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Special High-Level Session on the Launch of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour

ADDRESS OF MR. BENJAMIN MKAPA,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

The PRESIDENT — It is a great pleasure for us today to welcome the participants of the Special High-Level Session on the Launch of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Republic of El Salvador, the Kingdom of Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania.

As I said in my acceptance address at the opening session of the Conference, child workers are the most vulnerable groups and demand our preferential attention. In the world of today, it is intolerable that millions of our girls and boys should be working in exploitative and extremely hazardous conditions. We know that much of this can be traced to poverty. In many instances, the problem also arises when poor people's lack of choice and need to survive coincides with their search for cheaper and more flexible labour.

The complexity of the processes that bring about child labour calls for integrated action and broad-based support from all sectors of society. There is no doubt that global consensus is solidly against the most abusive forms of child labour. The unanimous adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) by the International Labour Conference in 1999, demonstrated this clearly.

This morning, we are honouring three States that are taking the important step of launching time-bound programmes in their respective countries. Time-bound programmes are tightly integrated and coordinated action aimed at eliminating a country's worst forms of child labour, within a defined period of time.

On the occasion of this Special Sitting, the Conference has the great honour of receiving the visit of His Excellency, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

However, before the privilege of hearing the words of President Mkapa, I shall turn to Mr. Somavia and to our other guests, all of whom are at the forefront of the combat against the worst forms of child labour. Mr. Somavia you have the floor.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL — I thank all those who are here with us today and it is a pleasure to welcome everyone to this important event.

We are most privileged that President Mkapa has made this journey to mark the United Republic of

Tanzania's commitment as well as his personal dedication to this cause. The United Republic of Tanzania holds a very special place in my own heart. Indeed, I had the honour to know the late Julius Nyerere as a teacher and as mentor.

Only a few years ago, when I represented my country on the United Nations Security Council, he guided me through the complex issues of the Great Lakes and invited me to Arusha when he was dealing with the Burundi question. The Conference is honoured by President Mkapa's presence and the ILO is honoured by his support for social issues, but today, and above all, the children of the world are honoured by his commitment to confronting the worst forms of child labour.

We thank him for his leadership and personal engagement, and for agreeing to be our special guest at this session of the International Labour Conference.

Two years ago, the International Labour Conference unanimously adopted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). With this action, the international community sent a strong signal to tens of millions of lost children, the most exploited, the poorest of the poor, the young bonded workers in factories, sweatshops, fields and homes, child soldiers, girls in brothels, trafficked children. They are the faces of the worst forms of child labour. We told them that the international community had opened its eyes and would not continue to tolerate the abuse of power by adults exploiting the weakness of children in these abhorrent ways. Because I believe that we must never forget that child abuse always happens with the complicity of adults. It is an adult that employs, it is an adult that traffics, it is an adult that looks the other way.

Two years ago, we launched a campaign so that nobody could look the other way. I called on all of us to make the elimination of the worst forms of child labour not only a global cause, but also a personal cause — a cause that engages us individually as human beings, something that, as persons, we want to fight for.

Many of you pledged to take early action, and you have done so. Seventy-four countries have now ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in two years, and we expect many more ratifications in the next few months. It is the fastest-ratified Convention in the history of the ILO. But as we all know, ratification is just the beginning of the journey. That is why today, we honour the United Republic of Tanzania, El Salvador and Nepal, the first three countries prepared to take the next step, and to make the crucial commitment to eradicating the worst forms of child labour in a time-bound framework.

We are very pleased to welcome the personal representative of President Flores, of El Salvador, Mr. Nieto Menéndez, and Ambassador Simkhada, the representative of Koirala of Nepal. We deeply appreciate Nepal's determination to show its commitment even while coping with its recent tragedy.

These three governments are leading the way. They are willing to set goals to measure progress and be judged. We are privileged to have with us Minister Riester of Germany and Mr. Cameron Findlay, United States Deputy Secretary for Labor, representing two funding partners in our International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Each symbolizes a key point in IPEC's evolution in the fight against child labour. It is difficult to imagine that, just over a decade ago, few voices were raised against child labour, but the ILO was drawing up its pioneering work and Germany at that time was calling for action. When the time came to start a major programme, the Government of Germany was prepared to provide the financial support needed, and IPEC was born in 1992. We thank Germany for that early backing, and for the confidence it placed in us.

Many followed in Germany's footsteps. Today, IPEC is a partnership of around 25 contributing countries and organizations, and 65 programme countries. I want to thank them all for their involvement.

