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Thursday, 14 June 2001, 10.15 a.m.

Presidents: Mr. Parrot, Mr. Donato

RATIFICATION OF A CONVENTION BY THE SULTAN OF OMAN

The PRESIDENT (Mr. PARROT) — Before we begin the session I would like to ask the Clerk of the Conference to make an announcement.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE — I would like to announce that on 11 June the Director-General registered the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), by the Sultan of Oman.

FIRST REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE: SUBMISSION AND NOTING

The PRESIDENT — The first item on our agenda is the first report of the Credentials Committee. Since the report was adopted unanimously by the Credentials Committee, I invite the Conference to take note of it as recommended in paragraph 21 of the report.

(The report is noted.)

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

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

Original German: Mr. SZABÓ (*Workers' delegate, Hungary*) — As the representative of the Hungarian workers' organizations, I would like to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election to their posts and wish them the utmost success in their work.

A National Council for the ILO has been in operation in Hungary since May 1999. One of the major tasks of this council is to propose the adoption of Conventions which have not yet been ratified. The workers are making good use of this opportunity and in April proposed a first package of Conventions to be ratified. This application led to the examination of whether it was possible to adopt an agreement on atypical forms of employment, take measures to help workers combine family and work commitments and ratify the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). We take a firm stance on social security and also have some critical comments to make with regard to the approach taken by ILO

Conventions to development. The current Hungarian Government dissolved the autonomous social security organs shortly after coming to power.

Last December, the ILO National Council and the Budapest Regional Office concluded a two-year agreement. The unions actively supported the agreement, which provides a framework for the ILO to promote the development of industrial relations between the social partners on the four key points of fundamental rights, employment, social security and social dialogue.

This last point is of particular importance because unions feel that the situation today in Hungary is not satisfactory. They demand that the Government take firm steps to promote successful dialogue and improve conditions for the conclusion of agreements.

Workers feel that relations between the Government and trade unions have in many ways been damaged by undesirable modifications to labour law. The unions have expressed their protest through large-scale demonstrations. This situation has led the confederations of unions to cooperate closely, coordinate their approach and to organize their action jointly.

We welcome the ILO's attempts to promote the adoption of a Convention on health and safety in agriculture. Almost everywhere in the world, agricultural workers experience unsatisfactory conditions. So we particularly applaud a Recommendation giving attention to the living conditions and the protection of the health and physical integrity of people working in agriculture. We will make every effort to ensure that the Hungarian Government is one of the first governments to sign this agreement.

Our joint achievements can serve as a beacon on the road ahead. Thus we will be able to achieve decent work for all.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-NAMLAH (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Saudi Arabia*) — In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I would like first of all to extend personally and on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia my sincere congratulations to Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on her election to the presidency of this session of the Conference. I am convinced that thanks to her personal qualities she will guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion.

Saudi Arabia has great hopes that our work will contribute to greater social dialogue and exchanges of views.

I would like to convey the best wishes of His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia, Fahd Ibn Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Crown Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Second Deputy Prime

Minister Prince Sultan Ibn Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the Minister of Defence, for the success of this Conference.

It is also an honour for me to express our appreciation to the ILO Director-General for the efforts carried out. Mr. Juan Somavia has given us a great deal to think about in his Report, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, and in expressing his concern to follow up the decent work programme begun years ago.

The delegation of Saudi Arabia shares the concerns of the Director-General regarding the decent work deficit. We must intensify our efforts in order to reduce this deficit and decent work should form part of our development strategies.

The Government of Saudi Arabia is constantly concerned with giving work to everyone who is on its territory, not only Saudi Arabians but others who are living within our borders. It considers worker-related issues and the working environment to be of major significance. Our labour legislation attaches great importance to conditions of work respecting the dignity of workers and guaranteeing their rights, protecting them from discrimination in any form that it may take. We have created social security legislation, one with humane interests in mind and a sense of solidarity, providing pensions and benefits for workers and families after retirement, and in cases involving disabilities, working accidents or a worker's death. We are focusing on improving productivity and the performance of our workers and on broadening the capacity of the private sector in order to create decent employment for qualified workers, both men and women.

We have also set up an accurate, comprehensive database on the labour market and we have set up the mechanisms necessary to maintain it. The State has also created a fund for human resource development and has laid down regulations for the establishment of workers' committees within enterprises.

A growing number of workers of different nationalities working side by side with Saudi Arabian citizens takes place in a climate of security and tranquility. We believe that this is undeniable proof of the capacity of the market in the kingdom to be able to provide decent jobs work in a framework of justice and human dignity.

The agenda of this session includes a number of issues of importance to us including social security and social insurance. These are some of the most important components of decent work and I would like to note that Saudi Arabia's social security system which was set up in 1389H (corresponding to 1969), and updated in 1421H (corresponding to 2000), in order to adapt it to the needs and realities of today embodies an ideal of stability and social solidarity through benefits, provided by the government social insurance body to those covered by the system.

With regard to cooperatives, the Government of the Kingdom has given importance to their functioning and to enhancing their capacity and believes sincerely that cooperatives can contribute to economic and social development in our country.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the support of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the efforts of the ILO and its strategic objectives in order to achieve the noble and lofty goals of social justice.

I would like to express to the ILO Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, and all of his collabora-

tors at headquarters and in the regional offices, our sincere thanks for the untiring efforts which they have carried out in preparing this session of the Conference.

I would also like to extend our thanks to the ILO Governing Body and all of the countries who have supported us in holding this special session in order to be able to examine the situation of Arab workers in Palestine and in the occupied Arab territories. We appeal to the international community and to the ILO to take on their responsibilities and to take the necessary measures for workers in Palestine to enjoy their most basic human rights in the performance of their work.

I would also like to thank our brothers and colleagues, the interpreters, for their efforts which enable us to understand each other in all of our working languages.

Thank you for your attention and I wish the work of this session of the Conference every success.

Original Turkish: Mr. MERAL (Workers' delegate, Turkey) — At the outset of my address I extend my deepest regards to all here on behalf of all the working people in Turkey. I also congratulate the Director-General for his successful activities during the past year.

The Report presented to this Conference by the Director-General has formulated very successfully the basic objectives of the working people of all countries. Today it should be the objective of all governments to provide decent work opportunities to secure humane living conditions for all workers.

Unfortunately many governments in the world do not honour these responsibilities.

In Turkey, however, in spite of the two severe economic crises experienced during the past year, and the interventions of the IMF and the World Bank, which are incompatible with national sovereignty, our Government has been striving to solve the problems of the working people.

In my country, social dialogue, in line with the basic guidelines of the ILO, has contributed during the past year to solving some important problems.

A bill that would provide job security in line with the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), ratified by Turkey, has been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and was submitted to the Council of Ministers on 28 May 2001. This bill has been prepared on the basis of a perfect tripartite consultation mechanism and, in spite of some shortcomings, is of extreme value to my country and the workers. I thank the Minister of Labour and Social Security for his endeavours in this area, and I urge my Government to accelerate the enactment process of this bill.

In spite of all the pressure of the IMF following the latest economic crisis in my country, a framework agreement based on mutual goodwill has been concluded between the Government and my Confederation without any need for industrial action.

Besides, the Government has taken a step forward in favour of workers by starting to employ workers in the public sector under labour contracts of non-specified duration. Prior to this, these workers were employed for brief periods under fixed-term labour contracts for work of a continuous nature.

The promises of the Government, as stipulated by the framework agreement concluded with my Con-

federation, not to dismiss workers in the public sector, and to reinstate workers who have been laid off as a result of privatization into other establishments, have made important contributions to the strengthening of social peace in my country.

However, in spite of these positive developments the working people of my country still have important problems.

Globalization, in line with the interests of transnational capital, has increased unemployment, poverty and inequalities in income distribution. As a result of the implementation of policies imposed by institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, workplaces are being liquidated and tens of thousands of workers dismissed. As a result of imposed agricultural policies, every year hundreds of thousands of peasants leave their land and migrate to the cities, thus further swelling the ranks of the army of the unemployed. Globalization in its present form is making the rich of the world even richer, and condemning the poor to hunger. The black economy is expanding. I therefore urge the ILO, in its relations with these institutions, to warn them that the policies they impose on the developing countries contradict the basic objectives of the ILO.

Amongst our other urgent problems are, for example, the fact that the provisions of our labour legislation are not in harmony with the ratified ILO Conventions, the recently suspended strike and the lack of regulation of the trade union rights of public servants in line with ILO principles.

There is also the pressure of the IMF and the World Bank on social security, which is one of the agenda items of our Conference this year. The working people in Turkey categorically oppose the attempts to privatize social security.

I hope that the Government will eradicate the obstacles to the full exercise by all working people of the rights to organize, to bargain collectively and to strike, and will further accelerate the democratization process in my country. These are steps which are the demands and rights of my people, and they will accelerate the accession of Turkey to the European Union.

Turkey is the only secular, and the most democratic, country in the region. These characteristics are being further reinforced today. The most important right of any person is the right to life. The greatest enemies of the right to life are wars and terror. Wars and terror are, at the same time, the greatest impediments to democratization and the creation of decent work opportunities. Therefore, arms dealers and war and terror-mongers, should be denied the right even to talk about human rights. My country wants peace in the world and peace in our region.

Turkey, with its well-established democratic traditions, has at its disposal the necessary channels and mechanisms for dialogue. I am confident that my Government has understood the power and importance of the workers' movement, and will take the necessary steps to solve our problems.

I congratulate the President on her election and wish the 89th Session of the Conference every success in defending the rights of working people and in promoting social justice and a lasting social peace and harmony.

