



Provisional Record

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Presidents: Mr. Amorim, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and Ms. A. Sto. Tomas

OPENING OF THE SESSION

Mr. AMORIM (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*) — I have the greatest pleasure in declaring open the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. As the third Brazilian national to have occupied this post, it has been an honour for me to have conducted the work of the Governing Body during the last 11 months.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

Mr. AMORIM (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*) — Our first task is to elect the President of the Conference. I call upon the Chairperson of the Government group, His Excellency, Mr. Li Qiyang, Vice-Minister for Labour and Social Security of China, to propose the candidature for the President of the Conference.

Original Chinese: Mr. LI Qiyang (Government delegate, China) — I feel privileged to recommend, on behalf of the Government group, the Secretary of Labor and Employment of the Philippines, Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, to be the President of the 89th International Labour Conference. Ms. A. Sto. Tomas graduated from the Philippines Far Eastern University in 1965. She attained the degrees of Master of Development Communications at the University of the Philippines in 1976 and the Master Degree in Public Administration in Harvard University in 1986, respectively. Ms. A. Sto. Tomas has both a profound knowledge and rich experience in human resources development, governance, employment and migration. In the Philippines, she is now also serving as the Chairperson of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, National Wages and Productivity Commission, the Overseas Workers' Welfare Authority and many other institutions. Serving as the head of Philippine delegations, Ms. A. Sto. Tomas attended many important international conferences and meetings on human resources development and management, public governance and administration as well as civil service; on these occasions she exhibited outstanding capabilities in participating in international affairs. She is fluent in English and can read and understand Spanish. I believe, with her wisdom and experience, Ms. A. Sto. Tomas will perform her duty and the lofty post of the President of the 89th International Labour Conference and lead this Conference to a complete success.

Mr. AMORIM (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*) — I shall now give

the floor to the spokesperson of the Employers' group, Mr. Funes de Rioja, Employers' delegate of Argentina, on behalf of the Employers' group.

Original Spanish: Mr. FUNES DE RIOJA (Employers' delegate, Argentina) — In accordance with the proposal made, we are very pleased to be able to support that suggestion.

Mr. AMORIM (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*) — I now give the floor to Lord Brett, Chairperson of the Workers' group, Workers' delegate of the United Kingdom, on behalf of the Workers' group.

LORD BRETT (*Workers' delegate, United Kingdom*) — The Workers' group will endorse also the commendable nomination of the esteemed lady and we are sure she will be a great success and lead a successful Conference.

Mr. AMORIM (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*) — The nomination of Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, Secretary of Labor and Employment of the Philippines, has been duly proposed and seconded. In the absence of other proposals, I declare Ms. A. Sto. Tomas President of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. I wish to congratulate her most warmly and invite her to take the President's Chair.

(Ms. A. Sto. Tomas, Secretary of Labor and Employment, Philippines, is elected President of the Conference and takes the President's Chair.)

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The PRESIDENT — I would like to express my gratitude to the member States of the Asia and Pacific group for endorsing my candidature. I wish to thank the Association of the South-East Asian Nations and my dialogue partners in the region, principally China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, for their support. May I also personally thank those who have just spoken, His Excellency, Mr. Li Qiyang, Chairperson of the Government group, Mr. Funes de Rioja, spokesperson of the Employers' group and Lord Brett, spokesperson of the Workers' group.

I appreciate the honour and opportunity of this presidency for myself but more importantly for my country. As you may know, the past four months under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo constitute a determined struggle to reform and rehabilitate an

economy and society that seems to have lost much of its historical moorings. Given rising internal demands of 78 million people for economic goods and social services, and given a global order that exacts total competitiveness on all fronts, we welcome every opportunity to articulate our vision for the Philippines and to seek assistance for its early realization.

Globalization is the mantra of the new millennium. All it means is that we have to produce more, serve better and do both at the lowest possible cost. The theory is that, if competition were unhampered by tariff and non-tariff barriers, it would be a better world. Or would it?

