia, its social partners and the people of Liberia to extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the President on her election to conduct the business of this session of the Conference.

I should also like to extend greetings to the Vice-Presidents and other Officers of this session of the Conference.

Last year, in an address to the Conference, Liberia noted that the International Labour Organization on the threshold of the twenty-first century had reached the crossroads, a critical point in its 80-year history that would require critical decisions and strategies to propel it into meeting the challenges ahead. At that time, we expressed gratitude to the Director-General for initiating the reforms necessary to realize the core objectives of the ILO through the highly accepted decent work approach.

The Director-General in his Report this year has shed more light on this by putting it into proper perspective and giving it clear visibility. Reducing the decent work deficit is a clarion call for decent lives in conditions of dignity for people all over the world. We would like to thank the Director-General again for this wonderful Report.

The provision of an integrated policy approach is, in our mind, the best step to yield great returns for an agenda that may very well be a tall order. The challenges could be enormous and not as easily surmountable as one might be made to believe in the Report. The challenges of limited resources, lack of political will and outright cynicism and scepticism are but some of the problems that may very well militate against reducing the decent work deficit. Much as this agenda could bring hope to individuals, families and communities, we believe that action should be taken cautiously, observing the results very closely. Perhaps this sentiment is being driven by the inequities that today fashion the global economic order. For decent work to yield the desired result, the inadequacies of globalization must be addressed adequately.

In addition, the burdens faced by developing countries must also be addressed more positively with the view to promoting debt waiver or forgiveness. Decent work is more vulnerable to failure in countries that are burdened by debt and poverty. Developed nations and the Bretton Woods institutions must eschew lip-service to the ideals of global development and take the initiative to reduce the decent work deficit. In spite of these grey areas, we are happy to learn that the call for global action for decent work is being positively received. We call on the ILO to ensure that the idea of decent work is widely disseminated.

It is in this light that we are pleased to inform this Conference that we in Liberia have decided to assist the efforts of the ILO in playing the role of flag-bearers in the campaign to spread the idea of decent work in the maritime industry. As the country with the largest maritime registry in the world, we have the social responsibility to ensure that all seafarers working on Liberian vessels do so in conditions of dignity and decency. We have already expressed our interest in this area to the Director-General and we encourage him and the International Labour Office to respond positively.

We also note the Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2002-03 for the regions and share his views on the African situation and how the ILO intends to tackle the problems from the perspective of the four strategic objectives contained in the programme. The creation of decent work teams is laudable. However, we must remind the Director-General that the work of the ILO must be established in all countries of the African region and not just in a privileged few. We are also enthralled by the plan in the Report to extend decent work in the informal sector, the hub of the economies of African and other developing countries vulnerable to the vagaries of globalization.

The question of employment creation in Africa is crucial and cannot be overemphasized. We therefore welcome the ILO's emphasis in the African region on strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises to create quality jobs. The Jobs for Africa Programme, established a few years ago will corroborate this effort by making employment opportunities available to many Africans. We, however, see the programme as being restricted to a handful of African countries. It is important that the programme be extended to all countries, including Liberia, which is recovering from war and which has applied for it.

May we draw the attention of the Conference to the suffering and deprivation of workers and employers as a result of the sanctions imposed on Liberia

by the United Nations Security Council a few months ago. Prior to the decision to impose sanctions, the United Nations Security Council drew up a list of demands requiring Liberia's compliance, then promised to verify our compliance before acting. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The sanctions were imposed without the benefit of verifying the significant measures taken by the Liberian Government in compliance with the demands of the Security Council.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) have registered a united African opposition to the imposition of sanctions on Liberia without credible evidence of Liberia's non-compliance. The Liberian Federation of Labour Unions (LFLU) dispatched an appeal in April 2001 to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) for its intercession on behalf of the working people of Liberia with the United Nations Security Council.

Although the sanctions claim to be selective and to target top officials of the Government, the reality is increased suffering for the working people of Liberia and divestment of employers and potential employers from the Liberian economy. Since the sanctions were imposed, more than 16 large and medium-sized enterprises have been closed, leaving more than 10,000 workers unemployed. This critical development is exacerbated by the dislocation of over 150,000 workers, peasants and their families from northern Liberia, where the ongoing insurgency has driven workers away from the farms, plantations, industrial sites and other workplaces. In a country with an extended family system, the impact of sanctions and insurgency affects more than 1 million Liberian workers and their families; it has led to the closure of many positive, productive, business ventures. In view of this debilitating situation we call on the ILO and its tripartite constituents to prevail on the United Nations Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed on Liberia, which have created massive unemployment, capital flight, business closure, hardship and undue suffering for all Liberians.

Child labour is a practice that must be abhorred by all countries in spite of the socio-economic conditions that necessitate the practice around the world. We are particularly appalled by the chilling statistics that about 80 million African children are subjected to work under dangerous and exploitative conditions. One cannot but agree with the Director-General when he mentioned in his address to this Conference that "if you do not ensure that people have a decent childhood, you undermine their chances for decent work as adults". Launching the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, therefore, is indeed a welcome initiative. The Government of Liberia frowns on the exploitation of children, and in a country where the youth account for more than half of the total population, one will understand why we in Liberia launched a campaign to protect children's rights. At the moment, the Government of Liberia and the Liberian National Legislature have made it a matter of priority to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in the next couple of months.

It is our conviction that decent work cannot be achieved outside the promotion of gender equality. We extol the work of the ILO in highlighting the issues of women at this session of the Conference. War and other social problems in Africa have in-

creasingly brought women to the fore of family life and responsibility. Discrimination against women therefore means cutting the life-support system of many African households and denying them a decent livelihood.

Realizing the important role that women play in our society and how vulnerable they can become under extreme circumstances, the Government of Liberia recently established a Ministry of Gender and Development to ensure gender mainstreaming in national policies. We appeal to the ILO to extend the relevant assistance to this Ministry.

The Government of Liberia takes this opportunity to thank the International Labour Office and particularly the Director-General for the new partnership established with our country. We are grateful for the work of the multidisciplinary team in Dakar for the support it has given us so far in improving the labour administrative system in Liberia.

Finally, Liberia wishes to inform the Conference that, as a founder Member, its faith in the International Labour Organization has not waned and it still shares the noble objectives for which it was established 80 years ago.

Original Spanish: Mr. GONZÁLEZ GONZÁLEZ (*Workers' delegate, Cuba*) — The Director-General affirms on page 8 of his Report that “there are no workers' rights without work”. It goes without saying that that statement is both valid and timely and I therefore believe that, together with the promotion of decent work, the ILO, as a member of the United Nations system, should also work to promote substantial changes in the relationships between countries, without which it will never be possible to foster the creation of jobs which respect the legitimate rights of workers.