I also want to acknowledge those countries that were willing to sign up with IPEC early on, to begin confronting the child labour problem at home, namely Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey. Each signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO in the first year of the Programme. We also recognize the role of the Government of the United States, the principal funder now, in helping the Programme to make a major leap towards fighting the worst forms of child labour. Most of these programmes are backed by the United States, and we count on its continued support.

I must emphasize that time-bound programmes — integrative, comprehensive and multilevel programmes — make sense only when they are part of a national development effort. For this reason, they have to be based on real national ownership. The United Republic of Tanzania, El Salvador and Nepal have accepted this responsibility. What they are doing gives hope to many millions of children — in those three countries and beyond. But let me also observe that it has a broader significance, for their actions show that questions of rights and values are not luxuries. When we think about it, we can afford them. They have to be built in from the start. This is what the ILO has always stood for; this is at the core of our decent work agenda, and these three countries are not shirking from that talent. They are placing rights and values at the heart of their development agenda for, as we know well, it is not enough merely to remove children from the workplace — they must also have meaningful educational opportunities, rehabilitation, health care and nutrition, and families must have access to income-earning opportunities.

What I see, when I look back over the past three years, confirms my strong belief that we must dare to dream, that we must have a vision that we believe in. The fight against child labour now commands global attention and solidarity, and today we are targeting the eradication of the worst forms of child labour within a decade or less, country by country, with international support. We have come a long way and,

make no mistake, commitment marked in this event signals that it is not business as usual when it comes to child labour. As we work on the worst forms, we are also drawing attention to the broader cause of children at work who should, instead, be children at school.

I urge governments that have not yet ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), to do so soon. I urge governments which have ratified to follow the lead of the United Republic of Tanzania, El Salvador and Nepal. I ask employers' and workers' organizations to play a special role in advancing the cause nationally and internationally and, of course, there is space for community-based organizations, non-governmental and other citizens' groups to act.

Above all, I think that all international organizations and developed countries in the cooperation programmes should give strong support to those countries that have the will to make a time-bound commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

To mark today's occasion, we should think about establishing a world day against child labour, as a catalytic moment when, each year, in all countries, we ask ourselves what we have done to stop child labour.

The PRESIDENT — It is my pleasure to welcome the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Walter Riester. Germany's special place here today reflects both its important role in IPEC, as well as its continuing and strong commitment to supporting IPEC's work and to the global movement against child labour. Had it not been for the Government of Germany's missionary outlook on child labour, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour might not have been established.

Germany was the founding donor Government of IPEC in 1992 and — in the early pioneering years — enabled the launch of IPEC-supported national programmes on child labour in six countries, namely, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey. At present, its contributions help a total of 11 countries, and have also made important technical advances possible.

Original German: Mr. RIESTER (Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs) — It is difficult to find words after looking at these pictures of children who are forced to work. What can we say in answer to their distraught, unhappy faces?

Just maintaining a disconcerted silence will not, however, help any child who is forced to work. Childhood should be about playing and learning. We have to discuss this and we should tell the world that exploitative child labour should not exist in any society — nowhere on the face of the earth.

It is easy, speaking as a representative of an industrialized country, to point the accusing finger at such forms of child labour which we ourselves have long since overcome. Yet, clearly, this is neither effective nor just. It is not effective because accusations create a defensive reaction rather than insight, and it is not just because exploitative child labour in a particular country often cannot be blamed on to the ill-will or indifference of that country's political leaders.

Of course, I do not agree with those who claim that child labour can only be eliminated by eliminating

poverty itself, because ILO research has shown that there is no inevitable link between poverty and child labour.

If you really want to combat child labour, you should offer a helping hand instead of wagging your finger. That is exactly the philosophy behind the IPEC Programme, which is based on the recognition of the fact that child labour has many causes and that there is no one panacea against this evil.

We need a package of measures and, of course, the focal points will change from country to country. First of all, it is necessary to influence the attitudes of all decision-makers in the world of politics, the economy and society as a whole. They have to learn that child labour is not something that we should accept simply because it has always existed.

The children working so hard today are the badly educated, unhealthy, unemployed people of tomorrow, who have a negative impact on the whole of the economy.

Other measures are necessary as well. These include training for labour inspectors and suitable educational facilities for children who have already worked. Sometimes, as a first step towards this, we have to improve children's working conditions.

IPEC prefers to find a made-to-measure solution for each country, drawing on the plethora of measures that exist, rather than trying to impose a uniform solution on the whole world. This is possible because of two features that have characterized the Programme from the start, namely the almost universal cooperation with NGOs in the receiving countries and the opportunity for the authorities to use at least part of the available resources in a flexible manner without being bound by detailed rules and regulations.