Mr. ABDUL LATIFF (*Deputy Minister of Human Resources, Malaysia*) — At the outset, I wish to con-

gratulate the President, for having been elected unanimously to preside over this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. The Malaysian delegates are confident that under her able leadership, this session of the Conference will be guided to attain the desired objectives.

The ILO, as an organization which promotes social justice, has travelled a long way since its inception in 1919. Through its various instruments, in the form of Conventions and Recommendations, the Organization has served well the interests of workers worldwide. However, we are concerned about recent developments in the international arena, where exogenous factors are linked to labour standards to achieve its own agenda. There is a re-emergence of efforts to link labour standards to international trade.

There are also instances of financial aid and technical assistance being linked to labour standards, where the recipient countries are required to ratify certain conventions before the release of funds. Punitive measures are imposed for the non-compliance of these conditions. As we are aware, the ability to comply with any convention depends very much on the economic status of the country concerned. We believe that such coercive measures will not serve the interests of the workers and the country concerned as a whole. The Singapore Ministerial Declaration of December 1996 has acknowledged the ILO as the competent body to set and deal with labour standards. In spite of this pronouncement, we have members who are advocating the promotion of labour standards by organizations other than the ILO. Such a dubious stance made by these members should be put to rest. We do not doubt the dynamism of this Organization to promote its own instruments. Any outside interference in this regard should be shunned by all members of this august Body.

The *World Employment Report 2001* has brought attention to the harsh truth about the employment situation worldwide. We have an estimated 160 million unemployed and 850 million underemployed. There is also concern about the 500 million workers and families living below the extreme poverty line. In this context, we tend to harbour doubts about the virtues of globalization in its present form. The emergence of ICT has spurred the development of borderless trade. However, a large majority of countries are inadequately equipped to take advantage of this new phenomenon. We have economic sectors with an infusion of ICTs creating job opportunities, while destroying jobs in areas where the systems have become obsolete. Therefore, it has become imperative for member countries to address the emerging trends in the field of employment.

It should be emphasized that the skills and knowledge acquired by the workforce should be broad, portable and industry-based. These new skills should enable a person to cope with a rapidly changing workplace and new technology. Such an environment would certainly enable the smooth transition of the economy from a production-based to a digital economy.

In Malaysia, our Government has instituted several measures towards this end. Our training policies, programmes and institutions have been infused with ICTs to prepare and retrain the workforce with a view to meeting the needs of the labour market. The need for greater investment in knowledge, skills and employability at all levels is essential for sustaining our

competitiveness in the global market. The education system, from pre-school to tertiary level, is being reviewed to enable it to meet the manpower requirements of the knowledge-based economy. A system of lifelong learning is being promoted to ensure that workers can continually upgrade their skills and knowledge.

The Malaysian Government supports the Decent Work Agenda as proposed by the Director-General in his Report. We recognize the need for coherent economic and social policies to achieve this agenda. However, it should be emphasized that employment creation is the bedrock for enhancing the standard of living of the working community. Therefore, appropriate economic policies need to be formulated to provide the conducive environment for investment, leading to job creation. The Government's role towards this objective requires the support of all quarters of the country to ensure its effectiveness. The Decent Work Agenda can only materialize when there is an element of mutual understanding, cooperation and commitment among the various parties involved in promoting this social agenda. In this regard, the ILO's budget for the next biennium (2002-03) is well focused to promote decent work. We support the proposal by the Director-General for a zero real growth budget.

The Malaysian delegation welcomes efforts by the ILO to review the standard setting procedures and its follow-up mechanisms. The Asia and Pacific group has raised issues in relation to transparency in selecting cases, using a promotional approach as a means of implementing ratified conventions, avoiding double scrutiny, and questions relating to interpretation of the Conventions. We would urge the ILO to address the issues raised with an objective mind, taking into consideration the socio-cultural and political sensitivities that each member will have to deal with when enforcing the ratified Conventions. In this regard, the tripartite mechanism in my country has worked well in administering the requirements of the Conventions that we have ratified. The close cooperation of the social partners, that has been nurtured since independence, has served well to ensure industrial harmony, which is the foundation of our economic development.

Finally, the ILO's relevance to its constituents is recognized by the contribution that it makes to complement the efforts made by the social partners towards developing their respective economies and enhancing the interests and welfare of workers. We are convinced that the Organization is resolute in providing the necessary assistance to members for addressing emerging challenges. As the challenges become very dynamic in nature, labour standards should be flexible enough to address these changes. In this regard, the Conference should consider adopting framework Conventions which are ratifiable rather than prescriptive.

Original French: Mrs. MISSAMBO (Minister of State for Labour, Employment and Vocational Training, Gabon) — Allow me first of all to address my most cordial congratulations to the President on her election. This, in my eyes, confirms the increasingly effective, active and qualitative role women are playing in the world of work and shows just how keen the management of our Organization is about gender equality and equal opportunities.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General of the ILO for the quality of the reports submitted, for the wealth of information they contain and their clarity they should promote interactive and constructive discussion on the matters addressed.

What I found most interesting in these reports was the discussion of the decent work deficit. Reading the Director-General's Report, we see that decent work is indeed a multifaceted concept. It is productive work performed in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity which allows workers to benefit from growth and progress.

Seen in this light, it is obviously closely linked to notions of justice and social inclusion. So how can one reconcile these concerns of a social nature with the demands of profitability and the maximizing of profits that globalization calls for? The answer to this thorny issue seems to lie in the combination of a number of factors, namely:

- the education and training of men and women;
- the enhancement of human potential and capacity building;
- the modernization of social relations and the development of cooperation between social partners;
- access to new technologies;
- the fight against slavery and forced or compulsory labour, in particular that involving children;
- the fight against poverty.

Thanks to the knowledge and know-how that they generate, and the various skills that they develop, education, training, occupational safety and health are decisive elements in employment, productivity, competitiveness and the improvement of living conditions. They benefit both private individuals, the State and enterprises. This is why they play a decisive role in achieving the goal of decent work.

It is very important, particularly to the developing countries, to think and redesign our respective vocational training and employment systems, so that they can be redirected to meet the current demands of globalization. We believe that we must do this if our workers are to adapt to the technical and technological advances and changes under way. The reform of vocational training must also encourage the rapid development of self-employment and promote entrepreneurship. To fight against unemployment and exclusion my country has already initiated this process with a review of all standards and by holding regional employment forums, the principal aim of which is to promote employment and to make sure that vocational training really meets the needs of our national economy. These regional forums will be crowned by a large forum which will enable us — thanks to the participation of all parties — to draw up a national employment plan. This is why we feel we are completely in tune with the ILO which is to organize the Global Employment Forum in November 2001. We welcome this initiative.

In the perspective of reducing the decent work deficit, we hope that the ILO will strengthen its partnership with other organizations working in this sphere, in particular the World Trade Organization and the international financial institutions, which do not always take into consideration the social dimension in structural adjustment programmes. In this connection, we support the Director-General's proposal to

strengthen the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

We would also like to see a strengthened partnership between the ILO and the International Organization for Migration whose new initiative, Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA), which was adopted at a recent regional work shop held in my country, bodies well for capacity building on our continent and the redeployment of the skills of our countries' peoples.

Decent work cannot accept slavery nor forced or compulsory labour. Without wishing to anticipate the debates that will take place on this issue, I wish to say that in Gabon we equate slavery and child labour with crimes against humanity. Having already ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and in order to stem the spread of this scourge, my country has undertaken to enact dissuasive and highly repressive legislation against any known authors of such crimes. Thus a bill to amend our Penal Code introduce the offence of the trafficking of children and a draft decree prohibiting work by minors are in the process of being adopted. They add to the existing instruments already in force, in particular the Labour Code.

Likewise, measures have been taken to locate children who have been victims of organized trafficking by the foreign communities present in our country, and to repatriate them in decent conditions and help them to be reintegrated in their countries of origin.

I would like to conclude by saying that decent work and development are interlinked. The new economic and financial obligations of enterprises and States should not make us overlook the fact that all economic policies over and above private interests, should principally seek to achieve the common good. Solidarity in this context seems to me to be a very fundamental concept and should become our leitmotif.

In my country the President of the Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo fully appreciates this connection and has made 25 May national solidarity day. The first was celebrated last year and was an opportunity for the Government and civil society to explore together the problems linked to changes in our society. There was a strong movement of solidarity to help children in difficulty. We feel it is imperative for the ILO to step up its actions to raise awareness in this area, so that everyone understands that the economy should serve man and not make man its slave.

Original Arabic: Mr. M'HENNI (*Minister of Social Affairs, Tunisia*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! I should like first and foremost to express my congratulations to Ms. A. Sto. Tomas on her election to the presidency, and also to the other Officers. We wish them every success in their work.

I should also like to thank the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, who worked hard to ensure that this Organization can take its place in the new international system, thanks to its untiring efforts to give a human face to economic development.

The quality and the wealth of the reports submitted to the Conference bear witness to those efforts.

The Report of the Director-General examines the possible ways and means to give concrete form to decent work through the four strategic objectives — human rights at work, social protection, employment and social dialogue.

While we share the point of view that these objectives are inseparable, we are convinced that employment, which ensures human dignity, is the greatest challenge for any action involving development. We also trust that the first Global Employment Forum which will be held in Geneva next November will be able to identify practical ideas for possible ways and means to promote employment and decent work.

We agree with the Director-General on the necessary link between economic development and social progress. The World Conference against Racism which will take place in Durban, South Africa also presents an important opportunity to uphold just values and do more for decent work. We also agree with the Director-General that ensuring decent work is not the sole responsibility of the Office or ministers of labour, but it is also an individual and collective responsibility of the member States and the social partners.