Let us be realistic; so long as the unjust and unequal economic order which is imposed upon us prevails, so long as the natural and human resources which are the principal wealth of many of our countries continue to be looted, so long as the powerful countries, by means of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other institutions under their control, continue to impose shock structural adjustment policies which reduce to a minimum the possibilities of response of the poor countries, so long as the asphyxiating external debt of our countries is not written off, so long as the wealthy countries do not repay to us their historic debt for centuries of exploitation, so long as this scenario prevails, there will not be any real material progress in job creation and in workers' rights.

The world requires many changes, that is certain, but these changes have to take place exactly where they can have a profound impact upon the lives of nations and peoples. I am convinced that if we do not work together, all of us, governments, the business community and workers, to change what should be changed without further delay, it could be too late for the thousands of millions of men, women and children and nations of this planet.

Ms. BARBARO (*Workers' delegate, Myanmar*) — Let me extend my congratulations to Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on her election as President of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that under her able guidance this session will be brought to a successful conclusion.

I am much honoured to have been elected by the Nurses' Association of Myanmar to attend the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference as a representative of the Workers' delegation from the Union of Myanmar. I would briefly like to mention that the Myanmar Nurses' Association, founded in 1948, is one of the oldest professional organizations in Myanmar, working for the nursing profession and the improvement of health services.

The Government of the Union of Myanmar is trying its utmost to build a peaceful, modern and developed nation which will stand tall in the world community. At this juncture, the role of workers in my country has assumed an increasingly important position. As a result of the open-market economic policies practised since 1988, industrial zones, modern factories and plants have emerged in Myanmar. Moreover, office blocks and buildings of international standard have also emerged, as have commercial and service enterprises, creating job opportunities for more than 7 million people. This is an unprecedented achievement in the past 50 years. As the country achieves progress and development, workers are beginning to enjoy rights and privileges, and also pay commensurate with their skills and abilities.

The Government has placed emphasis on and provided protection for workers' rights and privileges, such as the creation of pleasant working conditions, suitable living standards, welfare and workplace safety.

Human resources development has also been systematically implemented, both by the State and the private sectors, to enhance the skills and knowledge of blue- and white-collar workers. This is carried out with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the workforce to enable it to compete in a globalized market economy. In addition, the emphasis by the Government on agriculture, mainstay of the economy, has also led to increased absorption of labour by the agricultural sector.

The workers in Myanmar wholeheartedly welcome the action taken by the Government to put in place legislative, executive, and administrative measures to ensure that there are no instances of forced labour in the country. We have also learned, with much appreciation, that in a recent development, a team from the ILO visited Myanmar in May 2001 to explore further possibilities of cooperation with Myanmar, and that the talks were positive.

Sustaining this positive trend is a matter of vital importance if we are to find a solution to the question of forced labour in Myanmar, for to do otherwise would only run counter to the very wishes of the ILO to find a solution to forced labour in the country. At this juncture any undue pressure that might derail the process should be avoided at all costs. The new positive and hopeful outlook must be encouraged to the full.

I sincerely hope, on behalf of the workers of my country, that this Conference will act in such a way as to help promote the encouraging and positive results so far achieved in the cooperative endeavour between the Government of Myanmar and the ILO.

Mr. SADIEN (*Workers' delegate, Mauritius*) — It is a matter of pride and privilege for me, as the Workers' delegate of Mauritius, to address this august assembly for the first time, on the occasion of the 89th Session of the ILO Conference.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Director-General for having chosen important themes of labour and social issues, so dear to workers, to be the subject of our discussion during this Conference.

Core labour standards are the foundation on which social justice, equity and, therefore, peace are based. Social progress is bound to be slowed without peace. It is most unfortunate that, although five years have elapsed since the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, not enough has been achieved to bring about justice and equity in the world, in spite of strong actions by the ILO. The commitments taken by very many countries have remained but slogans.

Nowadays, democratically elected governments are still grappling with the requirements of the Bretton Woods institutions which, not knowing the practical realities of most countries, impose standard prescriptions on those countries, thereby creating more injustices and, indeed, threatening the social fabric of those particular countries.

Globalization and liberalization were meant to bring benefits to the people of the world, in particular workers. Instead, the competitive race engendered by liberalization has impacted negatively, in particular on small islands like Mauritius. As workers, we are very much concerned about the threat that globalization and liberalization pose to decent work.

With fierce competition, which is the order of the day, the world has become very cruel; the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. Neo-liberal policies, which have spread throughout the world, are playing in favour of vested interests to the detriment of workers. The privatization of essential services of the public sector has opened the door wide to increased corruption and rendered governments unaccountable to their people. Multinationals are using local agents, and even politicians, to exploit the working class and enrich themselves. We believe that the best way of preventing labour exploitation by capital is for all countries to ensure that core labour standards are implemented, both in law and in practice.

In Mauritius, several provisions of the Industrial Relations Act of 1973 and the Public Gathering Act, are not in harmony with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). However, we note with satisfaction that our persistent claims have been heard by the Government, which stated through the Minister of Labour last Monday, in this very hall, that the Government is giving serious consideration to the ratification of the three core ILO Conventions, namely, Nos. 87, 100 and 111, as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155).

Workers in Mauritius can only wish to see action in that direction before the next session in June 2002, the more so since our Minister of Labour was once a victim of such legislation when he was an active trade unionist.

Effective discussion can never be held if the playing field among social partners is not levelled. In this context, we would like to commend the vital contribution of the ILO in achieving this objective. We are grateful to the ILO for accepting to co-finance, with the Trade Union Trust Fund, a survey on the low rate of unionization in Mauritius, which will also consider the reasons for the low participation of women workers in union affairs. We would also much appreciate it if the ILO could assist unions in Mauritius with a survey to

determine a national minimum wage, so vital for the maintenance of peace. Unfortunately, recourse to indicators that per capita income conveys an image contrary to reality. It has been used to deprive Mauritius of some forms of assistance, highly important for its social development. It is time to set up new indicators that will convey the realities of small States, such as ours.

It is a fact that development on the social fronts in Mauritius have not kept pace with economic progress. The new challenges call for review of the strategy of workers' organizations. We need more professionalism and exposure, especially in less-developed countries. Exchange programmes between unions should be encouraged and training increased. The contribution of unions to national development will not be effective until and unless there is full participation and understanding by unions of the issues confronting workers.