Please do not think that I am arrogant if I fail to remain modestly silent about the role of my country in the development of this Programme. We think it was very useful, ten years ago, to give some impetus to this Programme. But we are also aware that this initiative alone was no guarantee of success. Many elements had to come together in order to produce the successful programme that IPEC is today. In particular, it required the expertise and the admirable commitment of our colleagues here in Geneva and elsewhere in the world. It also required readiness on the part of many decision-makers in the receiver countries to take the problem of child labour seriously and not trivialize it. We are particularly happy that Germany did not remain the only donor for any length of time and that other donors rapidly joined us. I could say to my colleagues in the United States that I am not at all upset by the fact that Germany, in the meantime, has been pushed out of pole position on the donor table.

We believe that this event should send a cry around the world: "There should be no place for exploitative child labour anywhere in the world. Please, all of you, support the ILO Programme so that this goal is reached as soon as possible."

I also welcome the proposal made by the Director-General of the International Labour Office that today should be the day for the abolition of unacceptable child labour.

The PRESIDENT — It is my pleasure now to welcome the Deputy Secretary of Labor of the United States, Mr. Cameron Findlay. His presence here today reflects both his Government's commitment to the child labour issue and its role in funding the first stage

of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The United States is the largest donor to IPEC, however, its increasingly important international leadership on child labour is more than financial — it is moral, strategic and political.

The Government of the United States of America has taken a strong global leadership role in the worldwide battle against child labour. It was the third country to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and has shown that combating child labour is an issue that transcends political parties and firmly encompasses government, employers' and workers' organizations and all relevant sectors of civil society.

Mr. FINDLAY (*Deputy Secretary of Labor, United States*) — First, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak about the important progress we are making in our struggle against child labour.

Thank you, Mr. Director-General, for your leadership on this important issue.

I am very happy to be here today, on the occasion of the launch of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in El Salvador, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania. Elaine Chao, the United States Secretary of Labor, very much regrets that she could not be here today, but she sends her greetings and congratulations on the commencement of this important Programme.

Let me just take a moment to express, on behalf of the American Government and, more importantly, the American people, our sympathies to the people of El Salvador and Nepal regarding the recent tragedies that have occurred there and prevented their Heads of State from joining us here today. We wish they could be here with us, but we look forward to continuing our work with them in the future.

This is a very significant moment — a milestone in the challenging journey that began nine years ago, in 1992. We have not yet eliminated the worst forms of child labour, but we are at last in a position where we can begin to do so, and reaching this point is itself a great accomplishment. Let me congratulate everyone who has worked for all these years to bring us to this day.

When the ILO first created its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, many governments did not even talk about the issue.

As we all know well, the first step towards conquering a problem is acknowledging its existence and speaking honestly about the challenges it poses. Many nations have joined this worldwide effort, but I must particularly commend the Government of Germany for its early leadership on this issue.

A topic that was once taboo is now openly debated, and there has been a growing willingness on the part of the international community, including the more than 50 countries participating in IPEC, to commit significant resources to addressing it.

At the same time, I think there is a general understanding that the ultimate answer to this problem begins at home, in each of our countries.

I am very pleased to note that during the course of the IPEC Programme, there has been a growing willingness among nations to address the problems of child labour within their own borders, and at the same time, there has been a dramatic increase in the willingness of the international community to support these efforts.

Most importantly, this progress has been reflected in the unanimous decision, two years ago, of the ILO member States that we shall not tolerate the worst forms of child labour, and that we “shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency”.

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), was adopted unanimously, and this was a landmark moment in the history of the struggle against child labour. Nations have ratified this Convention at a record pace.

Today, the United States and other nations are moving forward rapidly in our efforts to assist countries that are ready to follow through on the commitment embodied in Convention No. 182, by providing technical assistance to countries that are working systematically to eliminate child labour.

Altogether, our commitment to eliminating child labour through IPEC and other programmes totals almost \$150 million over the course of the last six years. These funds are supporting a broad range of educational and economic development programmes to provide assistance for working children around the world. Through the programmes we have already funded, we expect to withdraw at least as many as 160,000 children from exploitative work, and to prevent another 100,000 from entering such work, while providing indirect assistance to many others.

Our President, President George W. Bush, was elected on a promise “to leave no child behind”. He used that term when talking about improving America’s public education system and opening the doors of opportunity for every American, but President Bush’s pledge should also inspire all of us here who are working to eliminate abusive and exploitative forms of child labour. We must stand firm in our commitment to work together as a community of nations to leave no child behind, anywhere in the world, in appallingly dangerous workplaces, bound in slavery, exploited as prostitutes or employed in other criminal and hazardous professions. No child should be involved in dangerous, illegal or immoral work.