Tunisia, thanks to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, became aware very quickly that economics and the social dimension are necessarily linked. It has made that into a basic principle of development. In concrete terms this means that development policy in Tunisia covers all social categories. We have an increasing number of programmes and measures in support of human rights, including rights at work. Tunisia has also given the highest priority to employment. Numerous employment promotion programmes have been implemented, especially for young people. Social solidarity programmes have also been strengthened. For example, in addition to the 26-26 National Solidarity Fund, the aim of which is to eliminate "areas of exclusion", we have also established the Tunisian Solidarity Bank and the National Employment Fund. Tunisia has for the first time succeeded in lowering the unemployment rate.

The Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work reviews the efforts made by member States to eliminate any form of compulsory forced labour. The report also highlights the need to strengthen efforts to eliminate these forms of labour.

Tunisia, convinced of the importance and pertinence of the Declaration's principles and objectives, undertook to be among the first countries to ratify all the core Conventions, including the Forced Labour Convention 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).

It has also endeavoured to bring its legislation into line with the standards contained in these two Conventions, and to give effect to these principles. In this connection, we can refer to the legislation in Tunisia, which ensures citizens' free right to choose work and to abstain from work, and which prohibits corrective labour and sentences involving forced labour.

The question of social security is now of fundamental importance.

Convinced of the numerous advantages of social security, which is the practical expression of solidarity and mutual assistance, Tunisia attaches special importance to this question. In this connection we have revised our legislation and strengthened our social security structures and mechanisms. Coverage has been extended. In 2000, 80 per cent of workers were covered. In 1987 the coverage rate had been 55 per cent. The worldwide average is currently 20 per cent.

On International Labour Day, 1 May, the President of the Republic announced some very important new

measures aimed at extending social coverage to all social categories.

Solidarity, in which social security plays an extremely important role, is not just a noble principle, but also a method and approach which should be generalized in order to ensure lasting development. National solidarity, whatever the dimensions, cannot be achieved if it is not supported by international solidarity.

His Excellency the President of the Republic has thus called for the creation of a World Solidarity Fund. This initiative has been supported by numerous international and regional bodies. The 55th Session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to that effect, calling upon Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, to hold the necessary consultations with member States with a view to submitting proposals.

It is my pleasure to thank, from this high tribune, all those who have supported this humanitarian appeal.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the social progress to which all the peoples of the world are entitled cannot be achieved without peace and stability. It is therefore important to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to ensure that the Palestinian people in particular can enjoy their legitimate rights, as recognized by the United Nations.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-HAROUN (*Employers' delegate, Kuwait*) — In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the All Merciful! I would like at the outset, to convey the warmest wishes of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which organizes employers in my country, and which I am honoured to represent within the Kuwaiti delegation to this session of the Conference. I would also join earlier speakers in congratulating the President and Vice-Presidents on their election, which is a mark of the confidence the Conference has in their ability to successfully chair this session.

In his Report to the Conference this year, the Director-General takes up the same topic presented in his Report to the 87th Session, namely, decent work. In my opinion, this important subject, and the fact that we are considering it today, demonstrates a commendable trend by the Director-General and indicates his foresight and prudence. I think this is a sound choice, and one which deserves discussion at future sessions of the Conference. Among the main conclusions reached by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen was the adoption of full employment as a strategic goal. Heads of State and Government should therefore give this top priority in domestic policies relating to social and economic development. Governments should do everything in their power to guarantee the right to work to every citizen. The Director-General's Report adds that the work secured for the unemployed and jobseekers should be decent work.

The Report demonstrated the Director-General's vision, which will enable us to work towards the goal of decent work for all. Yet, in our view, this should be seen as a long-term goal. At present, many States, particularly the developing countries, are confronted with socio-economic challenges and difficulties that hinder growth and development programmes to such an extent that the issue of decent work cannot be taken up immediately. We consider any work that might save people from poverty and unemployment

to be the primary goal of most communities in the developing world. Decent work is a luxury far removed from our current stage of development, in which people are unable to compare and select jobs as they please. The debate over decent work is like preaching to starving people about diversified meals; it is a stage that many countries have not yet reached.

In the second part of his Report, the Director-General reviewed the ILO's activities of the past year, and these are a symbol of the continuity and diversity of the Organization. However, we look forward to a time when the ILO develops its traditional functions of setting and applying standards and moves towards a greater focus on technical assistance. That involves helping member countries to combat unemployment, to develop their human resources, to secure productive job opportunities and to lay down socio-economic policy within the tripartite framework.

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of the relevant ILO officials to the fact that we did not receive the Director-General's Report and its appendix on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories before leaving for Geneva. We had hoped that we would be able to prepare and read these documents in order to comment on them in our speeches. We were particularly eager to receive the report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, because of our concern to bring an end to the discrimination and violation of human rights practiced by the Israeli authorities.

Original Chinese: Mr. LI (*Government delegate, China*) — The human race has entered a new century. At this juncture, the Members of this Organization are, once again, gathered here to discuss the important subject of how to enable working men and women to have equal access to decent work.

Not long ago, Mr. Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, visited China, where we reached consensus on achieving decent work in a way appropriate to national conditions. His visit has opened a new chapter in the cooperation between China and the ILO. It has also contributed to the further development of friendly exchanges between the ILO and its member States.

Over the past century, people of all countries have made unremitting efforts for peace and development. History tells us that only when social justice is realized can lasting peace be maintained and common development and universal prosperity promoted.

Economic globalization has presented both opportunities and challenges for the development of all countries. All governments are producing policies in response to these challenges. It will take China, a developing country with a population of nearly 1.3 billion, many years of hard work to achieve common prosperity and decent work for all of its citizens.

China, through more than two decades of reform and increasing transparency, has put in place a labour and social security system that suits its national conditions. In accordance with the Outline of the Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development which was adopted recently, China will deepen its reform, open up more to the outside world, develop its economy, strengthen international cooperation and exchanges, further improve its social security system, spare no effort to increase opportunities for productive employment, improve workplace conditions and continuously raise the living standards of its people.

What we need is an economic globalization based on equality, reciprocity and win-win coexistence. All countries, whether developing or developed, large or small, should become the beneficiaries of globalization.

Eliminating poverty and achieving decent work is not just the national concern of each individual country. More importantly, it should be the common responsibility of the international community. However, what we see in reality is that, because the unjust and irrational international political and economic order has not been fundamentally changed, the gap of wealth between the North and the South, as well as the digital divide, continue to widen and developing countries are faced with more severe challenges than ever in terms of economic development. In the world today, there are still 160 million unemployed people and 500 million workers still living below the minimum poverty line of one dollar a day. In view of this, we should take specific measures to eliminate poverty and realize decent work.

First, all countries should take immediate action to formulate social development strategies aimed at poverty elimination and employment promotion. It is advisable for the ILO to make employment promotion a priority of its work and design and develop cooperation plans in the light of both the needs of member States and the challenges facing the labour world, so as to facilitate a reduction in the gap of wealth between the North and the South for the benefit of the developing countries and our common development.

Secondly, the international community needs to make the elimination of widespread poverty an important item on the agenda of social progress and adopt concrete and feasible measures to help economically under-developed countries with their development. For historical reasons, developed countries have a responsibility to assume more obligations in debt reduction and provide greater economic and technical assistance.

Thirdly, developing countries should reinforce unity, maintain stability, enhance their self-development capacities and boost their national economies in ways appropriate to their respective situations. While giving scope to their traditional advantages in natural and human resources, developing countries should promote high-tech industries for leapfrog development and all-round improvement in employment both in quantity and quality.

We call on the tripartite constituents to join hands and make concerted efforts to ensure access to basic means of subsistence for the long-term unemployed and destitute people excluded from society, and to provide decent work for all working people.

Only when the common development of all countries and the common prosperity of all peoples are achieved can ILO's vision for decent work be turned into a universal reality throughout the world.

Original French: Mr. SPIDLA (First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic) — We meet today to defend decent work. Let me add my contribution, in the form of a message of hope, to the discussion.

The Czech Republic is an illustration of the fact that the fight for decent work is profitable. This fight must focus on all sectors of the economy based on global state intervention in a tripartite framework.

Decent work is worthwhile because wealth creation must move through know-how and knowledge and only decent work can foster that. Today, those enterprises in a win-win situation are the ones that count on the knowledge of their employees. Successful entrepreneurs are those who bring their clients an advantage in terms of the knowledge they provide.

The choice of decent work has been a rewarding approach for the Czech Republic. Formerly in transition, the country is now sharing the fruits of progress with its partners in the OECD, NATO and, tomorrow, with the European Union. We are very proud of this success, not only because it restores to us our nation's forgotten heritage, but also because this success is due to a political choice always to put effort before the easy way out. Thus, we have chosen social dialogue in preference to uncontrolled deregulation.

All sectors of the economy must benefit from the principles of decent work. Any pocket of de-socialization or exclusion in this interconnected world of globalization is a threat to its structure. Those who choose to invest in, and to trade with, the Czech Republic are all the more motivated because we have skilled labour and a high standard of living. In order to be successful, an enterprise needs its employees to be comfortable with their jobs and comfortable in the world outside their workplace, with provision of sound and well run services and social structures. Good wages have a role to play in making the development of an industrial unit a profitable one, but in the long term it is the standard of living of the entire population that justifies a decision to remain a country for a long time.

In this context we are notably staunch defenders of the cooperative sector. With a long tradition behind them, cooperatives contribute to economic and social development in the Czech Republic and my country seeks to increase their participation in all sectors of activity.