Consider that we are not starting the race at the same time. Some have already achieved a significant head start. Consider that others proceed with handicaps, some of which are historical, ideological, resource-based or information-driven, sometimes all of the above. The so-called “digital divide” may not be so formidable because technology may soon provide the appropriate bridge, as is now being experimented by our friends in India. What is alarming is the possibility of a global black hole, that which no amount of pole-vaulting or leapfrogging can provide us from falling into, if poverty, disease, ignorance and disunity remain unresolved and intractable. Are we then doomed to perpetual and rank inequality?

Human history gives us reason to be optimistic. Difficult times always bring about a revival of the public spirit which I define as enlightened self-interest or proper selfishness. Those among us who watch the landscape of governance know that, in the past decade, we have seen the blossoming of voluntarism, of a grouping of amorphously labelled civil society. Collectively and often serving for free, they act as advocates, watchdogs, supporters and fundraisers for a variety of causes that lie in the public domain. Trade unions probably constitute the forerunner of this emerging group. It is in our best interest that, in our effort to consult with our traditional social partners — government, employers’ and workers’ organizations — we also actively engage other interested parties. Globalization, after all, should be a call for inclusion, not exclusion.

The historical imbalance in national, regional and international development may probably best be redressed by focusing on those who need it the most. In the Philippines, we hope to establish poverty-free zones in our poorest provinces supported by our tripartite partners and utilizing the particular strengths of each while encouraging support from other sectors. Trade unions have promised to do the social organizing while our employer partners will take care of marketing community-generated projects and mainstreaming the same. Through these demonstration communities, we hope to establish that with concerted effort, it is possible to improve the quality of life and incomes of our poorest countrymen.

Within the ASEAN structure we have unanimously decided that the newer entrants to our original grouping should enjoy a greater amount of support and assistance from us because most of them come from backgrounds that do not allow immediate adjustment to a free market system. We believe that they should receive preferential attention even from donors external to ASEAN. Globalization, like golf, requires a handicapping system that allows the new players to catch up.

In the end, globalization requires minimum basic standards that preclude exploitation or reverse pro-

tectionism. Universally accepted standards, such as fundamental principles and rights at work, allow for equal protection of vulnerable sectors that are most affected by globalization, wherever they might be. From our national experience these would include the informal sector, migrant workers, women and child workers. It is essential, however, that when these standards are studied and established, as wide a net as possible is discussed so that the broad range of opinions is explored. The International Labour Organization remains at the forefront of establishing minimum and enforceable labour standards. We are confident that under the ILO’s continuing mandate, labour standards would constitute our ultimate protection from the problems brought about by globalization.

Our agenda for this Conference reflects many of these concerns. For a long while safety and health were issues for industry and others in the formal work sector alone. We are now recognizing the dangers that lurk in the working conditions of those who are in agriculture and related areas. Cooperatives constitute a useful partner to the trade unions and expand the possibilities for improving the income and the quality of life of workers. In some parts of the world, workers’ enterprises or employee mutuals are now being set up so that workers are becoming their own employers as well. Social security, acknowledged as a basic safety net for workers in the formal sector, is now being examined for its rich “coverage”. While problems regarding benefits as well as contributions continue to be a major concern, variations and social insurance are being explored.

Decent work, of course, is the rubric under which all these issues are being examined. We must, at this point, thank the good Director-General for providing us with a framework and reference point for this session’s discussions. This lucid and comprehensive exposition on decent work remains the definitive study on this all-important concern.

Part of my work as President of this Conference is to ensure that these agenda items receive the examination they deserve and the discussion that will illuminate future debates. Your elected officials —myself together with the Vice-Presidents for Government, for the Workers and for the Employers whom you will elect shortly — will do just that. This early, I wish to thank the technical staff of the ILO for seeing us through the legal and technical processes of the Organization. Gratitude, we are told, is a memory of the heart. Long after this 89th Session is over, this heart will long remember the memories of the next three weeks.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT — In accordance with the amendments adopted by the Conference at its 82nd Session, we shall proceed immediately to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference. I call upon the Clerk of the Conference to read out the nominations made by the groups.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — The nominations to the posts of Vice-Presidents of the Conference are as follows:

Government group:

Ms. Bannerman (*Ghana*)

Employers' group:

Mr. Donato (*Brazil*)

Workers' group:

Mr. Parrot (*Canada*)

The PRESIDENT — If there are no objections, may I take it that the proposals are adopted.