I applaud El Salvador, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania for accepting the challenge of embarking on these comprehensive and integrated time-bound programmes.

So, let this event mark not only a new level of commitment and action, but also the promise of a foreseeable future when children wake up in the morning, not to another hopeless and exhausting day of work, but to learning and other opportunities at school.

The PRESIDENT — All of us feel the greatest sympathy for the people of Nepal after the great tragedy that struck their Kingdom ten days ago. To demonstrate the strong commitment of the Government of Nepal to combat child labour, Prime Minister Koirala had been scheduled to travel to Geneva and to address this session of the Conference. We all understand that in this time of great sorrow and official mourning in Nepal, the Prime Minister’s presence here today is not possible.

But to show the Government’s unwavering commitment to be among the first to implement the Time-Bound Programme, His Excellency Ambassador Simkhada is here as the Prime Minister’s personal representative. I give the floor to Ambassador Simkhada of Nepal.

Mr. SIMKHADA (*Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Nepal, Geneva*) — I stand in front of you today with a heavy heart. The unimaginable, tragic events leading to the sad and untimely demise of our beloved King, Queen and other members of the Royal Family have plunged Nepal into terrible shock and profound sorrow. This national tragedy made it impossible for the Right Honourable Giriya Prasad Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal, to leave the country. I therefore have the honour to read his message.

Having being associated with the trade union movement for a long time and touched by the Director-General’s invitation to be the guest of honour at the International Labour Conference this year, I was greatly looking forward to attending this event this morning. But the tragic circumstances that left our country bereft of its beloved King, Queen and other members of the Royal Family, require my presence in Nepal. These are painful times for us. I wish to express my appreciation to all well-wishers of Nepal who have expressed their sympathy in this moment of our great national tragedy and showed their solidarity with us in our moment of need.

Despite this tragedy, His Majesty’s Government of Nepal remains steadfast in its effort to build a society in which all Nepalese, including children and workers, are able to enjoy greater freedom from fear and from want.

I wish to reiterate our full commitment to the goals of the ILO and wish the Organization success in its important mandate. I congratulate the President and wish her success.

Exploitative child labour practice is one of our biggest challenges today. The new research conducted by the ILO and IPEC has identified seven specific target groups: bonded labourers, rice pickers, porters, domestic workers, children in mining, children in the carpet sector and children who are trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation, as the worst manifestations of the child labour problem in Nepal. In each of the seven target groups, the situation of young girls is especially precarious. To rescue, rehabilitate and protect thousands of children trapped in each of the seven categories is a daunting task but as an expression of our determination to take bold steps in protecting the rights of children and giving greater dignity and rights for all people, on 17 July 2000. His Majesty’s Government of Nepal took a decision outlawing the practice of *kamaiya* bonded labour. Although slavery was abolished in 1924, a system of agricultural bonded labour called *kamaiya* has been prevalent in some parts of Nepal.

Of the 57,000 *kamaiya* children, 17,000 (30 per cent) worked in slave-like conditions in order to pay their parental debts, a very alarming state of affairs. The Government had to act and it did.

The *kamaiyas* are now free from any bonds, either verbal or written. The use of bonded labour is now punishable by law. The Government is distributing land to former *kamaiyas* and with the support of the ILO we are in the process of building safety nets to prevent new forms of bonded labour arrangements.

ILO data shows that one in every one hundred of the world’s working children lives in Nepal. The sheer scale of child labour, and the associated economic realities that underpin it, make solutions to the problem extremely difficult, especially for a least developed country like Nepal where the education system is weak and financial resources scarce.

The child labour problem is deeply rooted in poverty and lack of access to basic education, compounded by serious unemployment and underemployment.

In the combat against child labour, Nepal is pleased to be one of the first three countries selected by the ILO for the development and implementation of the IPEC Time-Bound Programme. To be effective, the Time-Bound Programme must link measures to combat child labour to national development effort with particular emphasis on policies to eradicate poverty, promote universal basic education, social mobilization and employment creation.

The success of the Time-Bound Programme will also depend on partnerships among all stakeholders, national and international.

His Majesty's Government, in cooperation with other social partners, international stakeholders and the IPEC team, is presently working on a master plan of action to implement the Time-Bound Programme. By incorporating child labour as an important priority in the tenth Five-Year Plan, Nepal has demonstrated full ownership and mainstreamed it into government policy and development plans for the benefit of our children and for the future of Nepal.