State action is a decisive factor in making decent work an asset on condition that the tripartite dialogue method is adopted. As elsewhere in Europe, our reforms are enforceable because the representatives of the world of work, and also non-governmental organizations, are involved in both their design and their implementation.

The most striking example is that of the reform of pensions. The Czech Republic belongs to that small group of European nations that invented the principle of pay-as-you-go but now these nations are ageing.

Today, only tripartite dialogue makes it possible to reliably predict the difficulties which, without reform, would be insurmountable. With the support of social partners, we have therefore ratified the Council of Europe's European Code of Social Security.

It is our belief that our pension system must develop further and that we must be on our guard against abandoning it and moving to another system structured by private funds. The systemic costs of such a move would be considerable and would entail an unacceptable risk for the future income of retired people. Quite the reverse, our system is going to develop through social dialogue, which makes it possible to come to a long-term consensus. A tripartite commission has been set up in order to contribute to this development within the framework of our Economic and Social Council.

Decent work is not only feasible in today's world of globalization, it is actually a prerequisite if integration

into this globalized world is to become an asset for our economies. At the same time, globalization can only be advantageous in the long term if we manage to eliminate all the poverty, which in several areas of the world is threatening the process as a whole. Therefore, we have a duty to succeed.

Mr. BUCHANAN (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica*) — Jamaica fully comprehends the significance of recommitting the theme of decent work to further discussion at this forum of the ILO. We congratulate the Secretary-General on this decision that symbolizes soundness of vision and stewardship.

We are now called upon to translate ideas about the primacy of rights, productive employment, social protection and social discourse into concrete programmes nationally and globally. The policy implications and operational challenges are enormous. To resolve them, we must bring a common understanding to the promotion of decent work as a universal movement.

We already know that, for decent work to become a viable and sustainable movement, aspirations must match the reality of its objectives. There must be congruence between national and global standards and there must be acceptable ways of measuring the progress of partners operating under different circumstances.

Decency in work as a universal goal also requires a new form of governance that would weaken some of the perverse effects of globalization. A new governance system is needed to help arrest trends towards social dumping. It is required to ensure the physical viability of trade unions across the globe. It must emerge to protest against the doctrine that labour is a commodity. It is a precondition both in order to bridge existing capacity gaps between the powerful and the weak and as one way of ensuring more stable policy environments. Overall, decency in work will remain illusory without a new system of governance that improves existing mechanisms for the exercise of voice, choice and representation as universal norms.

At the national level, the challenges of operationalizing decent work are equally daunting, yet possible. The pragmatic starting point is to build on some of the ILO specified guidelines while taking the procedural steps gradually but with determination. Jurisdictions lagging in standards of decent work should begin with national policy commitments that are informed by research. Their search for solutions should rely on integrated action strategies that are practical, comprehensive and complementary. These can be reinforced by systems of pilot programming, which are useful tools for gradualist policy experiment and rapid policy learning. Close collaboration among tripartite stakeholders, sectors and regions, is another technique available for the promotion of decent work. All these possibilities suggest that the establishment of a culture of decent work at the national level must be regarded as a process of social learning informed by contextual and comparative experiences.

The central problem, however, is not so much about definition of targeted action programmes. It is rather about the mobilization and development of resources to ensure their stable implementation. Jamaica speaks from the secure knowledge base of what capacities and tools may be needed for effective implementation in jurisdictions such as ours.

Much technical assistance will be needed to help build capacities and sharpen the needed tools. Primacy must be given to better worker and employer education, goals of economic growth, universal respect of rights and more rapid rates of technological learning. Yet these are only minimum conditions. The other preconditions reside in doctrines of international cooperation symbolized by the ILO.

Jamaica is fully committed to the goals of decent work nationally and internationally. So we call for action along the lines proposed now, not tomorrow.

Original Spanish: Mrs. BULLRICH (*Minister of Labour, Employment and Human Resources, Argentina*) — First of all, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Labor of the Philippines on presiding so skilfully over this Conference. I would like at the same time to extend our special congratulations to the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, for his Report on *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*.

May I also congratulate the other Officers of the Conference, particularly two Argentinians, Mr. Daniel Funes de Rioja, Chairperson of the Employers' Group and Mr. Jorge Sappia, Chairperson of the Committee on the Application of Standards. Their election underlines Argentina's commitment to participating more fully in the work, projects and programmes of the International Labour Organization.

The issues addressed by the Report present a challenge which was examined yesterday at the meeting of the Ministers of the Americas group. The social dimension of globalization must be addressed in a discussion conducive to creating conditions of fairness in terms of sharing the benefits of globalization among all peoples.

For, while we are here discussing the consequences of this reality, it is seeping into every aspect of our lives. Governments need to measure this reality in terms of the standards of living of our people.

What is decent work other than a discussion of the value of work as a yardstick to measure the dignity of the lives of our peoples?

If the right to certain working conditions in work is neglected for the sake of the right to work itself, the problem grows, for we cannot allow for separation of the issues of access to work and quality and decency in work. It leads to a situation where we cannot see the wood for the trees. We must avoid falling into this trap, for working conditions may be deteriorating all the while as we discuss the situation.

Together with the Ministers of Labour of MERCOSUR, Chile, Bolivia and Venezuela, Argentina raised at the meeting in Asunción de Paraguay our governments' concerns as regards the continued existence of subsidies and tariff and non-tariff barriers hindering the export of our agricultural products to developed countries. Subsidies in those countries translate into unemployment in our countries.

We are opening our markets more and more under the pressure of globalization and we are asked to implement strict structural adjustment programmes. We are prevented from earning income through the export of basic commodities, which adversely impacts on employment at home, especially in agriculture and livestock raising and in the processing and marketing sectors.

Decent work is defined by the principles which we must use to democratize our economies and

build regional and global balances. Decent work is measured through equal opportunities, and this is why our countries have presented to the Committee on Health and Safety in Agriculture a draft resolution raising the issue from the perspective of protection of the sources of agricultural work in our countries and the conditions in which this work is carried out. We believe that this is an important facet which must be linked to free access by our products to world markets. This is a challenge, but it is not the only one, for the ILO must accept the challenge of discussing, as we did yesterday in the working group, the fact that globalization needs to put on a human face and be driven by social considerations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many countries in our region who supported this initiative. We know that countries in Central America also share our concerns.

With regard to our country's relations with the ILO, I would like to emphasize that, over the year since the 88th Conference, my Government has made important progress in developing ever closer and more fruitful ties with the ILO. I would especially like to highlight the success of the mission headed by the Director of Standards, which visited our country a month ago in the context of the creation of a tripartite commission working with the Argentinian Ministry of Labour and with participation by all of the trade union sectors of Argentina as well as representatives from industry and government.

This tripartite commission reflects clearly our Government's will to implement purposeful and substantial social dialogue with the world of production and work and to allow Argentinean unions to enjoy the principles of freedom of association which are so vital to this Organization and which Argentina supports.

The work of the tripartite commission, as I have said, is given valuable assistance by the Department of Standards of the ILO and has produced results that include legal standards introducing changes in the framework of rules on trade unions, broadening worker protection and granting additional worker rights.

We have also submitted to Congress a draft Act that modifies the requirements for the appointment of union representatives. Decrees have been issued to grant unions new rights in respect of tax concessions and the collection of dues.

This Conference has on its agenda the task of examining the issues of social security and cooperatives, both of which are extremely important to Argentina. We hope that in future the right to cover for occupational risks and integrated pension plans will be raised to the status of fundamental rights. We know that our colleagues from the MERCOSUR countries share this point of view, as reflected in the press release from Asunción, dated 21 May 2001.

In this connection, my Government has made considerable progress, notably through article 19, of Act No. 25250, which establishes an integrated system of inspection and social security. It has also cut social security contributions for the employers of women over the age of 45 or who have recently given birth.

We have also been working on a special social security system for domestic service, which covers some 700,000 workers in Argentina, 90 per cent of whom are women. They now have social security and health care entitlements.

Furthermore, Argentina can announce with satisfaction that in February of this year it ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), thus having ratified the eight core Conventions of the ILO. With this ratification, Argentina is now a member of a very select club, which we hope will continue to grow.

We have also submitted to Congress for ratification the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), and have applied the Tripartite Consultation Convention, 1976 (No. 144), to discussions on marine shipping activities.

Besides ratifying Convention No. 182, our Government has recently set up a National Commission on Child Labour and has embarked on a number of projects at the national level. In addition to our own budgetary financing, we enjoy invaluable support in this work from the ILO and, particularly, IPEC, whose Director has visited Argentina. We have established a close working relationship with IPEC.

As Mr. Somavia said with reference to the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, where there is a will, there is a way. I am sure that those actions and will of the Government of Argentina to which I have just referred are in line with those of the International Labour Organization. I hope that our discussions on the value of decent work will not remain mere words but will become reality throughout the world.

Original Hindi: Mr. JATIYA (*Union Minister for Labour, India*) — I join other distinguished speakers in congratulating the President on her election to steer the deliberations of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. My congratulations also go to the Vice-Presidents on their election. I would like to take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the very comprehensive Report of the Director-General of the ILO, entitled *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*.

The term "decent work" is a recent addition to the world of work. I therefore appreciate the efforts being made to identify the deficits in a purely promotional spirit without in any way affecting the sovereign rights of the member States to carry out their policies and programmes.

Decent work is a concept of ideal work conditions and the decent work deficit is indicative of shortcomings in the concept. The creation of decent work is a demonstration of our respect for human labour. Both decent work and creating conditions conducive for ideal work are challenges to the modern world. Decent work and *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge* have a conceptual continuity, and for us they are important in both word and deed.