In Mauritius, we are pleased that the Government has acceded to our request to hold national tripartite meetings every month to discuss economic and social issues. However, we are of the view that the real spirit of tripartism, as practised by the ILO, should be made to prevail at these meetings, otherwise they will become a farce. We also note with pleasure the imminent establishment of the National Economic and Social Council, which will be a forum for dialogue among social partners and the civil society.

Allow me to recall that one's security depends totally on the welfare of one's neighbours. This applies to individual countries, as well as to the world at large. In Mauritius, rapid industrialization has brought in its wake some social problems with which the country is still grappling. Further training has not always kept up with industrial requirements at domestic level. Thus, while foreign labour stands at 15,000 persons currently, the unemployment rate has reached the figure of 8 per cent. The difficulties being experienced by the Export Processing Zones today is the result of a lack of forward planning, and has put at risk the employment security of workers without appropriate safety nets.

Because of globalization and liberalization, the sugar sector, too, is experiencing serious problems, and in order to render production increasingly competitive, employers are resorting to centralization of factories, causing considerable job cuts in that sector and associated difficulties in redeployment. The Government is coming forward with a voluntary retirement scheme for 6,000 sugar workers.

The new mode of alternative transport that has been announced by the Government will have a bearing on the employees of this sector. While here in Geneva the ILO is looking at the welfare of workers, in Mauritius, despite the Government's recognition of the need to assist vulnerable groups in society, the Minister of Finance, in his budget speech on 11 June 2001, has chosen to increase value added tax from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, thereby worsening the lives of the underprivileged, and the working class in general. This will bring about a sharp reduction of the purchasing power of workers in Mauritius, which the union movement deplors.

All the above are proof that workers, even in the so-called "Paradise Island", are not being spared.

The importance of the ILO, which is performing a noble task, is therefore felt more than ever by workers in Mauritius and throughout the world.

With these few words, I would like again to pay tribute to the assistance afforded us by the ILO and its regional offices, and express our wish for closer collaboration with unions in Mauritius in the future.

Long live international solidarity, long live the ILO!

Original Spanish: Mr. JARQUIN RODRÍGUEZ (*Workers' delegate, Nicaragua*) — The 89th Session of the Conference is particularly important because of the crucial decisions which will be taken in favour of workers, such as the adoption of the new Convention and Recommendation on safety and health in agriculture, which will serve as a basis for the harmonization of labour legislation and will create better working conditions for all farm workers throughout the globalized world.

I strongly believe that of all branches of law, employment law is the most humane, and more specifically, the law relating to safety and hygiene at work, given that statistics continue to show, year after year, that large numbers of men, women and children are exposed to labour-related hazards and become innocent victims because of a lack of modern, mandatory legal instruments, such as those which we are discussing at this session of the Conference. Hence, the adoption of this new international instrument and its recommendation, which should help to improve working conditions, and to avoid the exposure of workers to situations which may damage their health and well-being and that of their families.

On behalf of the workers I represent, I want to say that the efforts being made at this session will not end with the adoption of the new Convention and Recommendation but, rather, each of us must push for the ratification of this instrument. Otherwise, our objective will not become a reality, and the lives and safety of workers will continue to be threatened. With regard to the quest for human development, Nicaragua, like most countries, is in a very difficult economic position, despite the attempt to increase productivity, and we need to continue to support improvements in working conditions in order to make our economy more competitive.

It is well known that the more working conditions improve, the more profits employers make. Hence the responsibility of the latter to return to workers part of these profits, by improving their working conditions, or at least by respecting the union and labour rights of workers so that they may organize themselves freely and use collective bargaining as an instrument to improve their conditions of work. If this is to be possible, it needs political will on the part of the State and other socio-economic players, so that the fundamental rights of workers become effective, as they are laid down in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted at the 86th Session of the International Labour Conference. Without respect for human rights, there can be no human development. In our awareness of the responsibility we have in the economic development of our country, our workers' organizations have participated in a responsible manner in the tripartite committees we have in Nicaragua, such as the National Committee on Occupational Health and Safety, the Committee on the Progressive Eradication of Child Labour and the Committee on the Minimum Wage.

Unlike in previous years when social and labour policies were executed by the Government, without

taking into account the social partners, the bodies I have mentioned are tripartite and include representatives of civil society, as well as dealing with social problems, safety at work, child labour and minimum wages. The participation of different sectors in resolving common problems reflects the new democratic process which we are bringing about, and which will make it possible to consolidate the grounding for future economic growth, which will bring with it the social development we hope so much to achieve.

I want to make it clear that Nicaraguan workers will continue to seek a better future, with social justice for all, in which we can all enjoy the fruits of decent labour.

(Ms. A. Sto. Tomas takes the Chair.)

Mr. LEATHER (*representative, Public Services International*) — I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of public service workers worldwide. Let me start by noting that this is the fiftieth anniversary of the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), an anniversary that deserves both congratulations and renewed commitment to ensuring its application in practice. There is a need for continued and increased technical assistance to improve understanding and action to promote pay equity.

After 20 years of ideologically driven attack on the public sector, aimed at downgrading its role and offering it for sale to the highest bidder, there are clear signs that this policy has not delivered the expected benefits. The global distribution of income has become more unequal, levels of poverty have increased, especially in the transition countries, and there is more social division and corruption. We are sitting on a time bomb of increasing insecurity in all aspects of life — employment, health, education, food, water, energy and social protection. There has been a decline in the access to these basic services for large sections of the populations of many countries, either because they are not available or because they cannot afford them. That is precisely why a well organized public service — based on people's needs rather than profit — is vital for the future economic and social development of many countries.

Unfortunately, recent trends have been in the opposite direction, but questions are now being asked of the policies that have dominated the reform and restructuring agenda. Those who promote crude globalized adjustment and privatization as an answer are becoming fewer. The ILO has a crucial role to play in this area in terms of analysing the trends and putting forward appropriate policy options. This is why the sectoral approach remains important, because it is not possible to observe trends effectively without looking at how they impact upon different groups of workers. In this respect, we specifically call on governments to take a more active stance at the sectoral meetings, because it is they who will be expected to implement the conclusions of these meetings.

Public Services International have witnessed increased violence against public sector workers, particularly in health services. We believe this is directly related to the devaluation of their status by their employers and this matter needs to be urgently addressed.

The ILO, in its publication *Your voice at work*, underscores the crucial role of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining in achieving

decent work for all in today's globalizing world. In the publication *Decent work*, the ILO has pledged its support for balanced social dialogue. It continues to stress the value of tripartite consultation and collective bargaining, helping employers and workers alike to appreciate how a positive labour-relations environment promotes change, innovation and competitiveness of a constructive kind.