We have taken the Time-Bound Programme as a challenge. We are determined to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2005 and all forms of child labour by 2010. We have demonstrated the political will and the necessary legislative action is in place.

With the assistance of our development partners, we believe we will meet the goals enshrined in the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the Time-Bound Programme being officially launched here today.

In his Report to this historic 89th Session of the Conference meeting in Geneva at the dawn of the new century, the Director-General has rightly presented reducing the decent work deficit as a global challenge. The effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of its worst forms are, in my view, the first vital steps towards translating this vision into reality in the twenty-first century.

I thank the Director-General for his vision, wisdom and leadership, the ILO/IPEC team for their assistance and the international community for their generosity in enabling the launching of the Time-Bound Programme.

The PRESIDENT — President Francisco Flores of El Salvador is unfortunately unable to be here today to present the steps taken by his country to eradicate the worst forms of child labour. But we are pleased to welcome as his personal representative the Minister for Labour and Social Welfare of El Salvador, Mr. Jorge Nieto Menéndez.

Despite the terrible earthquakes that struck El Salvador in January and February of this year, causing damage on an almost incomprehensible scale, the spirit of the country remains intact as does its commitment to become one of the first countries to launch a time-bound programme to eradicate the worst forms of child labour.

Original Spanish: Mr. NIETO MENÉNDEZ (*Minister for Labour and Social Welfare, El Salvador*) — The President of the Republic of El Salvador, Mr. Francisco Flores, regrets very much that he is unable to be present here today at the invitation of the Director-General of the International Labour

Organization, but the disasters resulting from the earthquakes of 13 January and 13 February meant that he could not leave the country. However, he does wish me to convey to you his warm greetings and his desire that the global programme that is being inaugurated in order to eliminate the worst forms of child labour should benefit from the support and commitment of the world's governments. We are convinced that our girls and boys represent not only the future of our countries but also the present and the future of humanity itself.

Our country duly ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). Since 1996, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, our country has been associated with the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Consequently, we initiated direct action programmes to benefit our children who spent many hours in the mud, gathering bits of trash and who were forced to separate and collect recyclable material from rubbish dumps, who spent the entire day selling in the market, or who were forced to make fireworks, working with chemicals and explosives at serious risks to their health, their person and even their very lives. These direct action programmes have benefited more than 1,000 boys and girls who were previously forced to work for their own survival and that of their families.

The Government of El Salvador has also created a national policy for children and adolescents. The programme encompasses the commitment of the various competent institutions in the area of health, education and labour, working together on actions to eliminate child labour, with special priority given to those hazardous occupations that endanger the health, life and full development of our children. The Government of El Salvador, in support of this strategy during the International Labour Conference of 1999, firmly supported the development of a new Convention on child labour. It also quickly ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

At the end of last year, the Government of El Salvador, speaking through me, expressed its staunch commitment to work to identify the worst forms of child labour, and design and implement a national strategy for its elimination. When we did so, we were aware that we were taking on a great challenge. But we were convinced — as we are now — that the international community committed to this global cause will give us their support in achieving this goal.

This willingness to get involved meant that El Salvador, together with Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, were selected as the first countries in the world to receive support from the United States Department of Labor so that, with IPEC assistance, they could develop and implement a time-bound programme for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

The process of creating such a wide-ranging project, which includes representatives of the Government, workers and employers, as well as non-governmental organizations specialized in this area, was seriously hampered by the tragic earthquakes that struck on 13 January and 13 February this year, devastating a large part of the infrastructure of our country and forcing us to redefine our national priorities.

Nevertheless, despite the resulting difficulties, the Government of El Salvador remains steadfast in its commitment to work for the present and the future of our children. We are of course aware that we will have

to redouble our efforts and to remain ready, willing and anxious to work so that we can achieve the results we have hoped for.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the countries represented here to join us in this initiative and to provide their support for the national efforts made by countries such as ours which have waited on building a more worthy, just and participatory society.

We are aware of our limitations and know that our difficulties have increased as a result of the natural disasters but we also know and trust in the abilities and devotion of our people who work hard every day to build a peaceful and progressive country.

Now is the time for all those who have not as yet joined in the global cause of combating the worst forms of child labour to do so so that together we can do our best and draw on our efforts to achieve this common goal. We are convinced that the smiles of our boys and girls are worth any sacrifice. We are doing everything within our power and we are certain that we have the support of all of you.

The PRESIDENT — It is now my privilege to introduce to you His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania. The many IPEC-sponsored programmes in the United Republic of Tanzania — there have been more than 40 to this date — have released thousands of children from employment into education, and provided alternative incomes for families for child labourers.