The globalization process has created asymmetrical risks and benefits for developed and developing countries. It is increasingly resulting in retrenchment, unemployment, partial employment, and the casualization and contractualization of work in developing countries.

Employment is fundamental and central to human existence. Since the onset of globalization the world of work has become very challenging. There is considerable unrest in labour markets especially in labour-intensive economies like India with a 380 million-strong workforce.

Protection of workers and the provision of a better working environment has been an article of faith and

commitment for my government. The Indian Constitution enjoins the state to strive to promote the welfare of its people by securing and protecting a social order in which social, economic and political justice underlies all national institutions. Article 41 of the Indian Constitution requires that the State should, within the limits of its economic activity and ability, make effective provisions for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness and disability. The Constitution further enjoins the State to make provisions for procuring just and humane conditions of work.

Our Prime Minister announced, at the 37th Session of the Indian Labour Conference in Delhi in May 2001, the launch of a welfare scheme to cover 120 million persons by way of pension and insurance for unorganized agricultural workers of India. Under existing social security schemes we have already covered 24 million workers and their families through the Employees' Provident Fund, and 8 million workers and their families through the Employers' State Insurance Scheme, providing health and insurance benefits for all these people.

The Government of India has recently doubled the minimum amount of compensation payable under the Workmen's Compensation Act in cases of permanent disability or death.

India is a federal polity, with 37 constituent states and union territories and with a population of over one billion people. This vast human resource needs to be gainfully channelled through appropriate education and training. In addition to providing the unemployed and underemployed with suitable employment, those already in work will also need suitable training and skill upgrading. Our efforts to identify and offset deficits in the area of legislation have led us to set up a national labour commission, the second of its kind, with a chairman and ten members to review labour laws and suggest umbrella legislation for workers in the informal sector.

We feel strongly that, while the emphasis on decent work is important, equal emphasis must be given to social globalization and the globalization of skills. There should be an understanding among the polity of nations that will allow the free flow of skill as well as capital. I would therefore emphasize that the ILO should endorse and enable developing countries which are labour-intensive to upgrade their skills, which would lead to the globalization of skills.

I would at the same time like to reiterate our national position that, under no circumstances, should labour standards be linked with trade. We long for a world free of exploitation where everyone can live in happiness and enjoy good health, where there is no suffering and everyone is prosperous.

Original French: Mrs. ONKELINX (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Employment, Belgium) — The issue of decent work is of particular interest to Belgium, as it prepares to take over the presidency of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Director-General for exploring new avenues and setting new goals, which are essential for decent work. I would like to say a few words about this Report with regard to European efforts over the next six months.

During the Belgian presidency of the European Union, we intend to step up development of a Euro-

pean social model, designed to strike a balance between economic growth, employment and social cohesion.

There are a number of facets to this objective which coincide with the ILO's aim to secure decent work. I think that over and beyond those present here today, we all seek to secure full employment. The Council of the European Union has made this a priority, and established the target of raising the level of employment to 67 per cent by 2005 and 70 per cent by 2010. We want to enable everyone to share in economic growth and to be able to combat social exclusion and poverty effectively.

However, we cannot be content with any kind of employment, or for that matter condone any kind of social or economic policy. To come back to the essence of the Report we are talking about and the issue of decent work, the Member States of the European Union and the Council will shortly be defining joint approaches to improve the quality of jobs, and also to develop indicators on the quality of jobs. This huge project could be the European Union's contribution to achieving the ILO's goals in this regard.

There is already a wide consensus on quality criteria, reflecting the European social agenda and the conclusions of the Stockholm Summit. The organization of labour and inclusion of new occupational hazards, guarantee of workers' rights, training and life-long learning, gender equality, income and the fight against discrimination are all elements taken into account as indicators of quality.

With regard to social dialogue, we want to have national standards which guarantee regular information and consultation with workers in companies with a workforce exceeding 50, and the genuine involvement of workers in European society, which would be a stride towards the strengthening and enhancement of the quality of social dialogue. I would hope that our Organization in the future could be more forward looking in its thinking and in the development of standards with regard to the new forms that social dialogue and collective bargaining could take within the framework of globalization. We of course welcome the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This should be taken up by governments and social partners throughout the world, as should the Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy. While the latter is also a step forward, we need to be even more creative if we are to take up the daunting challenges of globalization. You cannot sit back and watch mass redundancies taking place. You have to draw a distinction between the way workers are laid off when an enterprise goes bankrupt, and sudden redundancies which occur in spite of positive financial results and gains in productivity.

Many recent restructuring programmes in firms established in Europe illustrate the need for more detailed and relevant regulation and for better analytical tools to, anticipate change. I believe that the Governing Body of the ILO should look at this matter and that the social partners would do well to follow suit.

For its part, the Council of the European Union will be looking at various proposals to enhance job protection and I shall see to it that we give special attention to looking at new occupational hazards.

I would like to conclude on a matter which is very close to our hearts, namely that is gender equality. I

would like to thank the Director-General for stating in his Report that this goes hand in hand with decent work.

A new European directive on gender equality in terms of access to employment, training, promotion and good working conditions remains a priority for the Belgian presidency of the European Union. We are also concerned about wage inequalities between men and women.

In this connection, we are going to be putting forward indicators, with regard to the follow up to the Beijing Conference, which we believe can contribute to the goals of the ILO.

With regard to the other matters on the agenda of this session, I have too little time to make further comments. I would nevertheless like to reiterate Belgium's full support to any new initiatives or activities designed to eradicate all forms of forced labour, which, as the Global Report indicates, we can no longer accept. I would also reiterate our desire to see cooperation between international organizations strengthened, with a view to taking full account of the social dimension of globalization.

Original Russian: Mr. NEYKOV (Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria) — First and foremost, may I be permitted, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate the President on her brilliant election at this 89th Session of the International Labour Conference and wish you all every success in your deliberations.

The Director-General's Report is important and gives us the opportunity to exchange our views on major issues relating to fundamental principles and rights at work. This is a universal objective which every society should set itself, with a view to improving social progress against the background of economic globalization and seeking the welfare of everyone.

It is a Report which emphasizes a number of points. Economic success is evaluated in relation to access to decent work. What is particularly important for us is the Report's conclusion, according to which promoting decent work, even in countries with low wages, offers plenty of scope for the future. In order to support this theory, allow me to say that under the law amending the annex to the Labour Code which was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, we have been able to improve labour relations and freedom, and protection of children at work.

Bulgaria entered a new era not so long ago, and it is experiencing all the difficulties which accompany the process of social change. By accepting responsibility for guiding the country, which was on a downward spiral, the United Democratic Forces Government of Bulgaria marked a true achievement by entering on the path of reforms, which saved Bulgaria from disaster.

The Bulgarian Government greatly appreciates the role of its partners in the creation of the new social blueprint for Bulgaria. This is enabling Bulgaria's economy to be transformed into a genuine market economy.

A large part of the national economy is privatized, with increasing private and public sector activity and accompanying employment programmes. A considerable number of new jobs had been created up to April 2001, although this does not yet represent major results in terms of increasing employment in our country.

We consider that it is necessary to introduce new standards and new measures for increasing employment. By using the Bulgarian Fund, based on tripartite cooperation, we will be able to stimulate employment and multiply the number of posts.

These measures, and the employment action plan that we have drawn up, which is fully guaranteed by financial resources, will enable us to influence the European strategy on employment.

Bulgarian legislation is increasingly in line with European legislation, and is creating a climate which is more and more favourable to economic and social development. Modern labour laws have been created, and these play an active role in the formation of our Government's social policy. This work has been carried out in the context of an ongoing dialogue with civil society, with non-governmental organizations, and with the traditional participation of our social partners.

With the entry into force of the code on compulsory state insurance, Bulgaria has become the third country after Hungary and Poland where a three-pillar pension system has been introduced. The social security system in Bulgaria, which was created jointly by the Government, trade unions and employers, has achieved a high level.

During the prolonged crisis in the Balkans, and even at present, with the situation in neighbouring Macedonia causing concern throughout Europe, Bulgaria is maintaining its course and has become a source of reliability and stability in the Balkans. I cannot fail to point out the major contribution of the Bulgarian social partners throughout this period.

I greatly appreciate the existing cooperation with the International Labour Office and with its multidisciplinary team for Central and Eastern Europe. We hope that, thanks to their active support, Bulgaria will be able to move towards the goal, so human and so important, of reducing the social deficit, which is a major component in social development. I wish the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference every success.

Original French: Mr. DE (Minister of Public Service, Employment and Labour, Senegal) — First and foremost, on behalf of the delegation which I am heading, and on my own behalf, I would like to join previous speakers by addressing my wholehearted congratulations to the President on her election at this session of the Conference.

Naturally, I extend my congratulations to all the Officers of the Conference.

The founding fathers of the ILO had the excellent idea of establishing this Organization, although they certainly would not have imagined for one minute that the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the new millennium would be characterized by a phenomenon which, beyond the ILO, is disrupting the entire international system, namely globalization.

Globalization is an opportunity but also, and above all, a challenge on more than one account.

Since events occurring in the most remote village in the world become immediately known by the whole of humanity, it is no longer possible to live cut off from the rest of the world. The instantaneous circulation of information encourages exchanges and enables mutual comprehension.

Having information about other people and the impression that we share the same values is not

enough, we have to nurture the conviction that we are joined by the same destiny.

The common destiny of human beings, which is an undeniable fact, forces us to be more attentive to what is occurring around us.

Work gives people self-esteem and a *raison d'être* within society.

An unemployed person is a human being deprived of a major part of their dignity.

This assertion sums up the main problem addressed in the Director-General's Report, which this year focuses on reducing the decent work deficit.