In practice, however, we have been observing just the opposite. There are increasing numbers of governments that are introducing legislation which undermines the existing rights of public service workers. The Czech Government, for example, is discussing a draft Act which, if passed, will eventually curtail the basic rights of public servants to take part in free collective bargaining. This is in spite of the Government's desire to join the European Union, where these rights are recognized in the vast majority of countries.

The main exception is Germany where civil servants are denied the right to bargain. Another applicant for EU membership is Turkey and we are very concerned about the Turkish Government's draft law on public employees' unions which will prevent 400,000 public sector workers from joining trade unions. The law ignores ILO Conventions Nos. 87, 98 and 151.

In Asia, the Korean Government is preventing the Korean Association of Government Employees and Works Councils from changing its constitution to allow for its organizational transition into a trade union. The Japanese Government is in danger of violating Convention No. 87 because of its plans to introduce changes to the public sector without consultation. Let us hope that the Government will hold good to the commitment it has made in the last two weeks to consult with the unions concerned. PSI will be monitoring the situation closely.

There is also the situation of international civil servants. How should the ILO respond to their lack of basic rights? It must promote through the entire United Nations system and other international organizations the same values of tripartite consultation and collective bargaining that it defends for everyone else. The ILO can ill afford to shirk its responsibilities to staff on whom it depends. PSI calls on the ILO to work together with the agencies of the UN system and others to introduce new consultative mechanisms and procedures based on fundamental labour rights. Such a move can only make these organizations more effective, creative and competitive to face the years to come.

Finally, I would like you to think for a moment about the ways in which the HIV epidemic has affected the public sector in an increasing number of countries and regions. The first and most obvious impact was on the health service, and then there was the need to plan and implement the national response to the epidemic — all this as well as coping with the loss of workers and a contracting tax base. For this reason, the PSI welcomes the ILO Code of practice of HIV/AIDS and we call upon the ILO to devote the resources necessary for its implementation.

Mr. SIMKHADA (*Government delegate, Nepal*) — On behalf of the Nepalese delegation I wish to extend our warmest felicitations to the President on her excellent leadership in chairing this important meeting.

The Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General, which cover a wide spectrum of activities undertaken by the ILO in favour of a global coalition for decent work, reflect the hopes and aspirations of mankind for productive working conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO's activities serve as universal social pillars in support of democracy, economic efficiency and social progress. We appreciate the effort made by the Governing Body and the Director-General in articulating the necessary steps to meet the global decent work challenge, especially in this changing world.

The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, although a small least developed and landlocked country, has always raised its voice against social injustice, illicit human and arms trafficking, ethnic or religious intolerance and incitement to ethnic, racial, religious and other hatreds which cause human suffering. Poverty eradication by reducing unemployment and under-employment are the top priorities of our national development plans.

To this end, we are striving to reform liberal and social policies in a manner that promotes sound labour management relations and full employment, enhances efficiency, productivity and competitiveness of enterprises and promotes social cohesion for social dialogue and human development. Efforts have been made to reform the civil service to ensure good governance and transparent administration accountable to the people.

We have to date ratified seven ILO Conventions, including four core Conventions — the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). His Majesty's Government of Nepal is working seriously towards the ratification of the remaining four human rights-related Conventions in the near future. The Government has already approved the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and they are being submitted to the upcoming budget session of the Parliament for ratification.

Exploitative child labour remains one of the most evocative challenges of our times, and His Majesty's Government is committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2005 and all forms of child labour by 2010. In a recent study, the ILO identified the seven worst forms of child labour practices in Nepal, child bonded labour being one of the most serious. To ensure their rehabilitation, the Government has distributed land to the landless *kamaiyas* (or bonded labourers) who were freed from debt bondage on 17 July 2000.

Agriculture being the life blood of our economy, priority should be given to ensuring the safety and health of agricultural workers. In viewing the need for voluntary efforts to protect the life of workers involved in this vulnerable unorganized sector, we have recently constituted a national tripartite voluntary body of occupational safety and health.

My delegation also strongly supports the promotion of cooperatives. We regard cooperatives as an economic and social force for creating additional employment and income-generating opportunities in developing countries. Cooperatives can also play an

important role in poverty alleviation and improving socio-economic conditions of disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous and tribal people and unemployed youths.

We believe social security protection is an effective instrument of social progress. It is an integral part of a development strategy aimed at equitable distribution of income, and should not be viewed as a burden to society. Economic growth and social progress are indispensable parts of the single process of development.

Especially in the present context of the rights-based approach in international relations, the discussion of rights takes a whole new dimension when we are talking of people who suffer from the worst forms of deprivation, where large numbers of people are unable to enjoy even the most basic human needs and where society is unable to institute even a minimum of a social safety net. Society must do a better job in ensuring the enjoyment of freedom from want and fear by all people in this global village as humanity begins its journey into the twenty-first century. To eradicate poverty, to promote decent work, to stimulate development and to institute at least a minimum of a social safety net for the most vulnerable sections of society, a least developed and landlocked country such as Nepal needs meaningful assistance from the international community.

Let me conclude by wishing this Conference success.

Ms. YACOB (*Workers' delegate, Singapore*) — On behalf of the Singapore Labour Movement, I wish to congratulate the President on her appointment. I also wish to congratulate the Director-General on his comprehensive Report which will no doubt provide a useful guide for us in the year ahead.

The Singapore National Trades Union Congress (SNTUC) welcomes the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), by Singapore this year. We also welcome our Minister's announcement that Singapore plans to ratify the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). This follows a study by the Government, in which the SNTUC participated actively, of the capacity for Singapore to ratify more ILO core Conventions.

This is a significant development. While Singapore may not have ratified new core Conventions for some years now, workers enjoy high labour standards, as evidenced by our better quality of life since our country's independence in 1965. Our task is to ensure that unions continue to play a significant role as a partner in national development so that our workers can have good jobs, good pay and a good life.

More than 90 per cent of our citizens own their own homes through a successful public housing policy and the Central Provident Fund (CPF) system. Even if our workers lose their jobs, they and their families will not end up homeless due to inability to pay the rent, because they own their homes.

In Singapore, no one is denied medical care due to inability to pay for medical services. Our workers' children have access to heavily subsidized education, which ensures that each generation will be able to lead a better life than the generation before.

Through our Central Provident Fund system, our workers can also look forward to leading a comfortable life upon retirement. Public assistance program-

mes, managed either by the Government, volunteer welfare organizations or the unions, are in place to help the less fortunate or families who have fallen on hard times. Our unions helped their members to face such difficulties during the Asian financial crisis of 1997-99.