(The proposals are adopted.)

NOMINATION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE GROUPS

The PRESIDENT — Here again I call upon the Clerk of the Conference to read out the names of the persons who have been elected as Officers of the various groups.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — The groups have elected their Officers as follows:

Government group:

Chairperson: Mr. Li Qiyang (*China*)

Employers' group:

Chairperson: Mr. Funes de Rioja (*Argentina*)

Vice-Chairpersons: Mr. Suzuki (*Japan*)
Mr. Owuor (*Kenya*)
Mr. De Arbeloa (*Venezuela*)
Mr. Potter (*United States*)
Mr. Hoff (*Norway*)

Secretary: Mr. Peñalosa (*International Organization of Employers*)

Workers' group:

Chairperson: Lord Brett (*United Kingdom*)

Vice-Chairpersons: Mr. Adiko (*Côte d'Ivoire*)
Ms. Anderson (*Mexico*)
Mr. Shmakov (*Russian Federation*)
Ms. Triana (*Colombia*)

Secretary: Mr. Cunniah (*International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*)

Other than the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons, the Officers of the Workers' group are: Mr. Ahmed (*Pakistan*), Mr. Attigbe (*Benin*), Ms. Boverud Pedersen (*Norway*), Ms. Coletti (*Italy*), Mr. Itoh (*Japan*), Mr. Miranda de Oliveira (*Brazil*), Mr. Parrot (*Canada*), Mr. Zellhoefer (*United States*) and Mr. Yillah (*Sierra Leone*).

COMPOSITION OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — The Credentials Committee has nominated the following members:

Government member and Chairperson: Mr. Oni (*Benin*)

Employer member: Ms. Sasso Mazzufferi (*Italy*)

Worker member: Mr. Edström (*Sweden*)

The PRESIDENT — The Conference takes note of the appointments made by the groups.

CONSTITUTION AND COMPOSITION OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

The PRESIDENT — The next item on our agenda is the establishment of the various committees that will consider the matters before the Conference.

The Conference may wish to set up the following committees: Selection Committee, Finance Committee, Committee on the Application of Standards, Committee on Safety and Health in Agriculture, Committee on Promotion of Cooperatives, Committee on Social Security — Issues, challenges and prospects.

The nominations made by the groups for the composition of these committees appear on a list that will be distributed. If there are no objections, may I take it that this proposal is adopted.

(The proposals are adopted.)

SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT — We move now to our next item which concerns the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders to implement decisions taken by the Governing Body at its 274th and 279th Sessions, more specifically the time limit for speeches in plenary, the approval of changes in the composition of committees and the discussion of the Global Report.

In order to implement these decisions, the President and the three Vice-Presidents unanimously recommend, in accordance with article 76 of the Standing Orders, the following:

- (a) that the time limit for speeches in plenary on the Director-General's Report be set at five minutes and that the Conference to that extent suspend article 14, paragraph 6, of the Standing Orders;
- (b) that the Conference delegate to the Selection Committee — with authorization to subdelegate to its Officers — authority to approve non-controversial changes in the composition of committees and non-controversial invitations to non-governmental international organizations to be represented in committees, and that the Conference, to that extent, suspend article 4, paragraphs 2, 9(a) and 56, paragraph 9, of the Standing Orders;
- (c) that the Conference decide that the discussion of the Global Report should not fall under the limitation concerning the number of statements by each speaker in the plenary, and to that extent suspend article 12, paragraph 3, of the Standing Orders, and that the discussion should not be governed by the provisions regarding time limits to speeches and, to that extent, suspend article 14, paragraph 6, of the Standing Orders.

Pursuant to article 76 of the Standing Orders, these suspensions will take effect, with the agreement of the Conference, as from its next plenary sitting, which will take place this afternoon.

(The Conference adjourned at 11.30 a.m.)