In simple terms, which are also full of meaning, we understand decent work to be something enabling people to partake in gainful activity in dignity and humane conditions.

No community, country, or continent, regardless of its socio-economic system, can reject this noble concept of decent work.

For various reasons, developing countries have great difficulties in guaranteeing work for all active sectors of society, and also in making this work decent for those who are lucky enough to be employed.

As a result, we consider the appeal made by the Director-General to be a challenge, namely that of continually improving the conditions of employment for our hard-working sectors.

In Senegal, political choice has been stopped from making social dialogue the pillar of governmental action.

In this context, under the auspices of the Department for which I am responsible, a National Forum on Social Dialogue recently took place.

This meeting witnessed the participation, alongside government representatives, of all the interested parties, particularly trade union and employers' organizations.

The aim of this forum was to recommence dialogue between the different social actors by creating the necessary synergies.

We also came to an agreement to encourage social dialogue whilst respecting national and international labour legislation, in particular at national, industry and enterprise level.

Furthermore, we have decided to draw up a Social Charter which will establish the adequate structures for consultation as well as the methods for implementing such structures.

The launch of the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in 1992 and the subsequent adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), have contributed to the emergence of a universal movement against child labour.

As relevantly pointed out to this very Conference by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, his Excellency Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, at the Special High-level Session on the Launch of the Time-Bound Programme on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, behind each working child is an adult.

At all levels, it is the responsibility of adults to contribute through their daily commitment to the elimination of child labour because — and we cannot say it often enough — children do not belong in a factory or an enterprise, but at school.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that my delegation supports the Director-General's call for the institution of a World Day against child labour.

AIDS has changed from a simple disease to a pandemic, which is also a genuine threat to the socio-economic balance of our countries.

Not only does AIDS affect children, who mainly suffer its consequences by losing their parents in particular, but it also attacks the most active sectors of the population, thus posing a problem for productivity.

We must join together to put an end to this situation.

Our country, which has always given priority to prevention in the struggle against AIDS, is in the process of considering various approaches for combating AIDS in the workplace, with the active support of the ILO.

The concept of decent work, which has been successfully developed and popularized by the ILO, under the guidance of Juan Somavia, is more than ever a current event.

This has been the necessary counterweight to globalization, which has also enabled the ILO to justify its reputation as the social conscience of humanity.

I could not finish my intervention without gladly mentioning the increasingly marked will of Africa to become effectively integrated into the process of globalization.

This will is conveyed on the one hand by the great attention given to the major issues which are troubling our continent and disrupting its development, and on the other hand by the determination of African leaders to make our development above all an African affair.

Two initiatives perfectly illustrate the elements which increasingly go hand in hand with an African awakening: the *Millennium African Renaissance Plan* drawn up by Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; and the Senegal *Omega Plan* established by our President, Abdoulaye Wade.

These initiatives are the reflection of the new frame of mind of high-ranking African leaders with regard to their approach to the problems of development.

In essence, these plans, the combining of which is both desirable and necessary, contain ideas which if made known to all international institutions, without exception, would facilitate this development so needed by our continent.

Reducing the decent work deficit has the aim of enabling the development of the individual, which can only be envisaged within the context of a global approach which includes all aspects of human life: health, education, agriculture and infrastructures, which are the four main aspects of the *Omega Plan*.

Original Polish: Mr. KOMOLOWSKI (*Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Poland*) — I extend my congratulations to the President on her election to preside over the 89th Session of the Conference and I am certain that under her presidency our Conference will produce results on the ambitious agenda before us.

On behalf of the Polish Government and the entire Polish delegation, I wish to express our wholehearted approval of the Director-General's Report. The title, *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge*, and its content firmly orient our discussions around the problems of the world today. It should be highlighted that this Report bridges the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its

Follow-up, adopted in 1998, the document debated at the 1999 session of Conference, the reorganization of the ILO and the timely issues of today.

I have a great deal of admiration and esteem for this Organization, which has 80 years behind it and a wonderful heritage. Under the direction of the current Director-General, the ILO has taken on the most difficult issues, ones which are vital to the labour situation at the beginning of this new century and faced with the challenge of globalization.

I am convinced that the very strong spirit of renewal, of new ideas and a new approach to the problems of human work will leave its mark on the results of our labours and that this will be true also for the fundamental work linked to the Report for the activities related to reviewing and reorganizing a debate on the modifications to the various social security systems.

A coherent policy and its strategic plan built over the last three years by the ILO is characterized in many ways.

There have been tremendous organizational efforts to adapt the structures and activities of ILO programmes to the main objective, which is the issue of work today in its various forms.

Let me look at this from a Polish perspective. In Poland, following the transition period and the establishment of the basis of a market economy and democracy, and several years of economic growth, the problems of the labour market and high unemployment have become one of the most serious of the social and political issues facing us.

Work has become a mark of social status and its prolonged absence includes the risk of exclusion for groups living in regions that are insufficiently advanced in their development and for those people who do not have sufficient qualifications.

Demographic forces in the labour market in coming years mean that we will need to create 1.2 million jobs before the year 2006; this is a challenge for us and something which needs to be taken into account if we want the social and professional start for the new generation to give them a chance to improve themselves and all of society.

These new measures on the labour market require the protection of workers in small enterprises by trade unions. These workers are often overlooked by the Labour Code; as is the increase in the role of trade union organizations to act as partners in negotiating collective agreements.

For this reason we would like to ally ourselves with the Decent Work Agenda. Our own experience enables us to understand better the link between employment and the possibility of employment on one hand, and policy on the other.

It is obvious to us that work and income from work has an effect on the quality of life of families and on the social and professional opportunities for their children, if only in terms of providing them with a better level of education. It is also obvious that employment has an effect on ensuring income for retirement.

I am in full agreement with the thrust of the Director-General's Report that increasing competitive pressures in the global economy affect labour and are important in formulating policy. This problem should be dealt with from a point of view of the individual and of society as a whole.

The emphasis in the Report on launching activities to define and implement the principles of decent

work, should encompass the various issues dealt with (employment, workers' rights, social protection, social dialogue) in an integral way. We see the commitments that can be taken by the states governments and social partners.

Poland is ready to review the conditions, the situation and the perspectives of decent work, especially since the revision of the legal aspect of this issue has already been undertaken in our preparations to negotiate our acceptance into the European Union.

A demonstration of all policy pursuant to the strategies of reducing the decent work deficit is to be put in place while restructuring by sector and implementing protection measures allowing workers in iron works, mines, armament and railways to benefit from appropriate assistance in case of mass lay-offs. Thanks to this assistance, workers will be able to re-qualify or retrain themselves to find a new job, to set up their own business by investing their severance pay, or to have regular income through early retirement benefits.

Workers from sectors being restructured have not been left to their own devices, and their families are not threatened by exclusion, nor will they find themselves in poverty. This does not mean that the risk of poverty does not exist in Poland. The unemployed, those with few qualifications, and those in small cities or rural zones, members of large families, and even young people, are threatened by poverty despite the assistance of our social protection network. However, real assistance to them is work, the guaranteed minimum income, and support to educate their children.

This is the programme implemented by the Government of Poland which, by taking into account what is at stake in the labour market linked to unemployment, has made efforts to prepare employers' organizations and unions to promote the creation of employment.

We would like to take advantage of the work of the World Bank, the European Union and the analysis and recommendations of the United Nations, including the role that the Global Compact can play in developing this movement in Poland, by participating actively in the action plan in favour of the reduction of the decent work deficit in the world. This is the only way that we will be able to rise to the challenge brought about by globalization. This is the only way that we will be able to maintain social and economic cohesion and build the basis of development in our country.

(Mr. Donato takes the Chair.)

Original Arabic: Mr. DAHLAN (*Employers' delegate, Saudi Arabia*) — On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce of Saudi Arabia. I should like to congratulate the President on her unanimous election to guide the deliberations of the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference. It is a tribute to her country and to all of us in Asia, and the recognition of her expertise.

I would like to echo the voices of those who have welcomed and praised the Report of the Director-General, on a subject of such great importance to everyone throughout the world — decent work. The fundamental principles of the ILO are a sound basis on which we can model labour regulations, employment contracts and working conditions. However, this subject is still only the preliminary stage leading up to

a more important and more essential issue: job creation. There can be no decent work if there are no jobs and the promotion of employment requires a plan of action and unanimous support from all industrialized and developing countries, and indeed from the international financial institutions and the international employers' organizations.

We support the fundamental principles of the ILO, and we endorse the strategic objectives of the Director-General's policy relating to fundamental rights at work, tripartite dialogue and programmes and policies which seek to create more and better quality jobs and to provide workers with greater and more effective protection. These objectives are entirely in keeping with our own policies in Saudi Arabia.

On the question of how we can promote employment, we will shortly be organizing a Conference on this subject because, once again, we feel there can be no decent work if there is no work at all.

We are proud that our Government sets great store by the application of the fundamental principles of the ILO because our Government believes that the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work will enable us to attain our goals and has already applied these principles through the creation of workers' committees in which all workers are represented. We are also proud to recall that our Islamic law prohibits and combats forced labour and that there is no forced labour in our country. Furthermore, we wholeheartedly endorse a ban on child labour, because we are working to build a glorious future for our children through Government and private education programmes.

The examination of social security by one of the Conference committees makes us even more proud of our own efficient social security model. We are still endeavouring to better it, in order to adapt it to the changes taking place in the world, and to the suggestions and proposals of employers and insured individuals.

The discussion on cooperatives makes me proud of our Islamic system of cooperatives. While the details may differ, the fact remains that the system of cooperatives is an Islamic system which operates for the common good, although some employers may have some reservations on this score. It is a system which reinforces social structures, because it reinforces social solidarity.