The challenges confronting us change over time. No social security system can guarantee for ever that workers will not suffer financial difficulties when the economy turns bad or when their companies restructure. The best protection and most basic right for workers is to have a job that can give them a good quality of life. That is why the labour movement in Singapore is determined to help create an environment that can attract investments and jobs. That is why we are involved directly in efforts to reskill our workers so that they remain relevant and employable even if for some reason they lose their jobs. That is also why we initiate efforts to improve their productivity in order to help enlarge the economic pie so that our workforce can continue to enjoy steady and sustainable wage increases.

In the new millennium, the system of lifelong employment is being challenged. To enhance workers' job security, we have to help them remain employable throughout their working life. To achieve this, an extensive programme of skills training and retraining will be needed. SNTUC has been able to implement such programmes in Singapore through effective social dialogue among the three social partners.

SNTUC supports wholeheartedly the attention that this session is giving to the promotion of cooperatives. SNTUC has set up a network to help our workers enjoy quality goods and services at affordable prices. In so doing, we are able to moderate the cost of living. We operate cooperatives in the areas of retail supermarkets, health care insurance, childcare, housing, food and care of the elderly. During the recent Asian financial crisis, our cooperatives implemented a \$26 million package to help reduce the cost of living and ensure that the basic welfare of our workers was further protected.

We therefore applaud the ILO's initiative of bringing the role of cooperatives to the forefront of the global agenda. It is a most timely move to raise the profile of cooperatives as an important institution in social development.

The ILO is the ideal platform to discuss the role of cooperatives because it focuses on precisely the areas that the ILO is concerned with: decent jobs and a better life for workers. It is imperative that the labour perspective be given sufficient expression in the proposed instrument. This includes issues such as employment creation, decent work, core labour standards, human resource development, gender empowerment and the cost of living.

Apart from the principles of good and successful cooperatives, which delegates have discussed in the past weeks, I think we can add the element of transparency and good business management.

In order to be effective in protecting workers' welfare and enhancing their quality of life, cooperatives need to command a sizeable market share and be competitive. They must be well run and able to withstand public scrutiny.

In the Workers' group discussion, there was the suggestion that cooperatives could be subjected to quality audits to ensure that they live by the values and principles that they claim.

I am pleased to share with Members the fact that, in Singapore, we started this process two years ago. We have introduced social indicators for cooperatives to report on, much as companies have financial indicators. These social indicators, which include the extent to which prices are kept low for consumers and contributions are made to society, are released on an annual basis as a “report card”, much like the profit and loss statements of companies. They constitute the primary bottom line of our cooperatives.

We would be happy to share our experiences and welcome the opportunity to learn from our brothers and sisters in cooperative development.

To conclude, we wish the ILO ever greater success in enhancing the welfare of workers.

Mr. LALL (*Government delegate, India*) — It is a privilege for me to address this distinguished gathering of constituents and friends of the ILO. We are all here for the common purpose of improving the conditions of workers the world over.

India has a long tradition of fighting for peace, equality, freedom and social justice, since the immemorial time of Lord Buddha to the modern ages with the fight against colonialism. The “living legend” India with its commitment to Panchsheel and non-alignment, finds its essence of spiritualism and international peace, human probity and prosperity through the indestructible strength of Indian democracy as typified by the dynamism of its people: workers, business organizations, professionals and civil groups alike.

As a founding Member of the ILO over 80 years ago, and as a permanent member of the Governing Body, there are certain remarkable parallels between the philosophy of the ILO and the values upheld by the Republic of India.

Social justice has been an enduring theme in the Indian political tradition. It is also the guiding principle of the ILO. In fact, the unique tripartite structure of the ILO symbolizes this. Although against the conventional wisdom of the time, Indian leaders realized in our early days as a free country that democracy and social justice were not only consistent with, but also absolutely essential for, the country’s overall economic and social development. “The golden mean”, “the glory of middle path” — this is why all our development policies and programmes give pride of place to the welfare and dignity of the individual.

Reconciling growth with equity in a free and open society, especially in an era of global interdependence, is not an easy task. The Decent Work Agenda and the perceived gaps in decent work have to be seen in this context. There can perhaps be no absolute definition or ceiling for this Agenda as it is dynamic in concept. However, each country would set its own aspirations, capacities, capabilities and limits.

All constituents will agree that decent work is the ultimate universal goal to be achieved so that every human being can aspire to a better, more fulfilling and comfortable future.

The degree of decent work deficit varies according to the historical, social and economic development, or lack thereof, of every member country. In the majority of developing countries, which are plagued by poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, an entirely different yardstick will have to be applied to measure the decent work deficit. Even if it is not country specific, it

has to be at least the developing world and developed world-specific. Where do countries with millions of school drop-outs and adult illiterates figure in a world of globalization armed with information and communication technology? If the adult illiteracy rate is as low as 1 per cent in some countries, it is in excess of 50 per cent in others. Grouped data bring out the contrasts more starkly, with figures for sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States of nearly 42 per cent, as opposed to 1.3 per cent for the industrialized countries.

As rightly pointed out in the Report “achieving economic goals depends on social preconditions”. We will have to ensure that such preconditions are created in the first instance.

To be unemployed is to be poor. To be poor is to be powerless and vulnerable. The basic deficit to be reduced, therefore, is the threat of illiteracy, followed by unemployment. The integrated policy framework, with its four strategic objectives, should be gainfully and fruitfully used to overcome these deficits so that an empowered worker can himself demand the essential requirement of decent work.

With the advent of globalization and liberalization in the least developed countries (LDCs), there is little or no choice of economic policies and they are witnessing increasing unemployment. Fear of unemployment is gripping the economy as a whole. Since the LDCs do not have the necessary skilled manpower resources and infrastructure, the benefits of globalization, if any, have not been reaped by them. On the contrary, their human resource power may be crushed by the juggernaut of globalization. I earnestly appeal to the ILO under the leadership of the newly elected President to unite all forces, to muster support, sympathy and bargaining power so that the labour forces of the least developed world can have an equal share in the rewards of the international economy.

It is clearly not enough for the international bodies to lay down cosily worded ideals and standards and advocate economic and social rights in theory alone. We cannot just legislate good health and jobs for the sake of legislation. We have to ensure that we build a strong economy that will provide jobs for the unemployed in the developing countries. The able-bodied must be economically and decently engaged. People want to work so that they can enjoy the fruits of their labour: fair pay, education and health care for their families. Workers will build the wealth that allows them suitable remuneration.

Many of the poorest countries are marginalized from taking advantage of the growing globalized opportunities for a variety of reasons. A recent World Bank study quoted in the *Human Development Report 2000* states that the sharp increase in world economic inequality between 1988 and 1993 “was driven more by rising differences in mean incomes (weighted by the population) between countries than by rising inequalities within countries”.