The achievements of the IPEC country programmes in the United Republic of Tanzania attest to the strong commitment of the Tanzanian Government, together with the social partners in their continuing efforts against child labour. It is my great honour to give the floor to His Excellency President Benjamin Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. MKAPA (*President of the United Republic of Tanzania*) — Let me first congratulate Ms. A. Sto. Tomas for the honour and trust placed in her to preside over this important Conference and I assure her of the full support and cooperation of the Tanzanian delegation.

I had occasion in my own country to visit with parents of children we have rescued from employment, and I have welcomed the opportunity to see the faces of parents on film of children who have been rescued from child employment as part of the study of our implementation of IPEC.

Watching the faces of those parents reminds me of the wise counsel of the ancient philosopher, Confucius, who said, “If your plan is for a year, plant rice; if your plan is for a decade, plant trees; if your plan is for a lifetime, educate children.”

As nations, we must plan for more than a lifetime, and we must better educate more of our children. Yet I wonder what the parents of the children I have seen think they could do about this? Perhaps they are too poor to plan or too poor to care. For them any child is a source of income. For them, tomorrow is too far away. They have to live today. For them returns on investment in the education of their children’s physical and psychological growth are too distant in the future, so distant they can hardly focus on them.

That is why I am so grateful for the invitation and the opportunity to speak to this Conference about children and about the worst forms of child labour.

I do feel confident that, with political will in poor countries and with requisite support and partnerships between rich and poor countries, we can now address the scourge of the worst forms of child labour.

Child labour deprives children of opportunities for schooling and, at the very least, it puts on their frail shoulders the burdens of both schooling and work. Child labour can also enslave them, separating them from the security of their families.

We are gathered here because we share the recognition that child labour is detestable and a major challenge of our time. Cruelty to children aside, child labour is a negation of our common humanity. It is an insult to the dignity of the human person and a veritable waste of human capital.

Poverty is the major factor in child labour, but child labour has other dimensions, other causes and other drivers as well. Sometimes child labour is ingrained in the social, cultural and economic structures of societies. For this reason, the best way to address it is through comprehensive and holistic approaches geared towards a clear national policy and plan of action and anchored in the nation’s social and economic development. Today’s launch of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour should inspire us to do so. It is gratifying that the new Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), enjoys the extensive support of governments and other stakeholders.

It was approved unanimously by governments, workers and employers, reflecting a solid political consensus for urgent and immediate action. The time to act therefore is now.

Clearly civilized society should not countenance things like child slavery, forced child labour, child trafficking, debt bondage, serfdom, child prostitution, child pornography, child soldiers, and all other forms of hazardous and exploitative work by children.

I am here to reaffirm my own political will and commitment, as well as that of my Government, to do all that is in our power to fight all such worst forms of child labour.

Let me briefly describe the child labour situation in the United Republic of Tanzania, in the hope that it may well substantially reflect the situation in many least developed countries.

Preliminary data from the first round of the 2000-01 child labour survey suggests that 4.1 million, out of an estimated 10.2 million children aged between five and 14 years in my country, are not attending school. Instead, most of them are to be found in different types of work situations. There are several factors that contribute to this situation in the United Republic of Tanzania. The first, and perhaps the most significant one, is poverty.

Low incomes have made it difficult for poor parents to meet the basic needs of their children, including the basic need for education. African societies used to pride themselves in the social security offered by the extended family in the village. We even have a proverb which states “it takes a whole village to raise a child”. Yet the extended family is currently under severe strain. Economic hardships are forcing parents to focus on the nuclear family only. As a result there is a rapid increase in the number of abandoned and neglected children, including HIV/AIDS orphans, who eventually run away from their homes in search of work.

Secondly, the primary school syllabus does not impart necessary functional skills for those that comple-

te a basic education. Not surprisingly, therefore, some parents and children consider education useless, and prefer instead to make an early entrance into the unskilled labour market.

Thirdly, African societies find themselves somewhere between traditionalism and modernity and this compounds the stresses that economic reforms impose on families. As a result dysfunctional families are emerging, characterized by higher rates of divorce, teenage pregnancies, children born out of wedlock, irresponsible parents, and large families all contributing to sending more children out on the streets, or prematurely to the labour market.

Fourthly, there is the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which tends to affect young parents the most.

The death of breadwinners or the inability to work due to illness creates severe hardships for children. In the United Republic of Tanzania, we are approaching the one million mark in terms of HIV/AIDS orphans. No traditional extended family safety net can take care of such a huge burden and this increases the incidence of child labour — including its worst forms such as commercial sex.