While we welcome the ILO's activities and achievements, we hope that greater efforts will be made towards the implementation of the fundamental principles of the Organization, particularly those relating to workers and employers throughout the world, including those in Palestine and the occupied territories. We also claim our rights as workers and employers, at a time when we are witnessing domination by WTO and its interference in the spheres of competence of our Organization.

The ILO should work to protect our interests as workers and employers vis-à-vis some of the detrimental aspects of the application of the WTO's new rules.

Without tripartite social dialogue we will not succeed in our economic development plans. And without democratic dialogue there can be no success. If the world powers felt stronger as a result of their military strength last century, it is now the economic power that has the upper hand. With the success of economic policies in the developing countries we will

be able to achieve our principal objectives, that is reducing unemployment, creating more jobs, combating poverty and improving earnings. This is precisely what we are seeking through economic projects at the regional level designed to achieve these objectives.

In conclusion, may I express my thanks and appreciation to the Director-General and his colleagues within the Governing Body for their efforts to make the role of the Director-General more effective.

Mr. GONZI (*Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Social Policy, Malta*) — May I first of all congratulate the ILO on the theme selected for the Report this year, and more specifically on the holistic and comprehensive approach to how the decent work deficit should and could be reduced. Indeed, globalization has triggered a process of restructuring of unprecedented magnitude across all of the world's economies. In times of such vast and fast changes, where the desire to remain competitive is so compelling, we might easily be led to allow our social policy objectives to play second fiddle to economic exigencies. Worse still, we could even be tempted to allow social policy to become simply a by-product of our economic agenda.

Thankfully, this has not proved to be a popular formula. The fact that we are here today debating how the decent work deficit could best be tackled, collectively and individually, is itself a strong indication that we do not subscribe to a model of economic progress bereft of any social conscience. It is for this reason and in this context that I heartily congratulate His Excellency President Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania for his eloquent and touching speech to this assembly. It is also in this context that tomorrow I will personally present to the Director-General Malta's ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190).

I believe our objective is an inclusive society. My Government, together with the social partners, has therefore striven to formulate and implement strong and consolidated policy responses to the realities unfolding before us. Allow me therefore to present you with a very brief overview of how we in Malta are proposing to reduce the decent work deficit in concrete terms. I shall focus on the most recent initiatives.

A few days ago, the Maltese Government adopted the new Malta Council for Economic and Social Development Act, establishing a national council charged with advising the Government on issues relating to the sustainable economic and social development of Malta. Building on the 12 years of experience of its predecessor, the new Council comprises an enhanced social flavour through the widening of its terms of reference to include the social dimension. It also establishes a committee for civil society which will include on a permanent basis representatives from key organizations. That committee is structured in a manner that can encompass all local civil society organizations as and when necessary. The new structure, its permanent status, its composition and scope mirror my Government's commitment to manage effectively the core relationship between economic and social agendas.

A wide-ranging programme of labour law reform is currently under way, including the consolidation and updating of existing legislation as well as the introduc-

tion of new labour legislation. Thus, subsidiary legislation is currently being drafted and the necessary structures are being put into place to protect employees subject to collective redundancies, to provide posted workers with information on the prevalent terms and conditions of employment, and to protect employees in cases of insolvency of the employer. A Gender Equality Act, expected to be adopted by the first quarter of 2002, will provide for protection against direct and indirect discrimination based on sex in the field of employment and training, as well as protection against sexual harassment. This Act will also establish an Office of the Gender Equality Commissioner, who will hear and investigate cases of sexual discrimination and alleged breaches of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. In the sphere of occupational health and safety, a new Health and Safety Authority was set up for the purpose last May, with the brief to enable more efficient and effective health and safety inspections as well as to support the social partners through training programmes and consultation processes. Practically all European standards on occupational health and safety will be adopted in the Maltese legislation by the first quarter of next year.

In this context, please allow me to express the appreciation of my Government for the concrete support provided by the ILO through its experts, who have helped us to draw up the necessary legislative instruments.

Government representatives and the social partners have been actively involved in examining the sustainability of Malta's social protection systems since June 1999. The national Commission for Welfare Reform has been charged with identifying the demographic, social and economic attributes for the formulation of proposals on welfare reform and with submitting proposals for the reform of pension funding and provision. Its recommendations to the Government are due shortly.

The plan of the national recruiting and training agency, the Employment and Training Corporation, for the period 2000-03 addresses the implementation of active labour market measures, focusing on employment initiatives for young jobseekers, long-term unemployed persons and jobseekers over 40 years of age. Special attention is also given to the placement of women jobseekers and persons who are disadvantaged.

In conclusion, reducing the decent work deficit is a very demanding agenda. It requires robust and relentless efforts from all sides, both at the national level and at the international level. The ILO has a sterling role in seeing this agenda through, not only as an "honest broker" as the Director-General quite rightly suggests in his Report, but on a higher plan, as the principal visionary and mentor for us all. The Maltese Government and the social partners reaffirm their commitment to the efforts undertaken in this regard by this forum, and look forward to their continued participation and contribution in the fulfilment of this common goal.

Original Arabic: Mr. ISSA (*Workers' delegate, Syrian Arab Republic*) — In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! I am indeed privileged to address you on behalf of the workers and the General Confederation of Trade Unions of Workers of the Syrian Arab Republic. I would like to congratu-

late the President, in whom the Conference has placed its trust.

We appreciate the efforts made to place essential items on the agenda which will certainly serve the interests of labour, sustainable development and workers throughout the world. Indeed today there are major challenges to be faced as globalization unfolds and deepens the abyss between the developed and developing countries and reduces employment prospects for young people. There is a need to bolster worker solidarity to stem this capitalist tide which is jeopardizing worker's rights. In the Syrian Arab Republic, there is cooperation between the social partners because we believe we must achieve a shared goal: national development. We need to improve the situation of workers in economic and social terms. We have made some progress in this area, which has been strengthened thanks to the modernization and development policy of our State, where the rule of law prevails, and institutions. We have for instance been able to amend and update a good deal of our legislation, which is now in line with the spirit of our times and is better suited to meet the material and vital needs of our people. Legislative Decree No. 25 amended Act No. 84 of 1968 on trade unions, bringing it into line with the Freedom of Association and Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87). I would like to salute our Head of State, Mr. Bashar El Assad, for his enlightened approach which has enabled us to adopt laws to increase wage and pension levels, to eliminate ceilings for retirement pensions and to exempt pensioners from taxes. We are continuing to modernize as part of our overall economic and social development, and in health and education. We are increasing women's participation across the board and are modernizing the public sector and stepping up cooperation between the private and mixed sectors on the basis of economic pluralism, thus consolidating the gains we achieved under the enlightened leadership of our former President, Mr. Hafez El Assad.

The Report of the Director-General highlights two points: worldwide consensus, and the need to reduce the decent work deficit.

First regarding worldwide consensus, we would have liked to see greater participation and a social dialogue with all trade union organizations and groups observing international labour standards taking part in drawing up this consensus.

Decent work means upholding human rights and social coverage for all workers.

We wonder if the workers in the occupied Arab territories have any social coverage, while Israel defies the international community, violates human rights and international law, destroys workplaces, deprives workers of their freedom of movement and their sources of income and exterminates an entire people in defiance of international law. Are such practices in keeping with the notions of decent work and social protection?

The Committee of Experts has issued a protest concerning the unity of labour unions. Allow me to say that the Arab trade unions, including the International Federation of Arab Workers' Trade Unions, consider that in the unity of unions lies their strength, and that pluralism leads to the dissolution and weakening of workers' organizations. We would also like to thank the Director-General for mentioning the situation of the Syrian workers in the occupied Syrian Golan. In this connection I would like to mention that

the Israeli occupation is continuing, that land is still being confiscated, and that settlements are constantly being established, violating the rights of Syrians and making living conditions in the occupied Syrian Golan even worse. We urgently call upon the international community unconditionally to condemn Israel for defying international resolutions, including those adopted by the Conference in 1974 and 1980, and for violating the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949.

We would like here to salute the Lebanese people for resisting and freeing southern Lebanon, which strengthens our conviction that the occupation of the other Arab territories is bound to end.

While we support trade, we have some reservations about the use of international labour standards for protectionist purposes. As for the follow-up to the Declaration, this is the exclusive mandate of the ILO, which is the only competent authority, thanks to its follow-up and supervisory mechanisms which serve the interests of the social partners through objective dialogue.

Finally we would wish that cooperation with the ILO and the Director-General should continue to help us meet our goals. We would like to see the Arabic language become a working language used in all the publications and documents of the Organization.

Mrs. DIAMANTOPOULOU (*Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, European Union*) — I am very pleased to take part in this debate today on the rich and comprehensive Report prepared by the Director-General, a report that will no doubt be a true milestone in your efforts to put the Decent Work Agenda into practice.

I would like to comment briefly on two aspects of this Report that are relevant to the European Commission's own social agenda. And, in particular, in respect of quality in work and social policies generally, on which we will present proposals to European Union Ministers next month.

For us, the notion for quality is about minimum standards, yes, but it is also about moving beyond the minimum and driving forward our efforts to raise standards for the benefit of all. Boosting the quality of living and working conditions, fighting social exclusion, fostering equal opportunities, closing the gender-pay gap. For us, for the European Union, quality does not just stop at Europe's borders. We also need to make sure that quality in work and quality in life become universal goals, values and aspirations for governments at all levels, businesses, consumers and citizens. This is linked to your analysis of the economic dimension of decent work and the notion of decent work as a productive factor impacting positively on competitiveness and growth.