One of the most practical and sure ways, therefore, to minimize poverty is to create employment in the developing and least developed countries while ensuring basic income and social security to start with. For this, the ILO should ensure that multilateral institutions and developed countries provide unstinting support which is in no way linked to trade or labour standards.

Original Russian: Mr. KHMILIOVSKIY (Employers’ adviser and substitute delegate, Ukraine) — I

greet you on behalf of the members of the Employers' Confederation and the vast number of Ukrainian entrepreneurs.

The problem of employment is particularly close to my heart, not only as the representative of the Employers, but also as Chairman of the Ukrainian Coordinating Committee on Employment, which operates on tripartite principles. The main achievement of this Committee in recent years was the Compulsory Unemployment Insurance Act, which was prepared by the Government.

This shows that we now have basic guarantees for workers, but it does not mean that in Ukraine we have the necessary preconditions to provide all people with the decent work that is the main theme of this 89th Session.

In this connection, I would like to express my gratitude to the Director-General of the ILO for the high level of the analytical Report before us.

In our view, "reducing the decent work deficit" is not only a global challenge, but represents a breakthrough in attitudes to social and labour relations, a grasping of the new ILO policy and consequent new challenges to national organizations, above all of employers, and a setting of important priorities in public employment and social security. It allows a new approach to the employers' role and position in the formation of socio-economic policy in a context, not only of globalization, but of a restructuring of the global economy from the human resources perspective.

From our point of view, in our common work of studying and establishing new ILO policies to reduce the deficit of decent work, we need to unite the efforts of national organizations with those of me ILO in order to resolve the contradictions caused by globalization and restructuring, especially in countries with economies in transition. This will allow the ILO, which clearly has the image of a progressive leader in labour relations and social dialogue, to increase its authority still further as it plays its role of noble missionary, establishing partnerships and bringing its principles to new regions and countries.

This mission is especially important for the countries with economies in transition. Allow me to express the hope that the delegates to the Conference will agree that, in these countries, social, economic and labour relations resemble those of both the developing and the developed countries.

From the point of view of social policy, the most important example of this is the differentiated potential of the social partners. As noted at the Tripartite Meeting on the Human Resource Implications of Globalization and Restructuring in Commerce, which took place in October 1999, the weakest link in the transition countries, lamentably, is represented by the employers. Ukraine is no exception. In our view, this is due to the following factors: the lack of experience in democratic social partnership open to participation by all parties; the comparatively small experience of employer participation in social dialogue in market-economy conditions; the inadequate culture of social dialogue; and, perhaps most importantly, the lack of social awareness at all levels of the population with respect to the equality of the social partners in the negotiating process and their freedom of association.

For these reasons, the development of tripartism in our country is accompanied by great difficulties and potential conflicts. However, social partnership is becoming more important in the development of

social relations and its operation is almost entirely covered by the legislation.

At present, our social partners (the Government and workers), and society as a whole are presenting the business world and the national employers with increasingly tough demands in terms of compliance with their obligations to both workers and society. Above all, they must create new jobs, increase the level of employment and provide social protection. These are objective needs.

The Report before us reflects the situation and condition of social dialogue as a mechanism for the creation of conditions for decent work. Indeed, we cannot talk about creating these conditions without strengthening the principles of solid tripartism and collective action by all social partners.

The ILO has provided invaluable assistance to Ukraine in structuring and establishing the representation of employers. As a result, we now have a Confederation of Employers and Parliament recently approved the Employers' Organizations Act.

Our problem now is to involve informal enterprise in the social dialogue process. It accounts for about 10 per cent of the country's jobs and we hope the ILO will help us in this task.

Ms. VALKONEN (*Workers' delegate, Finland*) — The Director-General's Report, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, is very important and comprehensive. It is easy to agree with the numerous speakers who have spoken highly of it at this Conference. The Report opens up entirely new perspectives for developing the work of the ILO. At the same time it sets new challenges for all of the parties involved. In the last few years, the ILO's activities have made positive progress and the prestige enjoyed by the Organization within the international community has been consolidated. But, of course, we cannot settle for good goals alone. We also need the commitment of all the partners involved, as well as strong political will.

The Director-General's Decent Work Agenda focuses on issues that are essential for underpinning justice in all parts of the world. The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up have proved that the ILO has an important role in strengthening the social dimension of globalization. The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), adopted two years ago, has been ratified in an exceptionally comprehensive manner. This reveals that elimination of child labour enjoys powerful support. This goal can, however, be reached only with extensive cooperation and determination.

Changes take place at an extraordinary pace and one might well ask whether we will be able to keep up with the swiftly changing realities. Rapid development of information and communication technologies has increased inequality between regions as well as within societies. Workers are increasingly concerned about the effects of globalization. Insecurity and anxieties concerning the future have often been manifested in demonstrations. Workers do not shun changes as such, what they fear is insecurity, marginalization and unfair treatment. The ILO has an important task in building a safer and better world of work.

It is necessary to strengthen tripartite cooperation and social dialogue in all member States. Implementation of fundamental rights at work is a necessary

prerequisite of productivity, economic development, social welfare and stability. Allow me to reiterate the fact that freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are the basis of all development in the world of work.

Setting international labour standards and monitoring the implementation of these standards has always been the basis of ILO activities. Labour standards safeguarding fair treatment and security of the workers are a major factor from the point of view of successful activities. The ILO Conventions have often been criticized, sometimes quite sharply. I would, however, like to remind you of the fact that most of the Conventions are still topical and valid. Promoting ratification of Conventions and improving supervisory mechanisms must be an integral part of the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda. Standards and supervisory mechanisms need developing but under no circumstances, must modernization weaken them.

The ILO has, over a long period of time, made significant contributions to promoting equality in the world of work. Fifty years ago the International Labour Conference adopted the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), which has played a significant role in promoting equality. The position of women at work is very vulnerable, as many changes affect women in a particularly pronounced manner. Promoting equality is an issue that demands further contributions from the ILO.

Finally, I would like to thank the Director-General for his strong commitment to promoting equality.

Mr. AUNG (*Employers' delegate, Myanmar*) — At the very outset, allow me to congratulate the President, in my personal capacity and on behalf of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), on her election as President of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. We feel confident that under her wise and experienced leadership, the session will come to a successful conclusion.

The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry is Myanmar's leading business organization, representing the nation's 41 chambers and trade associations. It is a member of the International Chamber of Commerce and is associated with no less than 17 international trade organizations. It has more than 9,000 members. It also keeps in close touch with other chambers of the regions, promoting bilateral trade and investment.