Fifthly, in the early stages, structural adjustment and economic reforms tend to benefit urban centres at the expense of rural areas. The deterioration of living conditions in rural areas in relation to urban areas pushes many children and youth to urban areas in search of elusive jobs and a better life.

Sixthly, lingering and outdated cultural practices such as early or arranged marriages force girls to drop out of school. Sexual abuse and early pregnancies all contribute to causing severe and lasting psychological, mental, social and physical damage — all of which are detrimental to children's development into responsible adults.

Close to 50 per cent of households in the United Republic of Tanzania live below the poverty line; and, as usual, poverty is more prevalent and pronounced in rural areas, making rural development and transformation a key element in the war on poverty and child labour. The relationship has also been established between family size and poverty and hence child labour. There is much work to be done in promoting planned parenthood. And part of the difficulty in doing so is poverty itself because in a poor family the chances of children dying from malnutrition or disease are very high. For that reason parents take out an insurance by producing more children. Poor parents also generally have less access to family planning services. There are also cultural and religious factors. I am often reminded of Indira Gandhi's remarks, the late Prime Minister of India, when she said that to bear children was considered not only a religious blessing but also an investment. The greater their number, some Indians reasoned, the more alms they could beg. Relating or translating this observation to the situation in the United Republic of Tanzania, we can say: "The greater the number of children, some Tanzanians reason, the more child labour and income they can bring".

Understanding the links between fertility, poverty and child labour are important for the elimination of poverty in the long term. Not only do younger children from large families die more but also those that survive are more likely to start working earlier and less likely to attend school. This also puts them at the risk of starting to bear children of their own at a young age — and sending these children out to work rather

than to school. And so the vicious circle of poverty turns around and around. I am here to plead earnestly for the political will for concerted efforts and for co-operation between rich and poor countries to break this vicious circle.

We, in the United Republic of Tanzania, have learned from experience that questions of poverty and of child labour cannot be addressed without a strong economic base. In the late 1960s and 1970s, we had made impressive gains in social service delivery, attaining almost universal primary education by the early 1980s; but they were gains that were increasingly dependent on external aid for their sustainability rather than on a strong and growing domestic economy. As a result, the combination of declining aid flows, on the one hand, and long periods of economic stagnation, on the other, caused deep erosions in our social service delivery system. We could neither maintain the infrastructure nor fully fund the necessary supplies. In the face of rapid increases in the size of the domestic labour market, a stagnating economy could also not generate productive employment. For the last 15 years we have embarked on a painful but necessary process of economic reform and structural adjustment. Lean budgets have left little room for investments in social service delivery. In addition, there has been retrenchment in both the public and private sectors, as well as the introduction of cost-recovery measures in education, health and water, with prices we had to pay before we could begin to reverse the economic decline and create the foundations for a sustainably growing economy — an economy that can reduce poverty and child labour.

The Tanzanian Government joined the global campaign against child labour in 1994 when it signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO and started implementing a national programme of action of child labour with the support of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Political will for the implementation of the programme of action has been strong and firm. Together with other social partner institutions and NGOs, we have registered strong public awareness about and support for the fight against child labour in the United Republic of Tanzania. In November 1998, we ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), that sets the minimum age for non-hazardous work at 14 years and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 years. A draft national policy on child labour is being prepared and is in its final stages.

The United Republic of Tanzania is one of three countries that have made a commitment to implementing a Time-Bound Programme to achieve the effective and sustainable elimination of the worst forms of child labour. We are deeply grateful by this selection and honour and we are very grateful to the founders of this programme.

We have created in the United Republic of Tanzania a conducive environment for this purpose with the following aspirations. Firstly, we have shown and continue to uphold a strong political will and commitment for policy reforms. Secondly, we have developed linkages between child labour actions and efforts to provide universal quality basic education and to alleviate poverty in the context of our poverty reduction strategy. Thirdly, we have developed innovative partnerships with the international organizations, multilateral financial institutions and civil society, with the aim of fostering economic growth and improving

income distribution. Fourthly, we are building capacity to put in motion rapid response measures for prevention, withdrawal and rehabilitation of the victims of the worst forms of child labour. Fifthly, we are undertaking social mobilization and public campaigns for addressing the root causes of the problem. And sixthly, we are developing frameworks and processes for public accountability.

The United Republic of Tanzania is strongly committed to the elimination of child labour in general and its worst forms in particular. We have participated in the IPEC Programme since 1995 and registered significant achievements. This political commitment is underpinned by a reinvigorated endeavour to improve basic education and to fight poverty.