In Europe the recognition that is sustainable to economic growth goes hand in hand with social cohesion and now underpins the strategic economic policy goals of the European Union. I think our underlying message here is very close to your own, and, together in the international debate, I think they can and should be mutually reinforcing.

The second, related theme of your Report that I wish to take up is that of globalization, where we have been successful in setting appropriate, economic and trading rules, but where on the social and environmental fronts we have clearly failed. Globalization is

inevitable, but it is not a natural phenomenon, it needs its rules and regulations. For that reason we must control and manage its spread and development if we are to succeed in reaping all the benefits.

We fully agree with you that core labour standards are not merely significant in respect of trade, but should be seen as an integral part of social development as a whole. In this regard, the proposals you have made to strengthen the role of the Working Party on the Social Dimensions of Globalization can only support international efforts to ensure greater coherence between economic policy on the one hand and social policy on the other. As you noted in the Report of the Director-General, fundamental principles and rights at work are the "floor" of social governance in an increasingly integrated world economy.

The second Global Report on forced labour is clear proof of the need for even greater efforts by the international community to promote such solid foundations. You have the full support of the European Commission in these endeavours.

This, I might add, is one of the reasons why the Commission issued a recommendation last year to the European Union Member States on the ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Let me also say in this context that I was most interested by your ideas on private voluntary initiatives to promote fundamental principles and rights. The European Commission is itself in the process of launching a wide-ranging debate on corporate social responsibility. But this is an area where we believe the ILO has a tremendous contribution to make in terms of its expertise and, above all, in terms of its unique legitimacy.

I am pleased to note that on all of these issues we are now working more closely together than ever before. This cooperation should be strengthened further, given that we signed a new exchange of letters only last month setting out the areas where we can work together most effectively in order to tackle the challenges that both our Organizations face, including promoting labour standards and reinforcing the social dimension of European Union enlargement.

On that basis, we look forward to working alongside you in our efforts to reduce the decent work deficit.

Original Spanish: Mr. JIMÉNEZ AGUILAR (*Employers' adviser, Spain*) — I should like to congratulate the President and Vice-presidents on their election to steer the work of this Conference, and also to commend the Director-General of the ILO on the content of his Report.

I am going to confine myself to the issues that I believe are of particular relevance.

Three years ago, with the backing and the initiative of the employers' organizations at this Conference, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was signed. That initiative was an attempt to prevent a situation in which a surfeit of highly rigid instruments would harm the image of one of the most prestigious international organizations. The ILO needed to shake off the inertia that was leading it to burden a major part of our activity with new instruments, which were often far removed from the reality they were supposed to address and which jeopardized the effectiveness of the core Conventions.

We as Spanish employers look very positively on the steps taken by the ILO towards this noble goal, and which have taken the form of new objectives and working methods. Both the programme set in motion two years ago and the Follow-up mechanisms of the Declaration represent a major step forward which we support and endorse.

These initiatives, along with the debate now underway among governments, employers and workers on the future of standard-setting activities, will represent a vital move in adapting ILO standards to the constantly changing world of work.

The integrated approach of standard-setting activity, which we are seeking to develop, means not only the consolidation or revision of existing standards, but also the creation of new ones, and even alternatives which may take a form different from Conventions and Recommendations. Our fundamental objective must be to respond to new realities. Conflictual relations, the basis of many labour models, are currently being replaced by cooperative relations, which involve workers with the enterprise, drawing them in to share in its goals and strategies, giving them greater individual autonomy in exchange for a greater level of responsibility in decision making.

The structure of employment is no longer what it used to be. This has come about as a consequence of many factors, including the integration of new groups, particularly women, or the inversion of the demographic pyramid in the developed countries.

Spain's experience here is eloquent. An inability over many years to offer new answers to a totally transformed social and productive structure led us into a series of serious distortions that prejudiced employment, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups. Only a new approach, closer to the needs of enterprises and society as a whole, has succeeded in bringing about a change and making headway in the field of employment. It is above all the fruit of social dialogue. Over the last four years, registered unemployment has fallen by five percentage points, reaching historic levels of under 10 per cent. Some 3 million open-ended contracts have been concluded with people from groups with special needs. The number of those contributing to social security has increased by over 2.5 million. Sound and sustained growth and investment, access to the benefits of the global economy, public support policies, and a climate favourable to initiatives by and for enterprises are the factors that boost job creation.

In all these processes, social dialogue, whether it ends in agreement or not, has played a decisive role for employment, for the improvement of social protection systems, for life-long vocational training and for conflict resolution through systems of mediation and arbitration.

In conclusion, I should like to state that it is very important that the vision of the ILO's future should be shared by all its constituents. On the one hand, consensus must be based on the independence and representation of the partners, and on the other hand, the existence of bodies to guarantee an ongoing dialogue. In my opinion, the Conference and the Governing Body must guarantee this dialogue, and all concerned must abide by their decisions.

Original Arabic: Mr. HAMADE (Employers' delegate, Lebanon) — On behalf of the employers of Lebanon and in particular the Association of Leba-

nese Manufacturers, I would like to thank the ILO, which provides the three partners with the opportunity to discuss issues of economics, development, productivity, social justice, equality and decent work, and many other subjects of interest to governments, employers and workers and of value for the well-being of the human race.

We always look forward to these annual sessions, particularly since the ILO helps us to establish ambitious frameworks for our economic, social and humanitarian activities. This is of constant concern to us as we seek opportunities to apply the policies and recommendations adopted.

In this connection, we can only applaud and subscribe to the objectives outlined by the Director-General as regards decent work. In fact, whatever our national priorities, the resulting economic and social objectives require us to work together in order to create a suitable working environment for all men and women.

I would like to make it clear that the occupation, repression and aggression to which our region is subjected will not stop us pursuing our economic, social and developmental goals. I would remind you that those objectives are shared by the ILO, its Director-General and the majority of its constituents. I would like to use this platform to pay tribute to our Palestinian brothers, workers and employers, and I hope that one day they will also be able to enjoy the social rights and other human rights enjoyed by free peoples who have not been subjected to occupation.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Syrian and Lebanese militants who are fighting to free their countries. They are fighting for freedom of rights, thoughts and allegiance. The human values towards which we are working in the ILO and in our countries will be victorious in those lands too. Aggression, occupation and barbaric oppression can never gain true victory. Thus, we will continue to collaborate openly and positively with our Lebanese partners, our Arab brothers and the international community under the aegis of the ILO in order to strengthen the humanitarian efforts of the ILO and support the concepts expressed in the Report of the Director-General with respect to decent work.

In conclusion, we would like to affirm that the objective of the Association of Lebanese Manufacturers has always been, and continues, to strive to improve economic performance and support research and development in order to build a solid economy based on knowledge and skill. We are also striving to improve productivity in order to remain competitive. These are the pillars of any economic and social activity aiming to establish equality, justice and social peace, especially in the conditions of today.

Original Arabic: Mr. JRAD (Workers' delegate, Tunisia) — In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate! I would like to thank the Director-General of the ILO for the efforts he has made to bring more dynamism into the Organization, to define its priorities and to create conditions conducive to giving human beings a better, freer, fairer, more secure and more dignified life.

This ambitious programme can only be achieved by implementing the strategic goals laid down in the Report on decent work. The Report recommends the adoption of a number of measures to improve the living conditions of nations in order to give globalization

a human face and allow society to create conditions of freedom, stability and sustainable development.

Our greatest challenge today is to make globalization work for everyone. Rather than marginalizing millions of individuals and leaving them to suffer the adverse consequences of globalization, we need to do our utmost to free human beings, put an end to the exploitation of children and eliminate all other forms of social suffering throughout the world.

More effort is needed to meet the needs of Africa, which is burdened with debt, poverty, disease, unemployment and HIV/AIDS, as well as armed conflict which is tearing the continent apart and forcing millions of Africans to emigrate.

The ILO has a number of achievements to its credit in many countries in the world thanks to the implementation of its fundamental principles and rights at work in the technical cooperation programmes and advisory services that it offers to governments, which it accompanies with emphasis on the connection between stability and democracy.

However, we need to be mindful of the fact that tripartism is not strong everywhere. Very often, workers' organizations have very limited powers, so the ILO must make greater efforts to strengthen trade union rights and freedoms everywhere in the world. We should also step up our efforts in Arab countries so as to encourage Arab workers to become unionized and promote freedom of association in cooperation with the ILO. The immense achievements represented by the development of the standards is a veritable source of pride to all who support peace and social development. Today, we need a global development charter capable of reconciling economic

development with social development with social development within the framework of a world partnership that would bring the benefits of globalization to every country in the world.

We take issue with the pessimists who claim that developing countries are in a dreadful position because of the population explosion and cultural factors. We believe that social development is the only way to overcome the adverse effects of globalization. In Tunisia, we have drawn on all principles, in pursuing a policy of reform of social structures and concluded a partnership agreement with the European Union. We have made considerable progress including increasing social revenues and minimum wages through legislative reform and tripartite dialogue.

The world in which we live at the beginning of this new millennium requires greater efforts of us if we are to secure rights and freedoms at work. We must all fight against all forms of racial discrimination in order to strengthen democracy, to secure the observance of human rights, help the developing countries set up mechanisms for enforcing standards and further develop social dialogue. The ILO's social security programme must be supported if we are to ensure social harmony. Trade union powers, too, need to be shored up, as does freedom of association.

The nations have great hopes of the ILO and we must respond to their appeals and their aspirations. We must rebuild the balance between capital and labour, reduce the gap between rich and poor and provide decent work for all. Only in this way can we attain peace and security.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.45 p.m.)

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