I am honoured to be the Employers' delegate to the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. The Government of the Union of Myanmar is building a peaceful, modern and developed nation and we, the employers in Myanmar, as social partners in the nation's development process, are striving for productivity gains and economic development through fair labour practices and the maintenance of industrial peace.

In view of the all-round development efforts undertaken by the Government, job opportunities for the workers have tremendously improved. I am proud to inform this august assembly that the workforce, which was 18.5 million before 1988, has now increased to 25.7 million.

The UMFCCI has close ties with the other social partners and has traditionally maintained good relations with them. In the industrial zones that have been

established, as well as factories and other establishments, the spirit of tripartism is evident in labour-related matters when we the employers close ranks with the workers and the Government in our search for unilateral solutions to any issues.

At the 88th Session of the International Labour Conference, upon the recommendation by the ILO Governing Body, the Conference passed a resolution against Myanmar citing non-compliance with the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), which it had ratified, despite our calls to this esteemed assembly not to rush into any hasty decisions and to give the Government of Myanmar sufficient time for implementation of the recommendations.

Soon after the ILO Governing Body voted to take action against Myanmar on forced labour, the international business community in Myanmar sent an open letter to the ILO Governing Body expressing its deep disappointment at the decision, as it could affect employment opportunities for workers in Myanmar.

It strongly asked the ILO to work closely and firmly with the Government of Myanmar, as well as with the representatives of the workers and employers of Myanmar, to achieve greater progress in alleviating poverty and raising the standard of living.

The international business community in Myanmar also urged the Government of Myanmar to maintain a positive dialogue with the ILO to resolve the differences between the two parties. The Myanmar employers are heartened to learn now that the Government has already put in place legislative, executive and administrative measures to ensure that there are no instances of forced labour in Myanmar.

We welcome this important development. This positive development was given a further impetus when the Myanmar Government accepted a team from the ILO, led by Mr. Francis Maupain, Legal Adviser, to discuss the modalities for the objective assessment of forced labour situations in the country.

The employers in Myanmar have learned that these discussions have resulted in reaching an agreement on the modalities for an objective assessment. This positive development in our view is due to the political will on the part of the Government as well as the spirit of cooperation demonstrated both on the part of the Government and the ILO.

We think that both the Myanmar Government and the ILO tend to benefit from this cooperative approach.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate once again that we, the social partners in the national development process, have always ensured and will continue to ensure that unfair labour practices are not used and that all workers enjoy their rights and privileges under the existing labour laws.

Original French: Mr. LEBRUN (Workers' delegate, Haiti) — First of all, on behalf of all the workers of Haiti, I should like to extend my congratulations to the President and the distinguished Employer and Worker Vice-Presidents for their election at this 89th Session.

This year in his Report, the Director-General focuses on the decent work deficit. From the outset I would say that to achieve decent work, the member States need to ratify and implement virtually all of the ILO's international standards. It is unfortunate that we have not yet achieved this objective. This is a major challenge for all of us.

This Report has provided an opportunity to reassess and gain a better understanding of the values and concepts related to the concept of “work”, especially today, in a world which is in the process of changing in the face of globalization.

There is a tendency to consider globalization a new phenomenon, yet it is not that new. At present, whether we like it or not, globalization is with us and bringing new concepts and values in its wake.

All the talk is of large continental groupings — Europe, Asia and the United States through large markets controlled by vast multinational enterprises. But, there is more to it than that. Globalization is not without its negative repercussions, although some sing its praises. In the South, and especially in the LDCs, many are already complaining about its negative and incalculable consequences.

The workers are not the only ones to complain about this system. In the Director-General’s Report, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, it states that there is a growing polarization of opinion regarding the pattern and direction of globalization. Average incomes for the world as a whole are rising, and there is an obvious capacity for innovation and wealth creation. But these gains are accompanied by persistent inequality, growing exclusion, insecurities caused by economic fluctuations, and a feeling that the ground rules are unfair.

The Report also refers to the scandalous gaps and imbalances between countries that are vast and growing. In 1998, per capita GDP in the richest 20 countries was 34 times greater than in the poorest 20 countries. I could quote many other examples.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, we have been moving towards a unipolar world, the so-called single approach. Whereas before the debate focused on the East and West, now it focuses on the rich and the poor. The statistics and the economic indicators speak for themselves. While in the past the economic system in Eastern Europe was not a panacea, today we have no panacea at all, anywhere. Everyone, everywhere is complaining of the consequences of globalization and the decent work deficit. In the North, people complain of relocation, in the South it is not modernization or privatization which is the subject of complaints; people in the South complain of corruption, loss of jobs, increases in unemployment and the high crime rate.

Globalization is taking root. But there are fundamental disagreements as to its legitimacy and its viability. In the Report we are told that there are at least two diametrically opposed points of view as regards globalization. Some see in it “globophobia” and others see in it “globophilia”. The latter say that globalization is a source of wealth and well-being, and the former say that it is a threat to mankind; it is even a force which is going systematically to destroy the planet and the workers and peoples of the southern hemisphere, all for the benefit of multinationals. Looking beyond these opposite views held by advocates and adversaries of globalization, it is clear to see that the fate of mankind is at stake.

The different reactions in Seattle, Davos and Porto Alegre show that we need a new strategy. Both the planet and humanity have taken a dangerous path.

How does one reconcile a dream world, a world of utopia with these new models, where there are fewer and fewer jobs, where there is more and more unemployment and work is increasingly inhuman? The

Report does not merely record the facts; it is a wake-up call, warning the conscience of the world.

My country has not been spared. On the contrary, we have a full sense of the meaning of unemployment, underemployment and disguised employment — which is called the decent work deficit here. For more than 15 years Haiti has been living through a long political crisis on its way to democracy. I do not need to spell out to you what the impact of this economic crisis has been. We are the only least developed country in the Americas, with all the socio-economic problems that involves, and we are by no means on the verge of finding solutions to those problems. Decent work is a fundamental human aspiration that all Haitian workers share, but more than that, they lay claim to it. For us Haitian workers, it also means making our voices heard concerning working conditions and government employment policies. It means surpassing subsistence and having a decent existence. In a word, decent work must be synonymous with solidarity and human dignity.

So many areas of work are the prerogative of governments and employers! It is almost impossible to establish trade union representation and social dialogue.

Concepts of decent work appear throughout all the reports and the different items on this year’s agenda — Health and safety in agriculture, Promotion of cooperatives, Social security: Issues, challenges and prospects.

Quite rightly we cannot have certain categories of workers who have a monopoly on decent work because that would be tantamount to promoting and encouraging discrimination within the ILO itself.