We are also mobilizing support to make sure our programme is truly comprehensive in its coverage and scope, with the aim of eradicating the worst forms of child labour by the year 2010 in line with the targets of our National Development Provision 2025 and our poverty eradication strategy.

The following are our strategic programme aspirations. Firstly, we shall strive to safeguard children's rights by implementing the Education Act, the minimum age legislation and measures regarding hazardous work in line with the relevant Conventions. We shall also increase public awareness campaigns on the consequences of child labour, particularly the worst kinds, and social mobilization in support of their elimination. Secondly, we shall promote education by addressing access and quality issues, including reforms that increase the relevance of curricular content to the local economy. This will also include vocational training schemes to cater to the needs of child labourers and school drop-outs. In addition, we have decided that beginning with the coming academic year, primary education will be free in our country.

Thirdly, we shall reduce the opportunity cost of education by efficiently targeting poverty reduction interventions for the most vulnerable groups. The elimination of child labour will feature as an important strategy in poverty eradication and be integrated into the programmes indicators.

Fourthly, we shall address the social, demographic and gender dimensions of child labour, including family size issues and the implications of the increasing incidence of orphans due to HIV/AIDS.

Fifthly, we aim to create a specially targeted programme to protect the most vulnerable groups, in particular children at risk of ending up in prostitution, abusive domestic work, mining or commercial agriculture.

Child labour presents a serious challenge to the courage and imagination of nations and the spirit of cooperation of the international community. The victims are not just a few thousand, but several tens of millions of children throughout the world — irrespective of race, colour or creed, who are exploited at work or are employed under conditions that seriously jeopardize their health, safety, education, morals, dignity and self-respect. International cooperation in this matter should not be seen as window dressing to satisfy the curiosity or appease the anxieties of national or international public opinion; rather it should be a means of finding sustainable solutions to this serious problem. International cooperation should also give priority to supporting interventions that protect very young children and girls from economic exploitation because of their greater vulnerability.

An African proverb says “Dogs do not actually prefer bones to meat, it is just that no one ever gives them meat”.

It is not that Africans prefer their children to be exposed to the extreme forms of child labour that I have recounted. We make a call for joint action, an affirmation of the need for external support — for without such support many parents will not have an option to child labour. Working together under the Time-Bound Programme, we can give both parents and their children an option. Yes! It can be done, but only if there is sufficient external support and partnership. If rich industrialized countries want to help Africa effectively and they engage the continent for the long haul, let them heed the words of Confucius and help us by investing in the future of our children through education, nutrition, health and skills development. For Africa's future belongs to Africa's children. They must survive, they must be well-nourished, they must get a sound and solid education, they must inherit a growing, broad-based and sustainable economy.

Almost 80 years ago a poet from my then less-developed country echoed what should be our relationship with our children; and I would like to take the liberty to quote him. “Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself. They came through you, but not from you, and though they were with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow which you cannot visit not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you, for life goes not backwards nor carries with yesterday. You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.”

I am here to plead for the empowerment of countries like mine, as we seek to end child labour and set our children both free and on a firm foundation for the future they deserve. A future they will be equipped mentally and physically to build for themselves.

The PRESIDENT — On behalf of all the participants and officers of the Conference, I should like to thank President Mkapa for his illuminating statement. This has been an extraordinary session. While we have heard many times at recent conferences about the issue of child labour, the eloquence, the passion and the commitment of the speakers today have truly moved us.

First and foremost we are inspired by the commitment of the United Republic of Tanzania, Nepal and El Salvador. Despite huge challenges in their countries, they are the first to launch this bold new approach to eradicate the worst forms of child labour. We are also greatly encouraged by the moral, political and financial support extended by the Governments of the United States and Germany and by other donors to IPEC. We are enthusiastic about the ILO's intensified efforts, within the marvellous framework of IPEC, to address the worst forms of child labour.

I would like to take this opportunity to announce that the Philippines is in the process of preparing for its own time-bound programme. Since 1994, in partnership with the ILO and other organizations, we have succeeded in giving a high profile to the problem

of child labour. I believe that we have also produced some of the best practices for mobilizing a broad range of social, economic and political actors against the worst forms of child labour. Now we wish to set higher targets for ourselves.

I believe that we are all at one in our commitment to eliminate child labour and offer our children the best future possible. The pace will differ from country to country because of differing histories and situations, but I am confident that we will reach our goals.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.15 p.m.)

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Sixth (special) sitting:</i>	
Special High-Level Session on the Launch of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	1
Address of Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania	1
<i>Speakers:</i> the President, the Secretary-General, Mr. Riester, Mr. Findlay, Mr. Simkhada, Mr. Nieto Menéndez, Mr. Mkapa.	