The fact that the ILO has decided after 43 years to adopt a specific Convention which deals with health and safety in agriculture proves that there are no borders standing in the way of the spread of decent work, that even workers in the most remote rural areas will have the guarantee that this new instrument of social protection will be extended to them.

Several international labour instruments refer directly or indirectly to cooperatives but the only instrument which deals specifically with them is the Co-operatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation, 1966 (No. 127). This year the Conference has been looking at finding new ways of promoting wealth and new decent employment, but still based on the historic spirit of solidarity which has always symbolized the international cooperative movement. This new universal instrument, which we hope will soon take the form of a Convention will help to provide guidelines for the social partners, with each acting responsibly to promote development of the sector and providing hope for change and collective solutions to the social and economic problems common to all the most difficult sectors of employment.

Social security has been a subject of general discussion at the Conference. The workers recognize the stakes and the problems connected with social security at the beginning of this new millennium. There are all sorts of rumours going round about the fate of social security in the twenty-first century. Social security is a fundamental right won by workers through struggle and sacrifice. The workers will view favourably any discussions which could bring greater democracy to the system and give the social partners greater responsibility in moving towards a more participatory and effective system of management so that

we can promote new services which will take into account the most vulnerable sectors of labour.

The Haitian workers will campaign relentlessly for the ratification of the ILO Conventions, especially those which are binding and enshrine the fundamental human rights of workers. The reason for this is that many are denied these rights in my country. All sorts of workers' rights are violated daily: the right to freedom of association and protection of the right to organize and the right to bargain collectively. Many workers are dismissed, in both the public and private sectors, simply because they try to promote a trade union or join a trade union association. Many Haitian workers have lost their jobs because they tried to go on strike in pursuit of better working conditions. The current Government faces the heritage of its predecessor in connection with massive lay-offs from state enterprises, in particular the state electricity company.

Working conditions in general in the country leave much to be desired. The means of transport to take workers to their workplaces verge on being "indecent".

Neither their wages — equivalent to US\$1.50 per day — nor their purchasing power, come anywhere near constituting decent work conditions. There is no safety and health in our enterprises, industries or work centres, and even the minimum is not guaranteed.

The working conditions of domestic workers, and particularly of children who work in that capacity, resemble slavery rather than work. It will be up to the social psychologists to determine why the Haiti élite is entirely indifferent to this category of workers who, nevertheless, nursed them through their childhood and accompanied them on their discovery of an existence full of mystery, to paraphrase our labour law professor, Mr. François Latortue.

From this labyrinth of socio-political and socio-economic problems that is holding Haiti back, the workers of my country wish me to appeal from this podium to the world's conscience to help us to achieve through dialogue, negotiation, compromise and international solidarity, a new social contract allowing the effective and real reconciliation of the country with its citizens, and to work together to achieve the ideals of our forefathers in a climate of tolerance, patriotism, democracy, social justice, equity, development and solidarity in order to build a new Haiti, without any sort of exclusion, able to guarantee for its sons and daughters a place of well-being for all and a better tomorrow for future generations.

Original Portuguese: Mr. TIAGO GOMES (*Employers' delegate, Angola*) — The world today has moved into the consolidation phase of the globalization of the economy and the building of a new economic and social order.

Globalization is bound to have advantages and disadvantages and there are bound to be abuses. So, as of now, we should be giving the matter careful thought, and we would recommend the drafting of standards and rules, so as to avoid and eliminate such abuses. It falls to this distinguished institution to take the daunting task of drafting equitable rules involving all its members.

The agenda adopted for this session contains highly important issues relating to social security and solidarity. Social security and health in agriculture require specific, dynamic measures to address the

particular situation of labour in agriculture. This is characterized, in particular, by the exposure of workers to diseases which reduce their working lives, which is particularly true in the developing countries, where there are a whole range of hazards caused by plant and animal diseases, which need to be controlled in order to safeguard both arable products, and the safety and health of people working in agriculture, including both employers and workers.

War in Angola has reduced agricultural activity to practically nil, but this does not mean that we do not want to take part and support worldwide legislative efforts in the agricultural sector so as to see how relevant it might be to us as we edge towards peace and stability, in which we might develop our potential to benefit the Angolan people.

In the near future, we will require an input of capital, in order to relaunch agriculture in Angola which, in the past, achieved bumper harvests and surpluses. We are going to require a massive joint effort, given the high cost involved in removing the debris of war, namely lethal land mines, and we are going to require investment to build the sort of infrastructure needed to have balanced agricultural development which allows for the conservation of the environment.

In our view, it is very important to promote co-operatives, because they can contribute to ironing out social inequalities, especially given that they are high job creators, and given that they can create opportunities for individuals to gain self respect in many ways, which is particularly true of rural populations. It is a matter of solidarity, which moves away from the negative influence of selfishness, which goes beyond the materialism and hyper-consumerism of modern societies. It is clear that developing countries have to do a lot of basic educating to allow people to understand what cooperatives have to offer, and what their inherent values are, especially in terms of what they can bring socially, economically and occupationally. This needs to be founded on responsible labour practices which offer advantages to all concerned.

To achieve this, we also need multidisciplinary efforts on the part of those who can invest capital, and we need local specialists who are able to realize the hopes and aspirations of huge populations that want a better life, free of hatred, envy, and self-seeking wars which lead to instability and create situations in which people believe that they have a right to have a much better life than everybody else, just because of their personal merits, divine intervention, or whatever other reason they can come up with.

We really have to move towards more human solidarity, get rid of capital gains which are achieved through the exploitation of man by man. The development of cooperatives is one of the major concerns of governments and employers in this new millennium, because it is based on the aspirations of the disadvantaged and the marginalized, those who do not share in globalization, whatever their country, origin, colour, political, ideological and religious leanings, or any other discriminatory factor.

What matters is the fact that we should build a better world for mankind and for the human record. We would like to say how important the ILO has been in settling labour disputes since the end of the Second World War. It is likely to become even more important in the near future as supranational enter-

prises span continents and regions, as these selfish attitudes increase, leading to a situation of very unequal distribution of wealth and knowledge and increasing the gap between rich and poor. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Angola is clearly very mindful of the matter of social security, which is required so that people can have their place in work and so that we can reach a better definition of what coverage means, with regard to disability, temporary and permanent incapacity, both of workers and of managers.

Our employers' association is thankful to the ILO for the efforts it has made in the coordination and execution of programmes to strengthen the democratic spirit to reinforce tripartism. To help us build on our institutional capacity, we would hope that these efforts can be sustained and that they will eventually bear fruit, so that we might be able to attract investment to our country and promote viable projects and sustainable, structural development in Angola.

(The Conference adjourned at 6.15 p.m.)

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